

## Plan to Incorporate Environmental Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion into Environmental Education



Environmental Education has an essential role in fostering \*environmental justice. Environmental education engages people in their local environment and empowers them to bring positive change to their communities. By strengthening the focus on environmental justice in environmental education, the office will incorporate more voices from underserved communities in North Carolina.

### Mission Statement and Language of Environmental Education

The goal of environmental education is environmental literacy for the residents of North Carolina with an aim to recognize the history and importance of environmental justice and increase access to public natural areas and environmental education programs. The office will incorporate justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion in its mission and goals.



#### **DRAFT MISSION STATEMENT:**

**The N.C. Office of Environmental Education encourages, supports and promotes environmental education programs, facilities and resources and equips educators with the skills and knowledge to improve environmental literacy, stewardship of natural resources and environmental justice in North Carolina.**

### **GOAL: Increase access to and participation in environmental education**

The office will partner with other state agencies, organizations (state parks, land conservancies/trusts, Environmental Educators of North Carolina) tribal governments and environmental education centers to increase accessibility for unrepresented and vulnerable populations to environmental education and to the natural environment. The office will also partner with existing programs to provide personal and structured experiences in the outdoors and to make these opportunities more culturally relevant and inviting for people of color.

\*"Environmental justice," as defined by the US Environmental Protection Agency, "is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies."



**GOAL: Ensure that Environmental Educators are trained in environmental justice, diversity, equity and inclusion.**

The office will build training/professional development into the NC Environmental Education Certification program that will increase educators' cultural competency and ensure that environmental education programs are inclusive and relevant to diverse communities. It will also ensure that environmental justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion informs classroom teaching practice and culture, relationships with students, and choices of curriculum and projects.

**The office currently encourages and accepts professional development in diversity, equity and inclusion for credit in the NC Environmental Education Certification. We can expand this effort by partnering with organizations such as EENC (Environmental Educators of North Carolina), the North American Association for Environmental Education and others to train environmental educators and community leaders.**

EENC received a grant in cooperation with other state affiliates of the North American Association for Environmental Education to develop an online diversity, equity and inclusion training specifically tailored to environmental educators. It will be completed in November and the office will work with EENC to make this training an instructional workshop in the North Carolina Environmental Education Certification Program.



**Career Development**

Members of the conservation and environmental education communities recognize a disparity between the people who work in these fields and the racial and ethnic make-up of the population of North Carolina. The office will work with partners to increase diversity in environmental careers of all types.

We will prioritize reaching out to Historically Black Colleges and Universities, tribal governments and minority-serving organizations and include them in a conversation on how to reach students. We will continue working with community colleges and universities to increase diversity in the conservation fields and in environmental education.

**We will continue to recognize environmental educators who complete their certification and will raise up voices of people of color and recognize outstanding contributions by young leaders in North Carolina.**

We will continue to expand our lecture series to include speakers who do environmental justice work and who have successfully engaged communities. We will also highlight successful programs and people who engage underserved communities and youth in the outdoors.

