

southern maine CONSERVATION COLLABORATIVE

We are committed to the principles of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice and have worked hard with our full staff and board to develop a statement that shares our commitments and holds us accountable. This statement is a reflection of our learning and as such will be changed from time to time based on new perspectives, feedback, and growth.

Southern Maine Conservation Collaborative Statement of Equity, August 29, 2018

All people have the right to access nature in open and public spaces. To guarantee this right for all communities, it is imperative for the conservation community to build a more equitable, inclusive, and diverse movement. The Southern Maine Conservation Collaborative is committed to being a catalyst and partner in this transformation.

Just as biodiversity strengthens natural systems, conservation work is made stronger by the contributions, experiences, perspectives, and values of different people and communities. Biases and disparities disproportionately burden communities of color, indigenous communities, people with physical and mental disabilities, and low income communities with legacies of environmental damage and on-going harm.* It is our duty to ensure that our work is not repeating these practices but is addressing barriers and fixing inequitable systems.

We know that organizations embracing equity are more resilient, creative, and long lasting. Organizations outwardly committed to equity are more attractive to funders and to a diversity of people for volunteer or staff opportunities. Striving to become an organization that embraces equitable principles will make the Collaborative a stronger, more effective catalyst for environmental good.

The Collaborative is committed to building on its history of working in partnership with other organizations by embracing equity, inclusion, and diversity in all areas of our mission. We will continue to support, facilitate, and seek funding for ongoing learning opportunities for all member organizations to further their understanding of who is in their communities, what their barriers to engagement are, and how to listen for joint solutions.

SMCC will also seek educational resources to deepen our understanding of the true history of conservation and its ongoing perpetuation of colonization and exclusion. We will be intentional about our staffing and membership practices and strive to increase the diversity of our staff, vendors, board members, and supporters with strategic recruitment and partnerships, and an inclusive work place culture. We will review our policies and practices for communication and participation to ensure universal access for all.

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Additionally, The Collaborative invites a dialogue with partners working on these issues to seek guidance and develop collaborations. By expanding our reach, SMCC intends to go beyond traditional cultural and social boundaries to become more effective in building an equitable and inclusive conservation movement in Maine. We invite all communities to join us in this journey of transformation.

Thank you to The River Network for providing an inspirational base and beautiful language to our statement. <https://www.rivernetwork.org/about/mission-vision-values/>

**The Rise of the American Conservation Movement: Power Privilege, and Environmental Protection*