

WCS DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

ANNUAL REPORT
2021

If conservation represents only one perspective or emphasizes only a particular demographic, then other diverse groups with vested interests will become marginalized and conservation efforts will ultimately suffer.

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ACCELERATING OUR PROGRESS IN 2021

JANUARY

- Facilitated DEI survey for US-based full-time employees.
- Convened a team of representatives from our international field programs to identify actionable steps for addressing DEI in the global context.
- Honored Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. with an internal tribute and messages across WCS social channels.

FEBRUARY

- Hired Head of Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion.
- Launched WCS Heritage Month Blog Series with PBS Nature, a series of stories recognizing the conservation efforts of WCS staff from diverse backgrounds, identities, and heritages.

MARCH

- In response to increased violence against the Asian-American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community, WCS provided a list of AAPI therapists and mental health professionals for its employees.

MAY

- Issued a support statement after George Floyd verdict, signed by CEO, COO, and Head of DEI and messaged the same across our social channels.

JUNE

- CEO updated the WCS community on how the organization has evolved since its public acknowledgement and apology for the shameful 1906 mistreatment of Ota Benga.
- After making Juneteenth an official organization-wide holiday in 2020, WCS shared various ways members of its community commemorated the day and the CEO and COO issued an internal update on DEI efforts including announcing the creation of ERGs.
- Issued first employee benefits interest survey.

JULY

- Awarded \$2M in funding from NYC Speaker, Council members, and the Institute of Museum and Library Services to expand internship opportunities for NYC youth.
- Presented DEI plan to Bloomberg Philanthropies to assist in designing the next iteration of their Vibrant Ocean Initiative.
- Facilitated first annual DEI survey for New York City-based part-time employees.

AUGUST

- Designed a process to support identification and utilization of diverse vendors and Minority/Women-owned Business Enterprises (M/WBEs) to support our Supplier Diversity program.
- Received sensory inclusive certification at New York Aquarium, Central Park Zoo, and Queens Zoo—making all WCS zoos and aquarium certified sensory inclusive through our partnership with KultureCity.

SEPTEMBER

- Received special recognition for the WCS Career Lattice in the Association of Zoos and Aquariums' Angela Peterson Diversity Award category.
- Launched 6 Employee Resource Groups (ERGs).
- CEO participated in the Dismantling Eugenics online event.

OCTOBER

- Launched ThriveGlobal wellness app, the first platform that is universally available to all WCS employees.

NOVEMBER

- Engaged a minority-owned contractor to build an interactive cloud-based vendor database system to support our Supplier Diversity program.
- Created DEI tab for WCS's public website.

DECEMBER

- Posted "Updated Non-Discrimination Notice" on WCS's public website and separately included the process for anonymous reports of discrimination on OurWCS.org, our internal employee website.
- Facilitated a baseline assessment of DEI priorities for our field teams across the world.
- Hired Executive Director of the Rights + Communities Program, our flagship endeavor to ensure that our conservation efforts respect and protect the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

INTRODUCTION & STRATEGIC GOALS

WCS has been on a journey to consolidate its commitments and actions toward diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). These efforts align with our WCS 2030 strategic plan, which emphasizes our work to build a stronger WCS to support our mission.

As a global conservation organization, we recognize that there are very different perspectives, priorities, and understandings of what DEI represents for our colleagues working in almost 60 countries around the world. Collaborative efforts began at our New York City headquarters in 2017, where we assembled a passionate and dedicated group of diverse employees from different areas of the organization to identify key DEI priorities. We identified six priorities that formed the foundation of our DEI Plan. This plan was approved by our board and enabled us to make tangible changes to our policies, practices, and procedures and highlight the value of diversity and inclusion in our business operations.

Simultaneously, we started a thoughtful process on DEI with our regional field programs to build something that is practical, actionable, and takes the realities of social and cultural factors and local contexts into consideration. This reflection recognizes the need to discuss how we address DEI in the global context and aims to improve our understanding about the intricacy of DEI issues across WCS.

We are committed to continuing this work and invite you to join us in this journey, taking full advantage of our global and diverse team to create a strong inclusive community. One recent step was to hire Kevin Wells as our first Head of Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion. Kevin is leading several initiatives and programs to ensure that our DEI priorities are successfully implemented and reports directly to both of us. Transparency and communication will be crucial in our journey and this inaugural DEI report, which showcases our initiatives, best practices, and aspirations, is a critical step on this journey. Please join us and share your ideas and feedback.



Cristián Samper

Cristián Samper, Ph.D.
President & Chief Executive Officer



Robert G. Menzi

Robert G. Menzi
Executive Vice President &
Chief Operating Officer

DEI Priorities for WCS:

- Cultivate an inclusive and accessible work environment
- Attract, hire, and develop diverse employees
- Cultivate a diverse pipeline of talent for future management, leadership, and board positions
- Ensure that WCS facilities are a welcoming environment for all visitors
- Offer enriching experiences for our education program audiences
- Advance and sustain DEI efforts

“Our strategy is to work collaboratively across all departments and lead efforts to define and cultivate a framework of inclusion in our new journey. Not only will that define our DEI program, it will also strongly impact our business strategies by consistently ensuring that all voices in our extended employee community are heard.”



Kevin V.G. Wells, Esq.
Head of Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

INITIATIVES AND IMPACT

In 2021, our diversity, equity, and inclusion journey has led to the creation of new programs and meaningful changes to organization-wide policies, practices, and procedures. In the following section, we outline the new initiatives that bolster our six DEI priority areas. This work and the resulting impacts, including sector best practices, form a firm DEI baseline that will enable us to set targeted goals for the future.

PRIORITY AREA 1. CULTIVATE AN INCLUSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE WORK ENVIRONMENT

Employee Resource Groups

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) are employee-led groups that share interests, issues, backgrounds, characteristics, or pursuits. ERGs provide formal links between employees, WCS leadership, DEI efforts, and business and mission objectives.

This year, WCS launched six inaugural ERGs open to US-based staff, and over 100 employees have joined to date, with membership expected to grow and expand to the entire organization over time. Members are full-time and part-time staff from across all departments that include affinity members and their allies. Each ERG elects their respective employee co-leads who will be supported by a separately-appointed executive sponsor who acts as the group’s advocate at the leadership level. Our ERGs are impact-based and tasked with developing goals to reflect and mesh their respective missions to enact targeted organizational change. We incorporated the ERGs to create a sense of belonging and ensure that every great idea can be brought to leadership to ultimately strengthen our organization.

The 6 inaugural WCS Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) representing the initial community demographics are:

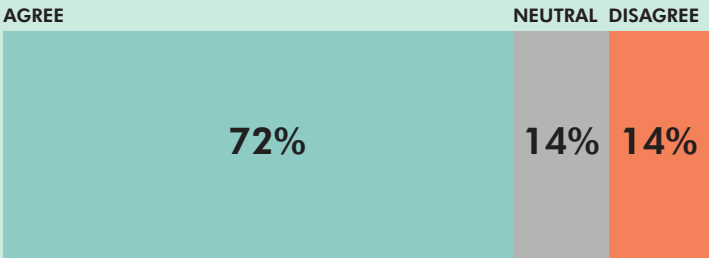
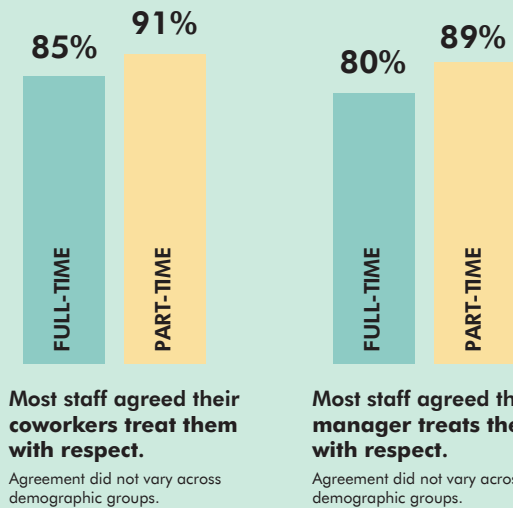
- ASIA (Asian Society for Inclusion and Action)
- BLAC (Black Leadership Advancement Consortium)
- Championship Circle (for Environmental Social Justice Advocates)
- LGBTQ+
- WAGE (Women and Allies for Gender Equity)
- WILD (Welcoming and Inspiring LatinidaD)

Updating WCS Non-Discrimination Notice

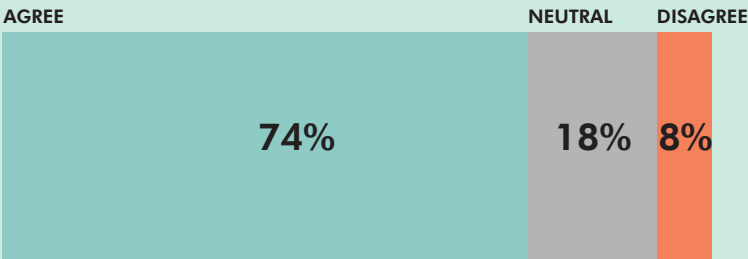
WCS values diversity and prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, veteran status, and other protected classifications. The WCS community is committed to ensuring that no one, including our valued employees, diverse suppliers, interested job applicants and guests to our facilities, is excluded or discriminated against in WCS’s programs and activities. We have set up systems for inquiries and discrimination complaints (which may be anonymous) to be directed to the Vice President & Chief Human Resources Officer and the Head of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

Employees’ Perspectives on DEI at WCS

Our annual staff survey explores employees’ perceptions of diversity, equity, and inclusion at WCS. We administered the survey to full-time and part-time New York City-based staff, collecting over 800 responses from all departments and employees in a wide variety of roles, including union and non-union, part-time regular, and part-time temporary staff. Results are being disseminated widely through this report and in communications to leaders across the organization to shape strategy and action.



Seventy-two percent of all staff felt their manager creates an environment for all employees to express their ideas and opinions. Agreement varied by age and LGBTQ+ identity, but not race and ethnicity or gender. Respondents who self-identified as younger or LGBTQ+ were least likely to agree.



Three-quarters of part-time staff felt appreciated at WCS. Agreement did not vary across demographic groups.

PRIORITY AREA 2.
ATTRACT, HIRE, AND DEVELOP DIVERSE EMPLOYEES

WCS Career Lattice

WCS is committed to building a diverse and inclusive movement of conservation advocates and STEM professionals. Started in 2016, the [WCS Career Lattice](#) is an integrated career pathways program through which young people growing up in historically marginalized New York City communities gain expanded access to opportunities at our parks and to a suite of professional services and supports. In 2021, the WCS Career Lattice, which is funded through a public/private partnership, reached 1,400 youth ages 14 to 24 who participated in volunteer, internship, and employment opportunities across our five parks. Extending this work globally, WCS mentors and partners with students from diverse communities, taking into account local contexts and values, which in turn serves to strengthen conservation outcomes.

WCS Internship Initiative

Recently, departments have come together to address a major challenge in diversifying the conservation career pipeline: internships. Many youth gain their first work experiences through internships, which provide exposure to a field, skills-based training, and opportunities to network with professionals. Unfortunately, inequity in internships exists in science-focused non-profits, leading to a lack of accessible pathways for communities historically under-represented in the field. In July 2021, we launched the WCS Internship Initiative to ensure that more youth are connected with pivotal early-career opportunities at WCS and other institutions focused on science. The WCS Internship Initiative will standardize WCS’s 300+ zoo and aquarium internships, align recruitment and selection protocols with DEI best practices, support internship supervisors, and elevate a diverse group of interns into paid positions at WCS and beyond.



SCI Network NYC

Thanks to support from the City Council, WCS was awarded \$1M to lead a partnership of eight science institutions that include the American Museum of Natural History, Brooklyn Botanic Garden, New York Botanic Garden, New York Hall of Science, Queens Botanic Garden, Staten Island Zoo, and Wave Hill. The SCI Network NYC is developing a plan that meets the internship needs of the institutions, while co-developing best practices for recruitment, compensation, cultivation, and advancement for all interns. Our goal is to ensure that NYC youth from backgrounds historically underrepresented in STEM and cultural institution leadership positions are provided the opportunity to engage in robust internships designed to cultivate and launch careers.

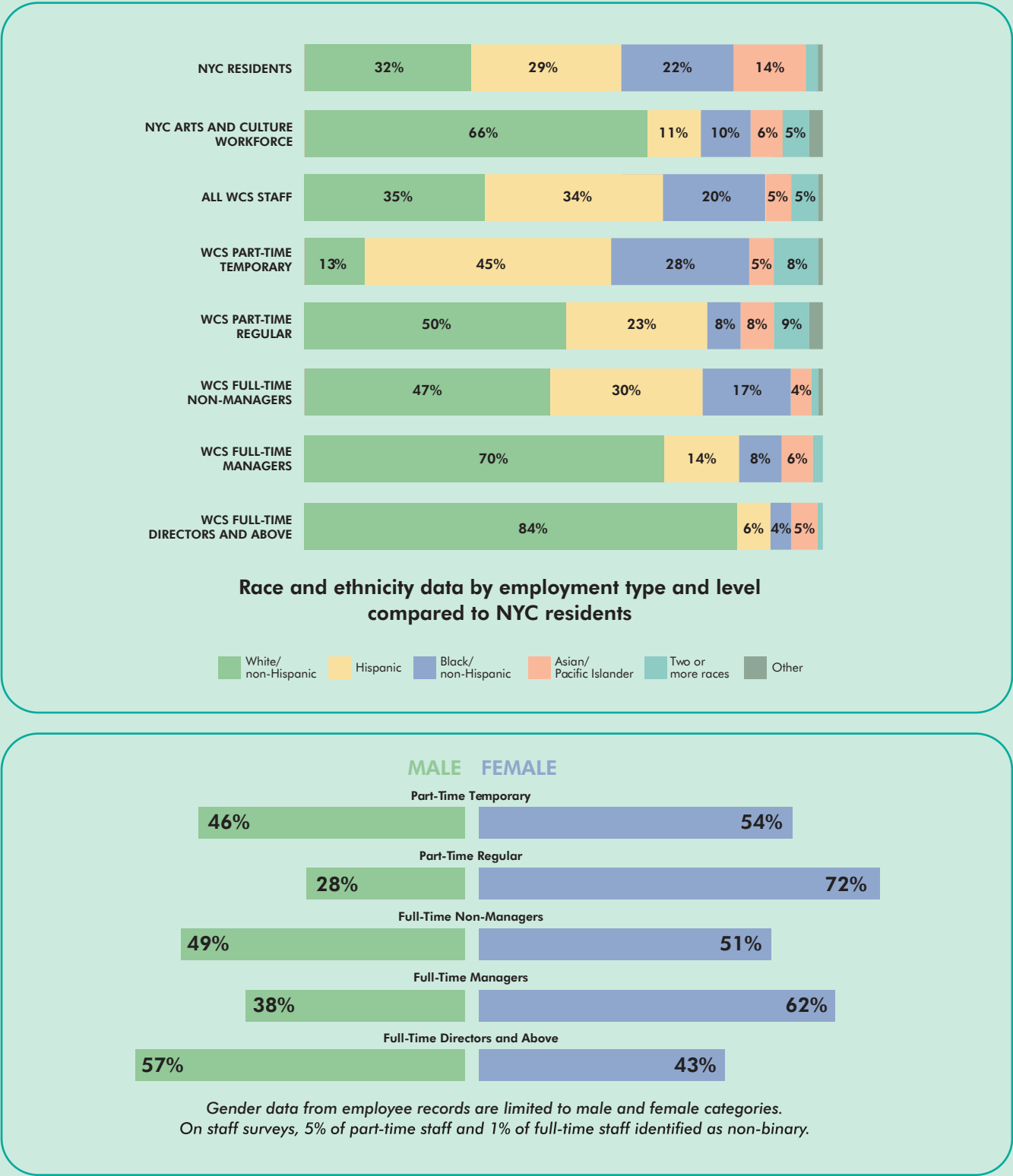
Learning and Leadership for Conservation Program



For nearly a century, WCS has been supporting the development of inspired and committed young conservationists around the world. Indeed, supporting rising leaders and building organizational resilience are cornerstones of the WCS Learning and Leadership for Conservation (LLC) program. Through LLC’s Graduate Scholarship Program, Conservation Leadership Programme, Local Conservation Partners Fund, and a range of customized capacity development approaches, WCS has worked to build capacity of our in-country partners. We provide graduate scholarships, strengthen practical experience and resilience through project grants and internships, provide management and leadership skill development, and create networks through peer-to-peer learning and knowledge sharing.

WCS NYC Employee Demographics

Each year, we compile demographic data for our thousands of New York City-based employees, including people in full-time, part-time regular, and part-time temporary positions, to understand representation across the employee life-cycle. We are tracking these data annually to measure the short- and long-term impact of our initiatives to attract, hire, and develop diverse employees.



PRIORITY AREA 3.
CULTIVATE A DIVERSE PIPELINE OF TALENT FOR FUTURE MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP, AND BOARD POSITIONS

Presenting Pathways for a Diverse Workforce

At WCS, we take seriously our responsibility to ensure we build a future-ready workforce able to scale the organization’s impact. Our goal is to become more effective at attracting, developing, and retaining a global, diverse, and motivated workforce. To that end, we will continue to pilot our succession planning approach for targeted positions with the goal to make succession planning an integral part of WCS’s work-force planning process.

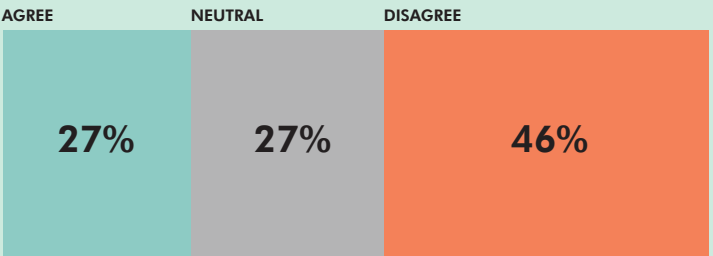
WCS U Management Training

WCS is committed to the development of our staff worldwide. One of the key outcomes of the 2030 strategy is a diverse and motivated workforce with the skills needed to meet our strategy and priorities. To support this important outcome, HR offers, through its WCS U portal, access to ongoing professional development across a wide array of skill areas, including management and leadership development. WCS U has expanded over the past years to include access to management programs offered by eCornell, Humentum, and other providers, along with access to courses on technical skills such as animal care, GIS, data handling, and operations management. WCS U continues to evolve as organizational needs are identified.

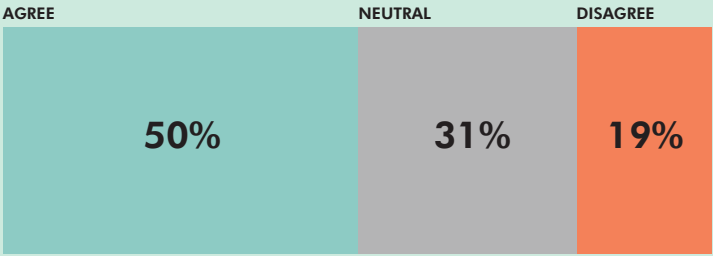


Employee Perceptions of Career Advancement at WCS

Employees shared their perceptions of opportunities to advance at WCS on our annual staff survey.



Nearly half of full-time staff disagreed that the requirements for promotion are clear. Agreement varied by gender, age, and LGBTQ+ identity, but not race and ethnicity. Respondents who self-identified as women, younger, or LGBTQ+ were least likely to agree.



Half of part-time staff saw a career path for themselves at WCS. Agreement did not vary across demographic groups.

We are taking into consideration our organization’s unique high retention based on extended employee tenures and now recognize the need to increase further clarity around requirements for career mobility. We are currently working toward clarifying our career structure and expanding ways to support our staff as they pursue opportunities for advancement.

PRIORITY AREA 4.
ENSURE THAT WCS ZOOS AND AQUARIUM ARE
WELCOMING ENVIRONMENTS FOR ALL VISITORS



Accessibility Resources

We aim to cultivate a welcoming environment in each of our parks that is accessible and inclusive, and ensures that all visitors have a positive experience. In the last year, we have continued our partnership with KultureCity to receive sensory-inclusive certification at our remaining parks—Queens Zoo, Central Park Zoo, and New York Aquarium. This enables all five of the WCS parks to provide a safe, comfortable environment for those with sensory sensitivities to enjoy and learn about animals and wildlife conservation. We have upgraded the parks’ websites and mobile sites to more effectively communicate accessibility information.

Multilingual Resources

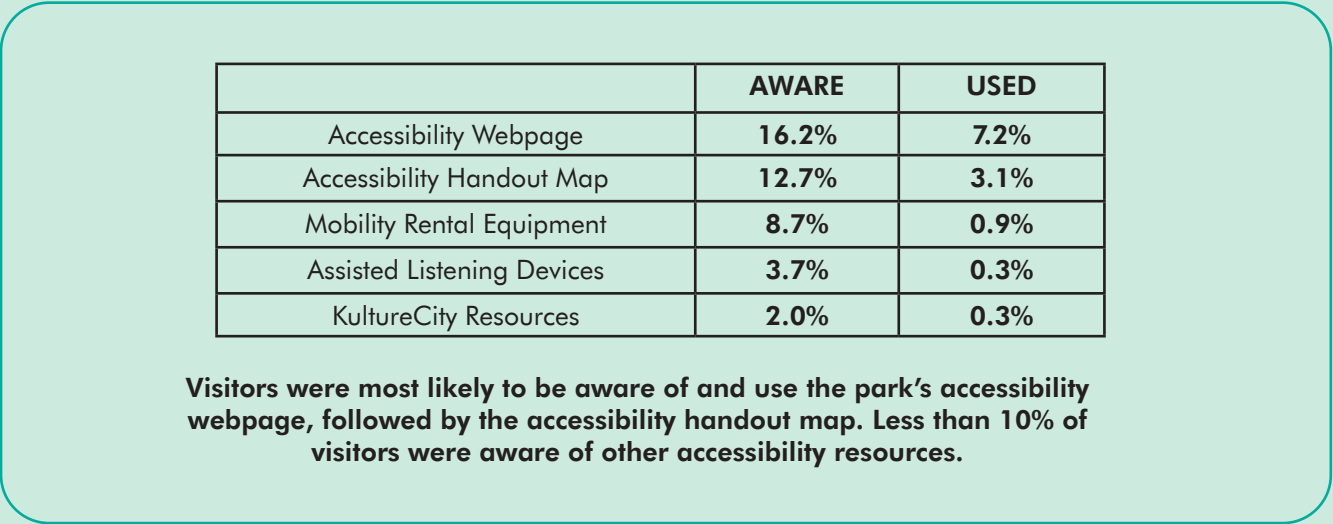
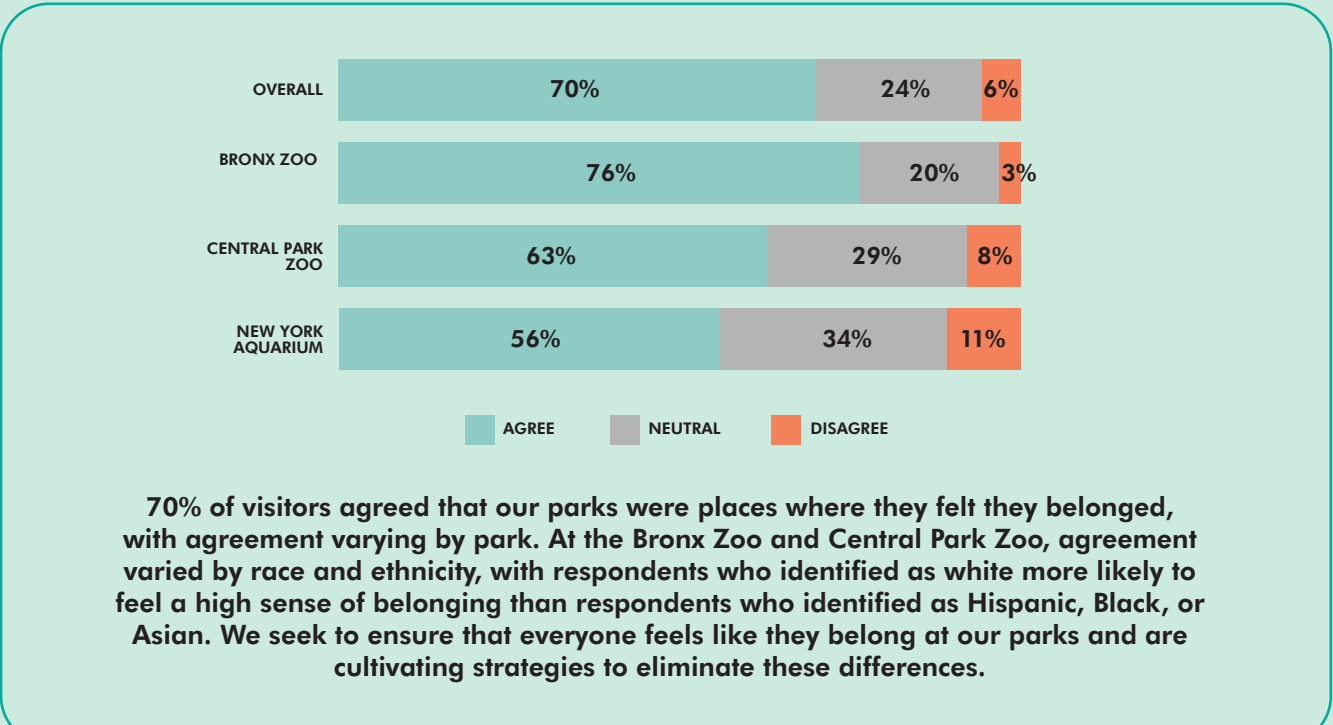
Our exhibits educate and inspire visitors about animals, nature, and conservation using a broad range of multi-sensory interpretive tactics, from mechanical interactives to digital media, to provide an inclusive and accessible learning experience in our parks. We also recognize our visitors come from diverse ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds. We have expanded our use of Spanish messaging in our zoos and aquarium, including bilingual COVID-19 safety information in all five parks; a Spanish-language Wildlife Theater show as part of the Bronx Zoo’s Wonderful World of Eric Carle event; the new PlayQuarium exhibit at the New York Aquarium—the first fully-bilingual exhibit in a WCS park; and bilingual Queens Zoo visitor maps. To leverage the incredible linguistic diversity of our front-line staff—37 languages spoken across our parks in 2021—we designed buttons staff can wear to communicate to visitors what languages they speak.

Community Access Program

As a community partner, WCS works to provide greater access to the Bronx Zoo and New York Aquarium. Through partnerships with community-serving organizations and agencies, WCS developed the Community Access Program (CAP) in 2006 which provides free access to WCS parks, primarily the Bronx Zoo and New York Aquarium, to seniors, youths, and individuals with disabilities who would not normally be able to visit during our free day/hours. The Bronx Zoo and New York Aquarium provide free admission to more than 600,000 guests annually, approximately half of whom visit during free hours on Wednesdays. Since its inception, WCS has grown its partnerships with City agencies such as the Department of Homeless Services, New York City Housing Authority, New York City Police Department’s Explorers Program, and the Administration for Children’s Services to provide educational opportunities and experiences to thousands of children and families.

Visitor Perspectives

We conduct an ongoing post-visit survey of visitors to the Bronx Zoo, Central Park Zoo, and New York Aquarium to understand their experience at our parks. In 2021, we collected over 19,000 responses.



Visitors were most likely to be aware of and use the park’s accessibility webpage, followed by the accessibility handout map. Less than 10% of visitors were aware of other accessibility resources.

PRIORITY AREA 5.
OFFER ENRICHING EXPERIENCES FOR OUR EDUCATION PROGRAM AUDIENCES

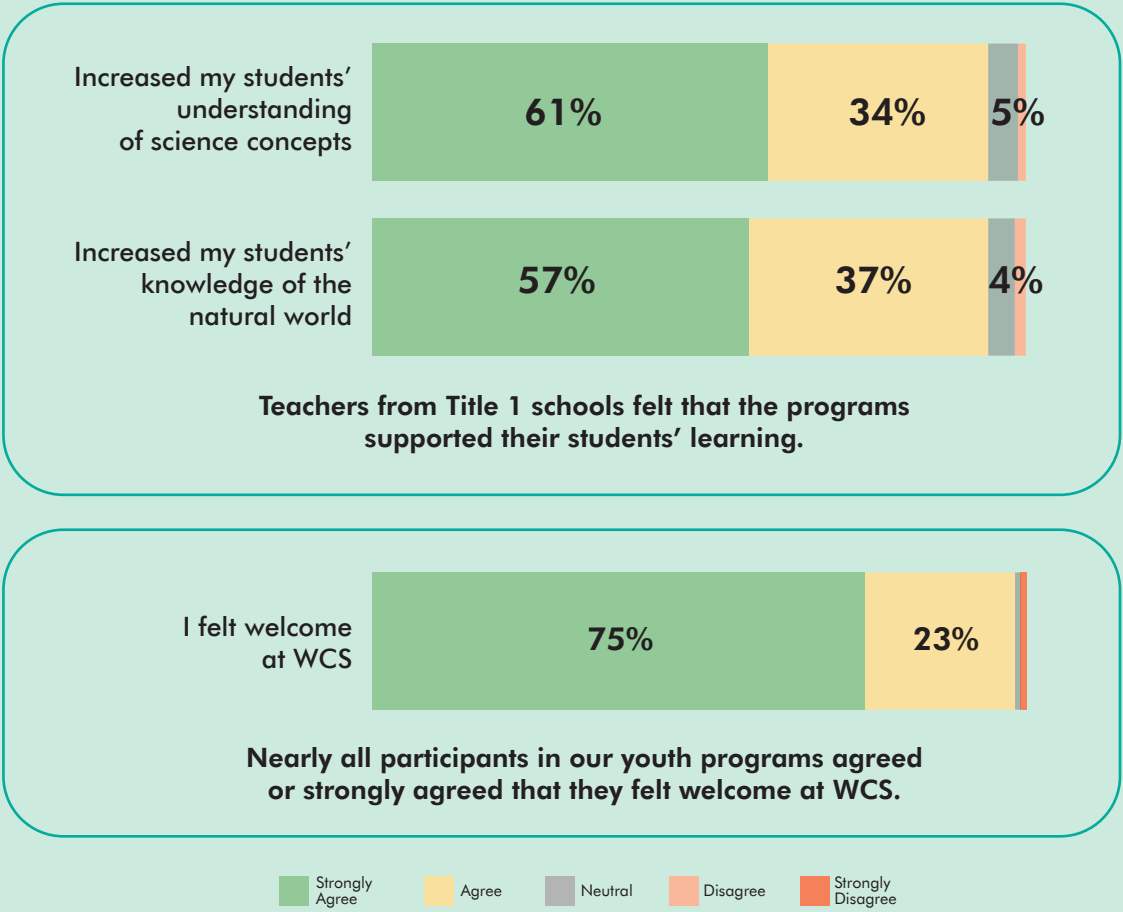
WCS works to inspire a diverse movement of conservation advocates by bringing conservation learning to life through our education programs. Every year, we reach close to one million students, teachers, families, youth, and zoo and aquarium visitors through education activities at our five New York City parks. We are dedicated to serving a broad audience that mirrors the diversity of our city, and this audience-focused approach has been particularly integral during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has upended the teaching and learning landscape. Our virtual programming, launched in spring 2020, proved to be an integral tool for teachers, students, and families around the world. From animal encounters and exhibit tours to career panels with diverse STEM professionals from across WCS, the virtual programs increased learners’ understanding of science and what we can do to help the environment. As the pandemic continues, we have committed to offering a menu of learning opportunities that can take place in schools, at our parks, and online.

Additionally, this year we tackled the financial barrier related to school field trips and secured funding to offer more than 700 free virtual programs to New York City Title 1 schools, reaching 17,500 students. Our youth development programs remained online, with more than 400 New York City youth collaborating to create a suite of digital products to engage zoo and aquarium visitors in conservation learning. We also leveraged connections with WCS colleagues around the world to create four new WCS Field Sight stories, free standards-aligned resources for teachers to bring real conservation stories into their classrooms. This diverse education menu removes participation barriers and ensures that we continue to advance high-quality science and conservation learning.



Education Program Evaluation

We conduct ongoing evaluation of our education programs, allowing us to measure our reach and impact and assess changes over the last five years. WCS strives to create safe, inclusive, and affirming spaces for all education program participants. Our experienced instructors are experts at customizing the programs to the needs of their audiences.



“Love the supports and understanding in place for neuro-diverse kids.”

—Camp Parent

PRIORITY AREA 6.

ADVANCE AND SUSTAIN DEI EFFORTS

Rights and Communities Program

One of WCS’s five core thematic programs is our [Rights + Communities](#) program—a global thematic priority for WCS’s conservation delivery, in which many DEI principles are intricately inter-connected: WCS recognizes that nature and people are intrinsically linked, and that biological and cultural diversity are interdependent, mutually reinforcing, and often co-evolved. Indigenous Peoples and local communities frequently represent the most active defenders of nature and the best partners and constituencies for conservation. Their long-term livelihoods, wellbeing, and cultural identities most directly depend on the sustainable use of natural resources in the wild landscapes and seascapes where we work. We form alliances with Indigenous Peoples and local communities across the globe to achieve a shared vision for a more secure and resilient future, where nature and people coexist, and cultures and wildlife continue to thrive. Today, WCS is respectfully engaged with 205 Indigenous Peoples in 39 countries.

Supplier Diversity Program

Inclusive procurement is an integral part of WCS’s DEI efforts to ensure a diverse supplier base that reflects the communities we serve. We co-chair the Ascend Bronx Anchor Council, a local network that supports the growth of minority business enterprises (MBEs) in the Bronx by connecting them with contracting opportunities from larger institutions. In 2021, we hosted the Anchor Council’s first in-person event at the Bronx Zoo, bringing together partners to build relationships and

strengthen collaboration towards equitable economic development. As part of this effort, our Purchasing Department has been working closely with Anchor Council partner, BronxXchange, to competitively purchase services and products from Bronx-based enterprises, with a focus on women-owned and minority-owned businesses. In the last fiscal year, three Bronx businesses were awarded Bronx Zoo contracts for office supplies and furniture, maintenance and repair, and information services, totaling \$290,000. We plan to increase our contract awards to diverse suppliers year over year.

WCS Supplier Diversity Database

We have contracted with a minority-owned vendor to build a new cloud-based system to extend our supplier diversity efforts to other boroughs, municipal entities, and the private sector. Based on our design, this database will enable the WCS procurement team to identify, distinguish, and utilize certified Minority-owned/Women-owned Business Enterprises (M/WBEs); Minority-owned Business Enterprises (MBEs); Women-owned Business Enterprises (WBEs); Disabled Veteran-owned Business Enterprise (DVBE) and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender-owned Business Enterprises (LGBTBEs) and track their respective contractual spend. This feature will aid us greatly in reporting our annual contractual spend to federal, state, and city agencies and strategic partnerships with existing prime vendors for capacity building and second-tier opportunities with diverse subcontractors. The system is expected to be operational in early 2022.



OurWCS Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Program



"All of us play a role in advancing and sustaining diversity, equity, and inclusion at WCS, and in doing so, we will become stronger and achieve even greater impact in our mission to save wildlife and wild places." Cristián Samper, WCS President and CEO



"Our strategy is to work collaboratively across all departments and lead efforts to define and cultivate a framework of inclusion in our new journey. Not only will that define our DEI program, it will also strongly impact our business strategies by consistently ensuring that all voices in our extended employee community are heard." Kevin V.G. Wells, Esq., Head of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

"DIVERSITY & INCLUSION: We value staff and community partners from all backgrounds and cultures with different skills, abilities, and perspectives; we ensure that everyone has an opportunity to fully contribute to our mission." [WCS: 2030 Core Values](#)

WCS Messaging on DEI Efforts

We believe in providing transparent updates to engage all members of the WCS community.

In December 2020, we hosted an all-staff town hall that focused on DEI and provided an opportunity for leadership to share our progress and answer employee-driven questions.

Currently, our primary internal communications for DEI updates and outreach can be accessed from OurWCS, our Intranet, which includes WCS’s DEI policy, position statements, and links to WCS communications to staff about DEI developments and progress, including in our weekly newsletter. This page on OurWCS also links to the WCS Careers page and the “Reckoning With Our Past” page, which includes the [NY Times article](#) link in which Dr. Cristián Samper discusses the mistreatment of Ota Benga and shares the organization’s apology and condemnation. In addition, we have made all archival materials related to this history available to all through this portion of the website. Another special feature of our DEI messaging is an ongoing series with PBS Nature giving staff an opportunity to tell their stories through their unique cultural perspectives.

To better share our goals and progress with external stakeholders, we have recently created a [DEI section on WCS’s public website](#) that summarizes all of WCS’s DEI work and, separately, we launched this inaugural DEI Annual Report.

DEI in ACTION

Here, we share a series of short stories of DEI accomplishments from throughout the organization.

SUPPORTING OUR STAFF

Prioritizing Our Work During A Global Pandemic

Part of creating a welcoming work environment is ensuring stability for employees. The COVID-19 pandemic radically altered the day-to-day operations for WCS employees at our headquarters in New York City and our global programs in 60 countries around the world. WCS's parks were closed for months in 2020, shrinking a critical part of our attendance-based revenue. Despite these financial hardships, WCS leadership worked to secure alternative revenue streams and maintained the full-time workforce throughout the pandemic. Further, hundreds of our New York City-based employees continued to come to our parks every day to care for our animals and ensure that critical activities continued to move forward. To support our global teams, we collaborated with International SOS, an organization dedicated to improving the health, safety, and security of workers around the world, to provide WCS country programs with medical advice and support during the pandemic. These efforts demonstrated WCS's commitment to employees in the midst of uncertainty and our employees' commitment to our organization's vital work.

"While we have been closed to the public, our essential staff have been here every day caring for the animals and maintaining park operations. The staff at our four zoos and aquarium have been amazing throughout this crisis, working tirelessly during this stressful time to meet the responsibilities we have to the animals in our care."

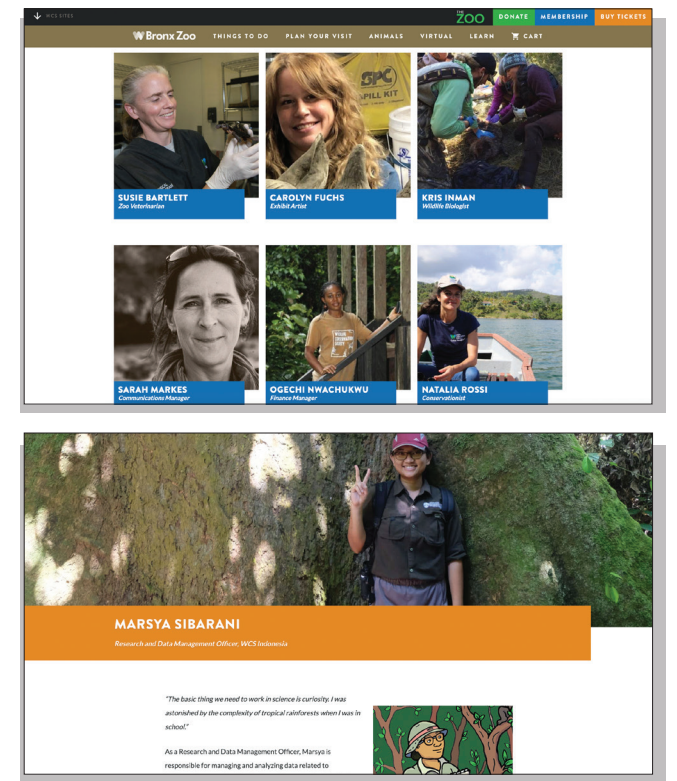
—Jim Breheny
Executive Vice President & General Director, Zoos and Aquarium & the Jonathan Little Cohen Director of the Bronx Zoo



DIVERSITY

Representing Diverse Voices in Science and Conservation

WCS recognizes the need to reach young women and people of color and invite them to pursue careers in science and conservation. A proven strategy to address the lack of diversity in these careers is to increase the representation of diverse scientists in media and educational programming. Over the past two years, WCS has created new tools that have shifted the culture of our organization to be more representative of women and people of color. Key activities include an updated video in the Bronx Zoo's Tiger Mountain exhibit to represent our diverse team of keepers, an internal database and a public-facing [WCS Conservation Heroes](#) website that highlights women and other historically excluded groups in STEM, and a deliberate programmatic shift where the majority of WCS education programs for students and teachers include diverse perspectives and role models.



Recognizing and Empowering Women in Global Fisheries

Women's broad and pervasive contributions to Belize's fisheries are often undocumented and overlooked. While only 3% of registered fishers are female, many more women work in unseen post-harvest roles such as seafood processors, vendors, and wives supporting family fishing operations. WCS's Belize program works side-by-side with the Belize Fisheries Department to support women in the industry, including hosting the annual [Women in Fisheries Forum](#) to highlight women's contributions to fisheries and fishery supply chains.

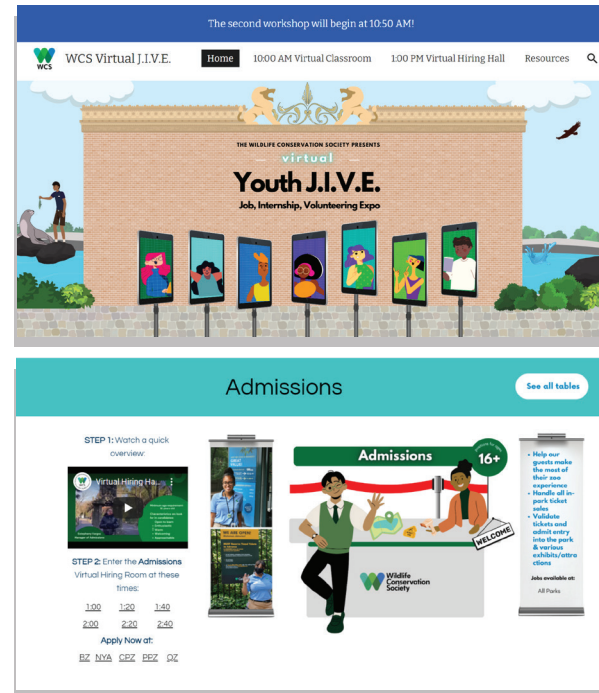
WCS's Myanmar program has tackled similar issues, in partnership with the social enterprise Support Her Enterprise (SHE), building a women-led incubator program. Through a series of virtual trainings begun in March 2021, we have been able to strengthen the capacity of women in small scale fisheries business, creating social, economic and environmental impact for women, their families and rural coastal communities. Our Fiji program has been a regional leader in these issues as well, most recently publishing a guide to ["Gender equity and social inclusion analysis for coastal fisheries."](#)



Connecting New York City Youth with Career Opportunities

Every year, WCS kicks off the recruitment season with the Job, Intern, and Volunteer Expo (JIVE) at the Bronx Zoo. This day-long event provides opportunities for youth to learn about a variety of WCS opportunities, spruce up their resumes and interview skills, and connect with hiring managers. Due to COVID-19, the 2021 event was held online using a custom-built website that simulated an in-person career fair, complete with virtual booths where youth could learn about the full suite of positions.

On February 6, over 800 young people from across New York City joined us for live webinars, Q&A sessions with hiring managers, and application support from WCS staff. At the end of the event, 84% of youth reported that they had already applied or planned to apply to a position featured at JIVE.



Collaborating with our Community to Advance Ecological Restoration

The New York Aquarium has been working with community partners including the Coney Island Beautification Project, Coney Island History Project, and the Stormwater Infrastructure Matters Coalition to create a forum and help organize a common voice for community organizations, businesses, and residents to work collaboratively to support Coney Island Creek. The coalition envisions a vital, vibrant, and resilient Coney Island Creek championed by surrounding communities. The group advocates for the ecological restoration, protection, and improvement of local waters, and the recreational, educational, and economic benefits that result from a restored Creek and positively impact the surrounding and interdependent communities.

The New York Aquarium and community partners have organized workshops to inform residents about issues affecting the Creek and to identify priorities actions to restore the health of the Creek by engaging, informing, and empowering community stakeholders and residents whose actions can affect positive outcomes for the Creek and surrounding communities.



Forging Community Partnerships to Rewild North American Bison

The American bison has deep cultural, historical, and ecological significance to the United States and is foundational to the spiritual and economic lives of Indigenous Peoples across the American West. Bison once numbered around 30 million in North America until mass slaughters in the 1800s pushed this species to the brink of extinction. Over the last decades of the nineteenth century and into the early years of the twentieth century, the bison's extinction was prevented, thanks to actions by people of what is today known as the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT), as well as efforts by the Bronx Zoo's William Hornaday in partnership with other conservationists. This recovery is often touted as the first major wildlife conservation success in US history.

This pioneering work set the stage for a bolder plan today: the cultural and ecological restoration of bison across North America over the next decade. This work relies on scientific research by WCS scientists and partnerships with Tribes, First Nations, ranchers, government agencies, and conservation organizations across the region to secure the long-term needs of wildlife, wild places, and communities. In fall of 2019, we came together with more than 200 of

these partners at the American Bison Society Conference, where a strategic framework for rewilding bison was outlined, laying the foundation for the emergence of a new conservation paradigm: one that braids Indigenous science, western conservation, economics, and art and culture into a transformative conservation vision. The Bronx Zoo has worked to create a herd of genetically pure bison for reintroduction and restoration efforts, and is now at a point where Bronx Zoo-born bison can be returned to the wild. We are extremely proud to have signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Osage Nation to send them bison to bolster their existing herd and work together to restore a viable herd of bison to their ancestral land.



Working with Local Partners to Showcase Their Own Best Practice

WCS used our platform and partnerships to share the important story of [Nigeria's First Female Park Controller](#), Caroline Samuel Olory, of the Nigeria National Park Service. When appointed Conservator of Park for Nigeria's Cross River National Park in June 2017, she became not only Nigeria's first female Conservator/Controller of a National Park, but is responsible for the administration of the third largest National Park in Nigeria. Cross River National Park is one of WCS Nigeria's core areas of focus, and we work hand-in-hand with the Park Service to support the effective conservation of the park's iconic flora and fauna species—including the famous Cross River gorilla, forest elephants, buffaloes, leopards, and 78% of Nigeria's total primate species. WCS worked with the Nigeria National Park Service, Caroline Olory and our media contacts at PBS, ensuring that her story reached an international audience.



WCS Parks as Community Hubs

We have a deep understanding that the zoos and aquarium are an integral part of the local community, not only serving as major tourist attractions and economic catalysts for local businesses, but also major educational providers and employment hubs for city residents. During the pandemic, we learned that online programs provide a lifeline for families and seniors struggling with isolation. For their and all of our mental health, we needed the connection, catharsis, and healing that arts and culture provides. Furthermore, data shows neighborhoods with robust cultural centers, like WCS parks, have better outcomes in education, aging, youth caught in the criminal justice system, community strength and safety, and more.

Additionally, the Bronx Zoo and New York Aquarium provide meeting and event spaces to many community organizations free of charge, including the Department of Youth & Community Development (DYCD)'s Fatherhood Day, US Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS), Bronx River Alliance, Literacy Inc., and others. We opened our parking lots to be used as staging sites to house ambulances from around the country during the pandemic, and worked with city and state officials to provide COVID-19 vaccinations to the public and staff at these parks. Through our programs, our relationships with community leaders and elected officials, our partnerships with agencies and local community boards, as well as our participation on organizational boards, we are able to continue fostering our relationships with our local constituencies.

WHAT'S NEXT?

As we begin a new year that is certain to bring more change, WCS remains unwavering in its commitment to deliver on the goals of our diversity, equity, and inclusion plan for our team in New York and expand them to include our global programs. We will continuously use data to make informed and inclusive decisions about our goals and progress towards them.

Equally important, we will hold ourselves accountable to our employees, which include our global and US teams and seasonal staff, and to our community stakeholders.

We will commit to and invest in the following goals:

- Establish programs that include our global and US teams to increase diverse hires for senior positions and maintain their retention
- Continue to introduce new ways of cultivating an inclusive culture and communities
- Expand access to development to ensure that all colleagues can reach their potential
- Further diversify the Board of Trustees to advance our mission and strategy
- Increase engagement with diverse suppliers in WCS communities to promote economic development

Furthermore, we will continue to engage and expand our newly formed ERGs. Launched in September of 2021, this program supports our commitment to encourage employee engagement, develop diverse talent, promote professional development, and cultivate a strong inclusive community.

In addition, our Global Conservation Program will continue efforts to approach DEI in a practical, actionable, measurable, and inclusive way. We will distribute a questionnaire to understand the practices of DEI across our Country Programs to inform next steps related to DEI in our global context.

WCS looks forward to providing updates on our progress and reporting specific goal achievements in upcoming annual DEI reports.



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