

Vice President Samantha Murray Statement on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

June 24, 2020

Before we start our meeting I want to take this moment to acknowledge explicitly that as Vice President of the California Fish and Game Commission, I stand against racism, white supremacy, violence against Black communities, and the silencing of marginalized communities.

I applaud the work of organizations like Outdoor Afro, Brown Girl Surf, Textured Waves, Black Girl Surf, HECHO, Latino Outdoors and Latinx Marinos, who are connecting people of color, increasing access to outdoor experiences, and changing the face of conservation. I was inspired by the inaugural Black Birders Week that took place earlier this month. And I celebrate the work of hunting and fishing organizations who are dedicated to increasing representation of Black and Latinx outdoorspeople, while tearing down stereotypes and barriers to participation. I recognize and see the stewardship work that Tribes throughout California have done since time immemorial and am invigorated by the newly formed Tribal Marine Stewards Network.

As the California Fish and Game Commission, I believe we can learn a lot from these entities, so that we are more deliberately fostering a culture of inclusion for Black, Indigenous and People of Color in outdoor recreation and conservation. And so that we are intentionally setting a table for dialogue that includes seats for those who have been historically underrepresented or marginalized in our discussions.

I see my own positionality as a white, privileged woman on this Commission. And I acknowledge the whiteness and privilege of many of my colleagues leading and engaged in fish and wildlife management and conservation. I am committed to leveraging my spheres of influence, developing my personal anti-racism plan, and demonstrating and practicing inclusion, equity and diversity in both visible and internal ways within this Commission.

But I realize it's not enough to just make a powerful statement. I acknowledge we have a lot of listening, learning and unlearning to do. And I recognize it will take sustained effort for FGC to make tangible gains toward more inclusive engagement and ensuring equitable impacts of our policies. For example, we must:

- support equity in our upcoming strategic plan, in tangible and specific ways;
- commit to working with California Department of Fish and Wildlife to address inclusivity barriers in recruiting, retaining and reactivating diverse participants in fishing, hunting, archery, bird watching, wildlife photography, diving and more, so that all Californians who wish to, can enjoy these activities;
- continue to prioritize our work within the Tribal Committee and through our Tribal Consultation Policy, in partnership with the tribes of California;
- double down on our commitment to engage marginalized stakeholders in our decision-making so that our policies have more equitable impacts on Californians; and
- see and hear those communities who rely on subsistence fishing for nourishment, especially those who don't speak English or use English as a second language.

I see these challenges as opportunities and I am emboldened to have the uncomfortable conversations as we work toward equity and justice for Black, Indigenous and People of Color, within the mission of the California Fish and Game Commission.

Taken together with the ongoing economic, social justice and public health impacts of COVID-19, I know this is an exceedingly difficult time for everyone. And I want to explicitly acknowledge the challenges associated with holding space to both be here today to speak on behalf of your interest in the fish and wildlife of California, while also standing alongside communities in support of human rights and equity, and managing personal circumstances related to COVID-19.

So, thank you for being here today, in spite of this impossibly difficult backdrop, in this extraordinary moment. The work we do here together matters. And our policies *are better* when informed by inclusive, wide-ranging voices and varied perspectives.

We won't always agree on every issue and I don't have all the answers, but do know that there is a seat for all stakeholders at the California Fish and Game Commission table. Together, I know we can find ways to make California more just, more civil, more equitable, more livable, and more enjoyable for all its inhabitants, into the future.