

2020-2022 Activity Report for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Society for Ecological Restoration



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Introduction

June 2022

For more than three decades, the Society for Ecological Restoration (SER) has given voice to the field of ecological restoration and provided leadership in all aspects of its development. We are a dynamic global network of over 4,200 members who foster the exchange of knowledge and expertise among ecological restoration practitioners and scientists from diverse disciplines and backgrounds. In addition to communicating leading-edge tools, technologies and scientific findings, SER actively promotes best practices and effective restoration policy around the world.

We are working to ensure that ecological restoration is recognized and utilized as a fundamental component of global conservation, biodiversity and sustainable development programs, and that ecological restoration projects are designed and implemented in a way that provides people with the opportunity to not only repair ecological damage, but also improve the human condition.

SER members are bringing restoration to every corner of the earth

SER actively promotes participatory, knowledge-based approaches to ecological restoration. The Society serves its members, partners, and the field by:

- Facilitating communication and networking
- Advancing policy
- Sharing information and knowledge
- Promoting practitioner effectiveness

The Society brings together academics, researchers, practitioners, artists, economists, advocates, legislators, regulators, and others who support restoration to define and deliver excellence in the field of ecological restoration. Since the Society's inception in 1988, our workshops, publications, and international collaborative networks have provided leading-edge restoration guidance to individuals and organizations worldwide. We provide a robust and dynamic platform to foster collaboration, knowledge sharing, networking, research, and policy discussions among the many actors and interests we represent.

SER SOCIETY FOR ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION

Our Story So Far

OUR MISSION

Across the globe, centuries of unsustainable activities have damaged the aquatic, marine, and terrestrial environments that underpin our economies and societies. SER is dedicated to reversing this degradation and restoring the earth for the benefit of both humans and nature.

SER advances the science, practice and policy of ecological restoration to sustain biodiversity, improve resilience in a changing climate, and re-establish an ecologically healthy relationship between nature and culture.

SER is a global organization with more than 4,200 members in over 100 countries. As of 2022, we have collaborative partnerships with 16 regional chapters and support the activities of two thematic sections and 30 student associations around the world. SER has a long history of partnering with underrepresented communities within the field and prioritized diversification as part of our 2015 global restructuring. We have had important successes in expanding diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice, but we still have much more to do.



"Restoration cannot be implemented without inclusion – and that means including everyone. It is the very first principle in the SER International Standards."

Our Strategy

On June 2, 2020 SER published its stance standing united with the peaceful demonstrators speaking out against racism and injustice in response to the police-killing of George Floyd in the United States. SER members contacted the organization and requested further action to ensure access and equity of SER's resources. Staff and the global Board of Directors responded with immediate steps aimed at increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) within the Society and impacting the ecological restoration field.

ACTIONS	DETAILS	OUTCOME
Membership for All Initiative	Expanded access and eligibility to SER's income-qualified pricing	• Increased membership • Diversified membership
Strengthen SER Codes	Codify DEI principles in SER guiding documents	• Improved governance • Created clear and transparent processes
Ad hoc Committee Formation	Form the organizational infrastructure to sustain this effort over the long term and begin examining how to implement systemic change	• Increased member engagement • Increased capacity to address DEI issues as they play out globally

Opening SER's Doors

Prior to June 2020 SER offered a reduced fee to members residing in low income countries as defined by the World Bank, but this in itself was inequitable to prospective lower-income members residing in higher income countries, while also failing to recognize the financial diversity within countries.

Feedback from SER's DEI stance created an opportunity for the organization to evaluate the policy and create an alternative and more equitable solution. While a review of membership programs in allied associations did not provide any new models for how to address our concerns, community service groups did.

SER's Membership Director adapted the models she found at organizations like the YMCA to craft what we believe is a first of its kind "Membership for All" program in a scientific society. The SER Board approved the Membership for All Initiative at the June 2020 meeting and in July SER "opened its doors" to a much wider audience.

As this program evolves, SER (with guidance from the Standing Committee for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) will want to evaluate how the organization can better meet the needs of its increasingly diverse membership and the restoration field at-large to ensure stabilized, and ideally, continued growth of the community. This includes access and engagement with SER via technology, language, and other modes; prioritization in the development and delivery of programmatic content; and identification of metrics and other data for tracking progress on goals.

OPPORTUNITY

600+

Open Doors Members welcomed since the program launched

CHALLENGE

25%

Retention rate of new Open Doors Members, is lower than desired

Membership for All Initiative

The Society embraces the principle that ecological restoration is an engaging and inclusive process that succeeds with full participation of all sectors of society wherever it is implemented across the world. Membership rates acknowledge that everyone does not have the same ability to pay. To reduce the cost barrier of SER membership for those with limited income, we offer two additional membership rate options. The Equity and Open Doors rates are for those who could not otherwise afford to become a member of SER and these opportunities are provided on the honor system.

- **Reduced fee Equity Memberships for Individuals and Groups**
- **Open Doors Membership is available to anyone who would like to participate in the SER community, but who is unable to pay.**

Both options are directly available on the membership application via www.ser.org/membership

DEI Goals

IN SER ACTIVITIES:

1. SER has a greater presence and impact across all geographies.
2. SER's membership profile is diverse and includes currently underrepresented groups.
3. DEI is reflected in different areas of SER's work and activities (e.g. conferences, staffing, leadership, chapters, publications, etc.).
4. There is a good balance between research and practice.
5. SER's activities and actions help to dismantle racism.

FOR THE ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION FIELD AT LARGE:

1. Persons from under-represented groups have equal opportunities in restoration-related education, research, employment, publishing, etc.
2. There is a significantly greater role in restoration projects for individuals from under-represented groups and geographies.
3. Persons from under-represented groups have equal access to funding for restoration.
4. There is effective and respectful integration of indigenous and local people and their knowledge in restoration.

Ad hoc Committee

OCTOBER 2020-NOVEMBER 2021

SER created a volunteer ad hoc committee through an all member call to action in 2020. It was representative of the SER membership, and included global and regional leadership and representation across age, gender, and geographies. We know by self-identification that the committee included members of indigenous peoples and under-represented groups, including those with diverse life experiences and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Three subcommittee chairs coordinated deliberations and serve as a general point of contact across three core activities.

Codes

Subcommittee A: Codify diversity, equity, and inclusion principles in SER guiding documents

Key activities

- Developed a Code of Conduct for SER events
- Recommended updates to the SER Code of Ethics

Key Enablers

Subcommittee B: Examine how to implement systemic change within the organization and membership

Key Activities

- Conducted a survey of SER membership to inform standing committee activities going forward
- Recommended updates to SER governing documents

Terms

Subcommittee C: Form the organizational infrastructure to sustain this effort over the long term

Key Activities

- Developed a framework for SER Ombudsperson program, including who would initially serve in this role
- Developed Terms of Reference for Standing DEI Committee and nominated initial slate of members

Community Feedback

The Ad hoc Committee conducted an online survey of current and recently lapsed members of SER to: 1) identify problem areas that hinder DEI within SER; 2) understand SER members' views and experiences related to DEI; and 3) obtain baseline demographic information on SER's membership that can help assess how DEI within the society changes through time.

Through the survey, SER members responded that they would like the Society to: proactively increase diversity across all levels of the organization and activities; increase outreach and education programs to under-represented groups and members both inside and outside of North America; and, provide support for under-represented individuals through mentoring programs, scholarships, travel grants, discounted membership benefits, professional development programs, etc.

The survey also illustrated that the Society needs to better communicate its activities around DEI, including both long-standing and current DEI activities. This will include better communication on the new Code of Conduct, the updated Code of Ethics, and how to report violations.



Notes from SER2021 brainstorming sessions

Members of the ad hoc committee organized two brainstorming sessions at the 9th World Conference on Ecological Restoration to gather additional input from members and conference delegates about: how they define environmental justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion; what SER's role should be in this realm; what DEI aspects in the broader restoration field should be addressed; and how SER can incorporate DEI. Feedback from these sessions is being paired alongside recommendations of the 2021 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Survey, which received 281 complete responses.

The ad hoc committee's work spanned just over one year. It was determined at the outset that implementation of any recommendations would be taken up by the permanent standing DEI committee that would succeed the ad hoc committee. A unified theme across all of the subcommittees was that the materials being developed were living documents.

- SER recognized that implementation will be a medium to long-term exercise
- The standing committee will determine priorities
- Some implementation aspects may be delegated to other SER committees

AD HOC COMMITTEE OUTPUTS

- Developed a Code of Conduct for Events
- Developed global conflict resolution framework; and included recommendations for who would initially serve in the ombudsperson role
- Conducted survey of SER membership and drafted report of findings
- Updated the SER Code of Ethics
- Planned two engagement activities at SER2021
- Recommended updates to SER governing documents including organizational bylaws, employee handbook
- Developed Terms of Reference for Standing DEI Committee and nominated initial slate of members
- Transitioned to a Standing Committee in March 2022

30
Volunteers

3
Sub-Committees

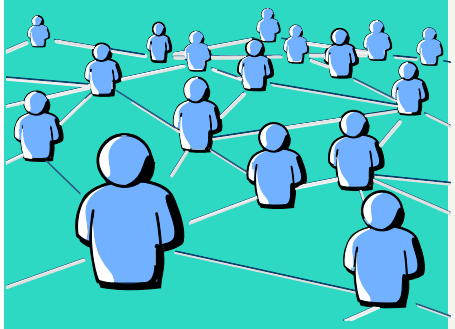


Image Source: US Department of Energy

Expanded Impact

6

Languages available for SER's International Principles and Standards for the Practice of Ecological Restoration



100

Countries represented by SER's membership



30%

Increase in total membership over 2020-2021

- SER simplified the biennial World Conference conference registration rate structure to just two main categories: standard and equity, with equity covering students, retirees, "low income" country members and others unable to pay the standard rate.
- SER also offered an even further reduced Open Doors conference registration rate (S10 USD) to Open Doors members.
- Regional Board Directors organized two "Engaging Asian Interest" sessions to engage members across Asia to discuss restoration activities and needs, and how SER can be of greater support. Over 30 people attended both sessions, representing 12 Asian countries and a new Asia Networking Group has been meeting regularly in anticipation of organizing a regional chapter.
- The World Conference virtual platform included language translation, session blocks across the Eastern and Western Hemisphere time zones, and a deliberate effort to showcase the diverse leadership across this field via invited keynote speakers.
- SER approved its first bi-lingual chapter in Eastern Canada and tri-lingual chapter in Ibero-America and the Caribbean.
- SER's first Student Association in Africa was approved at the University of Lagos, Nigeria. A second chapter in Latin America was approved at the Universidad de Puerto Rico en Aguadilla.
- The Chapter Relations Committee approved Partnership Fund grants to SER Midwest Great Lakes, Western Canada, Texas, and Northeast for DEI-related projects.
- Since the week-long program launched in 2021, Make a Difference Week events have been held on all populated continents.

Next Steps

The DEI initiative would not have been possible but for strong backing from the SER Board of Directors and the executive leadership. DEI has been integrated as a priority topic on the Board agenda and across the organization's programs. Taking SER's DEI agenda forward will require the involvement of all SER members.

In March 2022, the Standing Committee held its first meeting and began working on activities. Their primary functions and responsibilities are outlines below:

- Identify key DEI priorities, and develop short, medium and long-term DEI plans for SER aligned with the Society's objectives and strategic plans.
- Ensure DEI is integrated across SER activities, policies, processes and communication: committees' role shall involve consultation, oversight, and monitoring, through a DEI lens or filter.
- Monitor progress of the DEI action plan and recommend course corrections as needed.
- Ombuds oversight: ensure adequate, secure reporting mechanisms are in place for DEI aspects; as well as high level review of frequency and nature of incident reports, escalation, and resolution, including improvement recommendations based thereon.

LEVERAGING IMPACT

SER's Strategic Impact Plan for 2022-2030 includes an objective to **ensure equitable access for global restorationists** to SER tools, resources, programming, and community through the expansion of the Open Doors Program to support diversity, equity, and inclusion in ecological restoration.

2022-2024 STANDING COMMITTEE

- Amarizni Mosyaftiani, CERPIT (Indonesia)
- Beka Nxele (South Africa)
- Breanna Kaufman, CERPIT (England/USA)
- Dianne Watkins (Canada)
- Frank Kanyamula (Malawi)
- Hector Genaro Ortiz (USA/Mexico)
- Ludmila Pugliese de Siqueira (Brazil)
- Maha Guliani, CERPIT (USA)
- Ramesh Venkataraman, CERP (India)
- Rocky Smiley (USA)
- Kingsley Dixon, ex-officio (Australia)

Acknowledgements

AD HOC COMMITTEE FOR DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION (OCTOBER 2020-NOVEMBER 2021)

Ramesh Venkataraman, Ad hoc Committee Chair
Laura Capponi, Membership Director and Committee Staff Liaison

Maha Nusrat Guilani, Subcommittee A Chair
Cristina Eisenberg
Bill Forbes
Alois Mabutho
Dianne Watkins
Michael Yadrick
Alexis Gibson

Beth Anne Fischer, Subcommittee C Chair
Ramesh Venkataraman
Gunner Davies
Hector Genaro Ortiz
Jim Furnish
Scott Robinson
Dianne Watkins
Lindsay Teunis
Laura Capponi

Frank Kanyamula, Subcommittee B Chair
Valter Amaral
Karma Bouazza
Denise Burchsted
Amy Cozette
Magda Garbowski
Sierra Guzman
Breanna Kaufman
Peter King
William Olupot
Gary Pritchard
Ludmila Pugliese de Siqueira
Rocky Smiley
Yolanda Teran
Gavin Turrell
John Wigginton
Bethanie Walder

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SER Board of Directors
2020-2022

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*Executive Committee

We thank you for your continued support in our programs

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