

## Shifting the baseline for diversity, equity, and inclusion



Nothing



Preparation &  
training

**baseline**



Engagement &  
advocacy



Impact & change

**goal**

If you were training for a marathon, how would you prepare? The answer may seem obvious: get a good pair of running shoes and start a training schedule. If instead, you choose to sit on the couch, it makes completing the race when the day comes extremely difficult, if not impossible. This analogy fits well with achieving progress in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in the fisheries profession. Our marathon in the American Fisheries Society is to be a diverse, equitable, and inclusive professional society. We can finish that marathon by doing anything but sitting on the couch.

Events in the last year (including the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and more people of color) have brought issues of social inequity to the forefront and invigorated existing or new DEI efforts. These critical efforts are highly valued, and yet are often predominantly carried out by individuals who have experienced marginalization or discrimination first-hand. As a woman of color in fisheries, I can tell you that I am involved in four different fisheries DEI efforts primarily because I don't like feeling alone or without a role model in my workplace, and I don't want other people to feel the same. We need to shift the baseline of who is engaged in DEI efforts if we are ever going to finish this marathon in fisheries. We all have many commitments, but our baseline for DEI work should at least be increasing our awareness and self-education of social inequities in fisheries. Developing awareness determines our ability and drive for pursuing further action and enacting sustained, positive change. It is everyone's responsibility to work toward this common goal which will help the fisheries profession be more welcoming, innovative, and equitable.

In the Southern New England Chapter (SNEC) of the American Fisheries Society, we are committed to helping our members maintain a baseline of DEI work. We have formed a new monthly Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion discussion group where we read or watch a resource selected by a rotation of discussion leaders, and then discuss our thoughts and brainstorm steps our chapter could take to address the issues presented. So far, we have discussed the academic experiences of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) majoring in environmental science, navigating microaggressions, and biases in teaching/mentoring and scientific publications. A common theme has been sharing how uncomfortable or foreign it can feel to discuss social issues, but that this discussion space is helping set aside time to prioritize DEI and increase our understanding of what issues exist.

SNEC would like to extend an invitation to all NED members to join us for these monthly discussions, currently scheduled on the third Friday of each month at 1pm EST. If you would like to be included on

emails about this discussion group, please email Lian Guo ([lguo@umass.edu](mailto:lguo@umass.edu)) with “SNEC DEI discussion group” as the subject header. We hope you will join us to shift the baseline for diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts in fisheries.

Lian Guo

PhD Candidate (University of Massachusetts Amherst)

Equal Opportunities Section President Elect

AFS Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Standing Committee Member

Fisheries Diversity and Inclusion Podcast Co-host