



NWAEP • Year-End Newsletter, 2020

President's Perspective

Dear NWAEP Colleagues,

As 2020 ends, many of us continue to face unprecedented personal and professional hardships. A global pandemic, police violence, and disastrous forest fires have left indelible marks on our lives and will undoubtedly define the year. Amid these tragedies, however, there is hope. Vaccines are being distributed, diverse voices are being heard, and people across the Pacific Northwest have offered their homes and hearts to those in need. As we navigate these challenges and look towards recovery, it is important to reflect on the crucial role environmental professionals play in understanding and preventing such disasters.

In fundamental yet often overlooked ways, environmental science forewarned of the pandemic, the violence, and the wildfires that devastated our communities. The field of ecology, for example, has shown us how wildlife trafficking and bushmeat hunting – practices that bring humans and wildlife into prolonged and gruesome contact – are catalysts of zoonotic transfer of diseases like COVID19 from animals to humans (e.g., similar to HIV and Ebola). Likewise, the socio-environmental sciences have illuminated disturbing patterns of oppression at the core of many modern-day American institutions, including social and biophysical systems that affect public policies, policing, and ultimately the condition of human ecosystems (e.g., water quality), which in turn influence quality of life for human beings. And for decades, climate science has laid bare the strength of relationships among fossil fuels and rising temperatures, decreased snowpack, and earlier snowmelt that are leading to more dangerous fire seasons. Beyond rational doubt, best available science highlights our ability to understand and hopefully to someday prevent the types of environmental problems experienced in 2020.

Biased by our personal experiences, each of us has anecdotes, opinions, and beliefs that shape our perspectives about these and other urgent environmental matters. And there may even be a piece of truth in all perspectives. But science picks up the slack where anecdote wanes. Science deconstructs phenomena into measurable units and applies a systematic inquiry to point towards truth. The spotlight of knowledge blinds the cynic and enlightens the skeptic. And should you choose to change your perspective when presented with evidence then you will have chosen wisely.

Indeed, 2020 has reaffirmed the environmental professional as vital to understanding humanity's interconnection with the world. To which I alluded, however, science alone will not provide all the tools needed to resolve the issues at hand. Rather, we must blend scientific knowledge with a personal insight that sees our experiences as not separate from our actions nor from the environment we co-create with others in our community. That special insight is the source of wise personal and professional actions that we can use to construct the causes and conditions of a healthy and sustainable future for all.

Sincerely,

Dan Bingham, President NWAEP

Expressed opinions do not necessarily represent NWAEP or my employer.





As we close the year, the Board of Directors would like to celebrate highlights of NWAEP membership in 2020. Highlights include:

- two new board members,
- educational webinars,
- Lunch & Learns, and
- a new Diversity Equity and Inclusion Sub-Committee.

New Board Members



With over seven years of experience in environmental consulting, **Justina Everhart** works as an environmental planner with the environmental permitting compliance team at Parametrix. Prior to joining Parametrix, she worked as an ecologist and environmental planner at VHB in Atlanta, Georgia, where she led and managed environmental field surveys and document production for state- and federal-aid transportation projects. During her time at VHB, she was a member of the GAEP and regularly attended quarterly events. She also led the VHB Atlanta Green Team, an office-wide sustainability effort where she organized various volunteer events including trail work and clean ups with local non-profits. She holds a Master's in City and Regional Planning from Georgia Institute of Technology and a B.S. in Environmental Science from Georgia College.

Justina recognizes that NWAEP is vital for industry networking and the growth of the environmental profession. As a new board member, she is excited to contribute to the local chapter, be it through educational outreach, volunteerism, or coordinating social events. She looks forward to growing with the NWAEP in the New Year.

Maha Guliani is a Natural Resource Ecologist with the City of Portland, Bureau of Parks & Recreation. Hailing from the subtropics of Miami, Florida, Maha has over eight years' experience giving plenty of smiles and sweat to save rare and endangered plants through the academic, non-profit, public, and private environmental industries of south Florida. Her consulting experience includes protected species surveys, biological monitoring, wetland delineations, formulating habitat and species management plans and mitigation proposals, conducting biological assessments, environmental impact statements, environmental resource permit and federal dredge and fill permit applications with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, USFWS, Oregon DEQ, as well as ODOT for follow-through to permit issuance and post-permit compliance. As an avid volunteer, Maha has teamed up with organizations such as the Deering Estate Foundation, Tropical Audubon Society, Fairchild Tropical Botanical Garden, Miami-Dade County's Park Conservation Corps, the Everglades Foundation, and the Broward and Miami-Dade Chapters of the Native Plant Society, to work on rare and endangered plant conservation projects. While serving with the NWAEP, Maha strives to provide similar learning opportunities to the upcoming STEM graduates and early-career scientists as part of the on-going NWAEP initiative to better serve our BIPOC community in the Pacific Northwest region.



Webinars and Lunch & Learns

This year NWAEP made eleven webinars available to members, including nine that were live streamed. Topics were highly diverse and included environmental permitting, public water systems, oak savanna restoration, small dam removal, stormwater treatment, and beavers to name a few.



We also hosted two Lunch and Learns. Josh Jensen of Anchor QEA presented on the Elliott Bay seawall replacement project—a major seawall replacement and habitat enhancement project located along the shoreline of Elliott Bay in downtown Seattle, Washington. Habitat restoration included constructing a fish migratory corridor and habitat enhancements in an urban waterfront environment.



Dan Bingham of Cramer Fish Sciences presented on the use of environmental DNA and population genetics in fisheries management. We encourage our members to please volunteer as Lunch & Learn presenters, as they are valuable opportunities for exchanging information, are often well-attended by NWAEP members, and are an excellent way to give back to your friends at NWAEP.

Diversity Equity and Inclusion Sub-Committee

This year, NWAEP celebrated creation of a new Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) sub-committee. The DEI sub-committee is led By Josh Jensen of Anchor QEA with participation from Maha Guliani, Justina Everhart, and Dan Bingham. The sub-committee meets monthly to develop ways to better serve NWAEP's diverse and underrepresented membership. The DEI sub-committee has been working to develop a Mission Statement, DEI-focused language for our Chapter's Bylaws, a DEI donations fund, and a DEI Scholarship. The DEI-focused bylaws are under construction and are anticipated to be available in Q1 of 2021. The Board of Directors will be voting for a local DEI-focused organization to which we will make a modest donation. And, the sub-committee has finalized a DEI scholarship application that we will be recruiting for in 2021. Below is the official Mission Statement of the DEI sub-committee. For a complete list of the DEI goals, please contact Josh Jensen at jjensen@anchorqea.com.

The NWAEP Statement of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to All

The NWAEP and the chapter's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) committee are working to better serve the diverse and underrepresented communities in our geography. We are listening and striving to foster a culture within our organization where diversity is celebrated and intentionally recognized. We aim to implement thoughtful, practical, and innovative strategies that can serve as a model for all practicing and aspiring professionals in the environmental and STEM-related industries. NWAEP welcomes and derives value from the variety of views that our diverse members and partner organizations bring. In valuing diversity, NWAEP will act to foster open communication of diverse perspectives, experiences, and interests from all different backgrounds.

Future Plans

There are a number of events and milestones we are looking forward to in 2021. First, we are looking forward to hopefully restarting our monthly mixers. Secondly, the Board will be developing a Code of Conduct for NWAEP events. Third, we will be working to improve the NWAEP website for better user-response, implement better design, and provide content for opportunities for members. And finally, it is our goal to increase the number of web-based (and hopefully soon, in-person) Lunch & Learns.

From all of us on the NWAEP Board of Directors, we wish you a happy and healthy New Year.