Including Diverse Californians in Park Stewardship

Artwork: *El Arbol* by Jose Ramirez

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WOW, LOOK AT THE GRASS STAINS ON MY SKIN.

I SAY, IF YOUR KNEES AIN'T GREEN BY THE END OF THE DAY, YOU OUGHT TO SERIOUSLY RE-EXAMINE YOUR LIFE.
Ya'll have a hard job...
Thank You!
Name a few weeds that you deal with?
HALF FULL

HALF EMPTY
Science – Keeping it Real.
(balanced approach of realism mixed with skepticism)

BIG PICTURE
Our spirits need the experiences that the national parks offer. They help us fully understand what it means to be human.

— COMMISSIONER JOHN FAN EY
A large segment of the American public does not know who we are [or] what we do or see themselves working in the [NPS] ... We need to make the national parks and the work of the National Park Service relevant to all Americans.

— Jon Jarvis, Director, National Park Service
Challenge & Opportunity

• The national parks may belong to all Americans, but it’s no secret that the people who work in and visit them are overwhelmingly white and mostly older.

• Non-white, less privileged, and underrepresented populations are less familiar with the National Park System and also less able to access it.

• Whether we look at it as a social justice issue or an environmental issue, how can we protect public lands in the future if the next generation of racially diverse American people are not included?
Why Diversify?

- Moral Responsibility
  - It’s the Right Thing to Do

- Diversity = Success

- Changing Demographics
  - 2011 = U.S. babies born over 50% people of color
  - 2019 = U.S. child population over 50% people of color
  - 2043 = U.S. population over 50% people of color

Source: Center for Diversity & the Environment
RACE & ETHNICITY IN THE U.S.

Source: Center for Diversity & the Environment
Blame Game

Myth: “People of color don’t care about the environment”

Myth: The environment is a ‘white thing’”

Fact: People of color support environmental issues at higher rates than whites.
Voters of Color are Concerned About a Wide Range of Environmental Issues (% Rating Each Issue “Extremely” or “Very Serious”)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>ALL VOTERS</th>
<th>Whites</th>
<th>African Americans</th>
<th>Latinos</th>
<th>All Voters of Color</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economy and unemployment</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lack of affordable health insurance coverage</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too much government spending</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pollution of rivers, lakes and streams</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global warming</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toxins and pesticides in our food and drinking water</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pollution of oceans</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of working farms and ranches</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of habitat for fish and wildlife</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of natural areas</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Poll Conducted by Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, and Associates and Public Opinion Strategies; Commissioned by The Nature Conservancy
Minorities and youths shun parks

But for many African Americans, Asian Americans and Latinos, the parks remain remote places they don't want to visit. In 2000, the park service commissioned a comprehensive survey of attitudes toward parks. While 34% told interviewers they were too busy to visit parks, others reported that they did not feel welcome or safe there.
Park service tries to be ‘more relevant’ to the public

Some members of Congress have offered solutions they say would put parks more in step with what Americans want, including more commercialized activities and trinkets. With changes in public tastes, because we also have responsibilities to resources that we are mandated to protect," said Tread, former chief ranger at Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks.

Critics contend that if park service officials become more of a trivanci in, it replaces resources and what sets the parks apart.

Some parks are using technology to draw teenagers. At Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, they are experimenting with a virtual ranger game that simulates the activities available in the park.
Fortifying the Pipeline—Inclusive & Transformational Programming for Diverse Youth
SAMO Youth
Program Purpose

Recruit, introduce, and provide work experience to racially diverse students interested in the environment, but are not aware of NPS as a career choice.
Program Goals

• Introduce youth to NPS careers through meaningful work.

• Offer well-paying jobs as part of a team.

• Understanding of our natural and cultural heritage.

• MENTORSHIP

• Career development with NPS and other organizations (fortifying the pipeline)

• Engage youth in environmental stewardship and promote constituency.
Program Objective
Students are integrated into all park operations.

- Wildlife habitat improvement
- Native plant community **RESTORATION**
- Scientific field studies
- Trail work
- Park maintenance
- Interpretive, Education, & Outreach
- Cultural resource work
- Special events
- Customer service
- Administrative assistance / Office support
Inclusive

• Inspire youth toward efforts broader than themselves.

• Youth influence siblings, peers and their community by becoming role models, stewards, and mentors.

• Helps promote constituency.
Transformational

- Profound transformations
- Increase in strength
- Confidence boost
- Specialized training
- Practice life skills:
  - Problem solving
  - Peer interaction
  - Communication
  - Teamwork
  - Safety
• Use partners to create a pathway to employment.

• Home Grow - Recruit locally to reflect local communities.

• Develop a workforce that is diverse & retain employees so that we respond to the needs of the American people.
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARK ENGAGEMENT:
SIX KEY FACTORS

(1) Hire staff who represent local & diverse population, speak the languages of the target communities

(2) Build relationships with schools & community programs

(3) Engage community representatives to co-design programs that address community needs, instead of park needs

(4) Supportive, welcoming culture

(5) Bridge the geographical gap

(6) Actively recruit program participants

http://instituteatgoldengate.org/blog/engaging-diverse-youth-in-park-programs