

URGE Deliverable - Policies for Working with Communities of Color

Bucknell Geology Department Pod

First draft policy for working with communities of color, submitted 03/19/21

Summary of previous interactions with communities of color:

None of the faculty members in our department have specifically worked with communities of color in our research, in part because of the locations of our work (particularly in central PA, a very white area), and in part purposefully to avoid local communities of color. This avoidance of communities of color in our research was a topic of deep and thoughtful discussion, and uncovered a subconscious blind spot for many of us.

Reasons for deliberately avoiding Native American reservations, for example, even when working with these communities would be beneficial for our work, can be summarized as the following:

- Other colleagues/collaborators recommended avoiding reservation land, because previous scientists had behaved badly on the land and the general sense is now that scientific research is not welcome
- Contacting local communities of color about our work can seem burdensome for both parties, especially if it isn't clear how our work would benefit that community ("is it worth their time to engage with me?" has been reasoning to avoid contacting that community)
- The "charge-forward" culture in geology is pervasive, and even without directly thinking it, we often have the attitude that it's fine to go onto whatever land with an "ask forgiveness, not permission" strategy (which is tied to attitudes about "tough & manly" geologists)

Pod members have participated in successful community-building activities related to research sites, but these have not involved communities of color. Some examples of community/research interactions have included:

- Working with local landowners and sharing water quality data with them
- Sharing geologic information and posters with local parks (such as a national park in New Zealand)
- Working with land management & recreation partners to put up a kiosk about geology at a local abandoned strip mine surrounded by ATV trails

Plans for an improved process for working with communities of color:

Our discussion illuminated some previously hidden troubling behaviors that we are anxious to confront. Specifically, we plan to:

- Directly seek permission and build relationships with landowners (no trespassing "in the name of

geology”!)

- Follow-through on any commitments to land owners, such as data-sharing and publication sharing
- Establish in advance and in writing plans for data ownership
- Directly speak to landowners/communities about how they would like to be acknowledged in any presentations or publications about the work

Pedagogically, we commit to engaging with indigenous issues more directly, including:

- Incorporating land acknowledgements before or as part of field trips in our classes. For example, a pre-field trip reading about Susquehannock/Delaware tribe land uses of the Suquehanna Valley would help set the stage for the first field trips.
- Bringing in (with monetary compensation, if at all possible) a member of a local tribe to speak with the department (including students) about cultural traditions for indigenous peoples of this region. This would be annual or every-other-year programming, not a one-time event.

In addition to those concrete requirements, we also discussed a broader vision for working with local communities of color. One department member who has worked near Native American reservations in the western USA plans to implement an outreach project for the local community near the field site, for example. This project will be grounded in the framework presented in this week’s readings, where local people’s needs are centered.