

News Release



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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Welcomes Inaugural Class of Diversity Change Agents

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today graduated its first Diversity Change Agent Training Class, approximately 60 committed Service employees at all levels of the agency who will serve as mentors and advocates for workforce diversity. Graduates of the course will be utilized throughout the Service as role models, spending approximately ten percent of their official duty time working to improve the Service's capacity to attract and retain talented employees.

"The conservation legacy built by the Fish and Wildlife Service and its partners over the last century is at risk, imperiled by enormous challenges like habitat fragmentation and destruction, climate change and water scarcity. At the same time, growing urbanization has weakened the ties that many Americans have with the natural world," said Service Director Dan Ashe. "In order to sustain our fish and wildlife resources for future generations, we need to bring new voices and ideas into our agency and do a better job of reaching out to the public, and I'm grateful that so many dedicated employees have volunteered to help us effect this transformation."

Class members were nominated from across the country to participate in this five-day training seminar at the National Conservation Training Center, located in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. The training will be facilitated by the Franklin Covey Group and John Burden, Chief Diversity Officer at the Department of the Interior. The training seminar was first developed and instituted by the Department of the Interior in 2010 to foster a diverse and inclusive workplace through employee engagement, cultural competency initiatives, training and development, and recruitment and retention across all bureaus.

Deputy Director for Operations Rowan Gould, along with each Regional Director is hosting a "Championing Diversity" workshop this week to reach a broad audience at all levels that will train and educate Service members on how to be champions of diversity. This one day workshop is a component within the five-day Diversity Change Agent seminar.

"Almost all of us, if we're fortunate, can point to a person who, through their actions and integrity, had a profound influence on our life and how we view the world. That's why this program is so powerful. As an agency, we are strongly committed to workplace diversity, but it is the effort and example of committed individuals that will truly enable us to realize this vision," said Deputy Director Gould.

Participants in the Change Agents Course are senior executives, managers, supervisors and other employees who have been nominated by their programs and regional offices based on their leadership skills and commitment to

diversity. Once they complete their training, Diversity Change Agents will serve as a mentor and advocate for their peers, and new and prospective employees. They will encourage managers and supervisors to champion job shadowing and mentoring initiatives, and develop relationships with hiring managers, Human Capital staff and others in the community to help facilitate and promote the hiring of qualified, diverse employees.

As part of its commitment to diversity, the Service has also finalized and begun to implement a five-year diversity and inclusion plan which will allow the agency to progressively realize its vision of inclusiveness at all levels of the agency. The strategy is geared toward giving Service managers the tools and resources they need to recruit and hire talented, diverse people. Efforts now underway, in addition to the Diversity Change Agent training, include:

- Establishment of partnerships with the Department of Defense and Veterans Affairs to bring on wounded military service members as part of the Operation Warfighter and Coming Home to Work programs;
- Development of an interagency agreement with the Office of Personnel Management to assist us with hiring individuals with disabilities through the use of a disability recruitment firm; and
- Implementation of a scholarship program designed to attract students from diverse backgrounds, among other actions.

Through its diversity and inclusion work, the Service is proud to provide wounded veterans and those with disabilities with transition opportunities and appropriate work accommodations. The Service's efforts for veterans and people with disabilities garnered the "Best in Practice" recognition from the Department of the Interior, along with the Department's "Diversity Partnership Award." In addition, the Service was recently recognized by Virginia's Department of Rehabilitative Service for its leadership in increasing employment and accessibility for people with disabilities, highlighting successful efforts by the Service to make the agency a model workplace.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov. Connect with our [Facebook page](#), follow our [tweets](#), watch our [YouTube Channel](#), and download photos from our [Flickr page](#).

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