

Environmental Justice / Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Vision Statement



Our Pledge

The Eno River Association is committed to creating an environment that welcomes, encourages, respects and celebrates people from all backgrounds with diverse stories and experiences. We pledge to hold ourselves accountable in continuously advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion, and establishing ourselves as an anti-racist and inclusive organization.

Our History

We humbly acknowledge that a comprehensive, intentional focus on diversity, equity and inclusion has not been a priority of the ERA in the recent past. We acknowledge that the history of work in land conservation and land ownership is intertwined with racial injustice and acts of violence against Black and Indigenous peoples. The land that the ERA protects today is the ancestral homelands of the Eno, Shakori, Sissipahaw, Occaneechi, other people of Siouan descent and their descendants, the Occaneechi Band of the Saponi Nation. The accumulated wealth from this land was often built by enslaved people. We recognize that the economic disparities created by this history continue today.

Our Work

We have established a committee focused on issues of environmental justice and equity and have begun diversity, equity and inclusion training for our staff and board members. We will continue to listen and learn about systemic racism and the structures that deter and block people of color from outdoor spaces and land ownership. We will ally ourselves with efforts to name and combat the injustices these systems and structures have allowed. We recognize the need to identify cases of environmental injustice in our community, especially when they relate to, or are in conflict with, our land conservation efforts.

We will continue to research and highlight the stories of all the people that have had a relationship with the Eno River, including Indigenous and enslaved people. One of our recent milestones was the publication of the 2021 Eno Journal, *Ribbons of Color Along the Eno River: The History of African Americans and People of Color Living on the Eno*. We are proud of this work and look forward to following up on it.

We acknowledge that discrimination has many faces. While our initial focus is racial discrimination because it is at the core of the history of the conservation movement, we embrace working against discrimination in all facets to help create a more just and equitable community. We commit to continue learning from the rich and diverse Eno River community. We intend to build trust and respect by continuing to ask for, listen to, and respond to the community's needs, wants and critiques about the work of the ERA. Our priority is to understand our place and be present.

Our Ongoing Commitment & Goals

As we lift up equity in the Eno River Association, we know words are not enough. We will dedicate a portion of our annual budget to creating an anti-racist and inclusive organization. We will emphasize partnerships with diverse and nontraditional organizations. We will dedicate ourselves to shaping the Association into one that reflects and celebrates our diverse community.

We know this takes time, effort, and resources. We are developing an action plan focused on environmental justice and equity issues; in addition, the new strategic plan for the Association will have a focus on these issues and we look forward to sharing them with you. Our goal is to create a more inclusive, encouraging, and safe organization that is a part of the larger land conservation movement.