



MINRC
Minorities in Natural Resources Conservation

2022 MINRC SEAFWA After-Action Report

Submitted by George P. Braxton, J.D., C.D.E. Chair

2022 MINRC Fellows

The 2022 SEAFWA Conference was held in Charleston, WV.

Due to budget constraints, the Minorities in Natural Resources and Conservation committee could only invite 16 of the 42 students who applied for the MINRC Fellowship to the conference.

This cohort hailed from 12 states: AL, FL, GA, LA, MO, MS, NC, OK, SC, TX, TN, and VA.

They are:

Meredith Aguilar (U of Louisiana)

Daniel Castillo (Missouri State)

Gabriella Coombs (U. of Tennessee at Martin)

Sharon Dorsey (VA Tech)

Tanya Duran (Sam Houston State, TX)

Karla Farquharson (Benedict College, SC)

Herbert Franklin (Florida A&M)

Jaiere Harlow (Tuskegee Univ., AL)

Lavendar Harris (U. of Georgia)

Lauren Ireland (Rogers State, OK)

Zoe Jordan (Hollins College, VA)

Catherine Lerosé (NC State)

Enyo Cerise Mensah (Mississippi State)

Hanna Partridge (UNC-Charlotte)

Devin Raburn (Mississippi State)

Amber Wendler (VA Tech)



MINRC Fellows Workshop Agenda

Day 1:

- **5:50- 6:20 pm** Student Workshop: Professionalism in the Workplace
Facilitator: Mercedes Maddox, Alabama Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources
- **6:20- 6:50 pm** Student Workshop: Elevator Speech 101
Facilitator: Diana Prestigiacomo, South Carolina Dept. of Natural Resources

Day 2:

- **8:30- 8:45 am** Networking Ice Breaker with students and MINRC Committee
- Facilitator: Betty Bryant, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
- **8:45- 9:00 am** Teddy Roosevelt Award Presentation
Facilitator: Representative of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services

- **9:15- 10:15 am** Student Workshop: Job Application Tips
Facilitator: Betty Bryant, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
- **10:30- 12:15 pm** Student Workshop: Mock Interviews/ Elevator Speeches
Facilitators: Diana Prestigiacomo, South Carolina Dept. of Natural Resources
Amaad Blades, Georgia Dept. of Natural Resources
Anthony Corner, Louisiana Dept. of Wildlife and Fisheries
- **1:30- 2:30 pm** State and Federal Information Agency Hour

2022 Teddy Roosevelt Award Winner

In addition to their applications for the MINRC Fellowship, students submitted essays for the **Teddy Roosevelt Conservation Award** given by the USFWS. This year's Teddy Roosevelt Conservation Award winner was **Lavendar Harris**, an undergraduate student at the University of Georgia. Lavendar's essay touched on various recruitment methods, including integrating more teleworking opportunities. Harris stated that these remote opportunities would "expand the talent pool" and "enable the agency to embrace diversity and inclusion by hiring scientists from different socioeconomic and geographic backgrounds." Harris also mentioned the importance of retention in the workforce. She stated, "An organization cannot simply rely on a diversity policy statement ... Retention efforts will only succeed if we create an inclusive environment. This is because inclusion is vital for creating a safe space within the conservation field."

Lavendar recently began her career as a Wildlife Biologist with the Georgia Dept. of Natural Resources

To learn more about Lavendar's essay, you can view it [here](#).





MINRC COMMITTEE MEETING

- MINRC members convened to discuss two major business items:
 - 1) Electing a Secretary: Officer Anthony Corner of Alabama was elected.
 - 2) Committee Finances: The committee determined that the current funding level from agencies was inadequate to complete the mission assigned MINRC by SEAFWA. The chairman was urged to seek increased funding during the presentation at the Directors' meeting.

MINRC Professional Workshop Agenda

Relevancy: Where R3 and DEI Intersect

2:00 – 5:00 p.m. EST

Meeting Moderator: Mercedes Maddox, ADCNR – WFF

Welcome & Introduction, Mercedes Maddox, ADCNR – WFF

2:00 PM Union Perfectors™

Invited Speaker – Ashley Smith, Co-founder, Minority Outdoor Alliance

2:20 PM Changing the Paradigm: DWR's Recruiting Plan for the 11th Conservation Police Office Academy

2021 Workforce Diversity & Inclusion Award Winner

George Braxton, VA DWR Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer

2:40 PM South Carolina DNR – Community Engagement

2021 Diversity Outreach & Education Award Winner

Alix Pedraza, SC DNR Community Engagement Manager

3:00 PM Break

3:20 PM Collaborating with Minority Serving Institutes

TPWD, ADCNR-WFF, and FWC will discuss partnerships and programs they've established with various Minority Serving Institutes (MSI)

3:40 PM R3 & DEI Panel Discussion

This panel will focus on the intersection of R3 and DEI, and how agencies can meet their goals by collaborating with affinity organizations and partnering with MSIs

Panelists: Ashley Smith | Co-founder, Minority Outdoor Alliance

Dr. Rashidah Farid-Tilghman | Assistant Professor, Tuskegee University

Bill Freeman | Conservation Enforcement Sergeant, ADCNR - WFF

Cayley Birchfield | Human Resources Manager, TPWD

Matt Cleary | Research Scientist for Conservation Social Science, FWC

4:40 PM Wind down & final thoughts

5:00 PM Adjourn



SEAFWA Diversity Awards

- The Diversity and Inclusion Awards recognize SEAFWA member agencies for their strong commitment to diverse and inclusive work environments and outreach initiatives. This year we changed the format to recognize strong programs with a both Gold and Silver awards.
- Gold Winners
 - Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
 - Missouri Department of Conservation
- Silver Winners
 - Alabama Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division
 - Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation

SEAFWA DIVERSITY AWARD GOLD WINNERS

■ Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

For outreach initiatives that brought together over twenty private, public, and non-profit partners to increase outdoor recreation among underrepresented communities.

Jake Fitzroy, West Central Region Partnership Coordinator under the Florida Youth Conservation Center Network, led the effort and accepted the award on behalf of his Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.



■ Missouri Department of Conservation

For both constituent and workforce DEI initiatives including:

- MDC Community Conservation Initiative focuses on providing equitable conservation services.
- Diversity SMART program and work objectives to be included within staff performance appraisals.

Director Sara Parker Pauley demonstrated how leaders can move innovative DEI initiatives forward by engaging the entire agency and partners throughout the state.



MINRC SPECIAL RECOGNITION

► **David Buggs**, Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, was honored with the *MINRC Leadership Award* for his many years promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion in conservation. David is the immediate past chair of MINRC and has been integral in evolving it into a full SEAFWA committee.









**Thank you for your continued support.
Please direct questions and comments to:**

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