



WHAT I LEARNED WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES FACING DISADVANTAGES

DR. THOMAS RASHAD EASLEY

Planting Tree Equity by Sarah Wade, American Forests, Winter/Spring 2020

“In most cities in the U.S., you can take a map of trees and a map of income and overlay them, and you’ll almost always see that more trees are in higher-income neighborhoods.”

“Lower-income neighborhoods don’t have as many.”



That shade has health implications. The deadliest extreme weather phenomenon – the one that takes more lives annually than all other natural catastrophes combined – is heat.



Besides their cooling capacity, trees provide a myriad of other health benefits: They remove asthma-inducing pollutants from the air, lower the risk of respiratory diseases and skin cancer, and encourage residents to be more active, which can lower obesity rates. On a deeper level, researchers have linked a well-maintained tree canopy to lower stress levels and better psychological wellbeing.

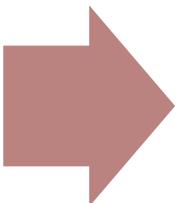
QUESTIONS



- How did people end up living where they live?
- How did the trees disappear from their community?
- What health disparities are people facing because of climate change, institutional “isms”, and poor access

Back to the Future by Jad Daley, American Forests, Winter/Spring 2020

The challenges we face today are different from those we faced when we were founded in 1875 as the American Forestry Association by a small group of concerned citizens in Chicago. In our early days, the challenges were mostly created by people – people who did not know how to manage forests responsibly and others who did not have the skills to properly govern our national forests. As a result, the tragedy of the commons played out in many of our country's forests.



Today, our greatest challenges are driven by natural foes, such as forest pests, tree diseases and wildfires – many of which are intensified by climate change. And we have new challenges that come with a growing population, such as the imperative to plant trees in marginalized city neighborhoods and the need to engage the next generation in forestry careers so we have enough people to care for our forests.



Who leads these environmental movements?



Do leaders of these movement reflect those that are adversely effected by inequities?



How have management practices changed over time?



Who decides and enforces the priorities for communities and the environment?



While the challenges are different are the perpetrators the same?

QUESTIONS

Changing the Face of the Outdoors by Sarah Mae Brown, American Forests, Winter/Spring 2020

A common theme for these new nature lovers is to play outside however you would like, something they say makes outdoor recreation and its twin sister, conservation, more diverse and relevant to everyone.

That sentiment is particularly important, given that only 12 percent of jobs in environmental nonprofits, government agencies and grant foundations are held by minorities, despite being nearly 40 percent of the overall U.S. population.

QUESTIONS

- Do jobs in this sector pay enough for people to thrive?
- How does a college education support or hurt people’s opportunities to grow and care for both households/environment?
- Do people get to the education they need to be better managers of natural resources and stronger citizens?
- What philosophical lens are people learning about the environment?
- Are they using academic lens that perpetuate the practices that harm the environment or their own cultural understanding?

COMMUNITY vs. TREES



Anthropomorphism as it relates to trees: having human characteristics
Messaging example,
“We must save our trees”
“Save the Forest”
“Change the County 1 Tree at a Time”
“Plant for the Planet”



Euphemism as it relates to people
Examples
Disadvantaged Communities
Marginalized Communities
Urban Communities
Excluded Identities

Which are We Discussing?

Improving

Improving the economic opportunities for people so that they will care for the land as well as their communities

Changing

Changing the living environments through planting practices for people and engage them in what we're doing

Trying

Trying to teach skills to people that will support self-empowerment and help establish communal leadership that challenges discriminatory practices that harm citizens, while also getting their input on how to help

Addressing

Addressing structural economic and environmental inequities by providing knowledge/opportunities for people to improve their circumstances and make their community better while supporting global environmental movements

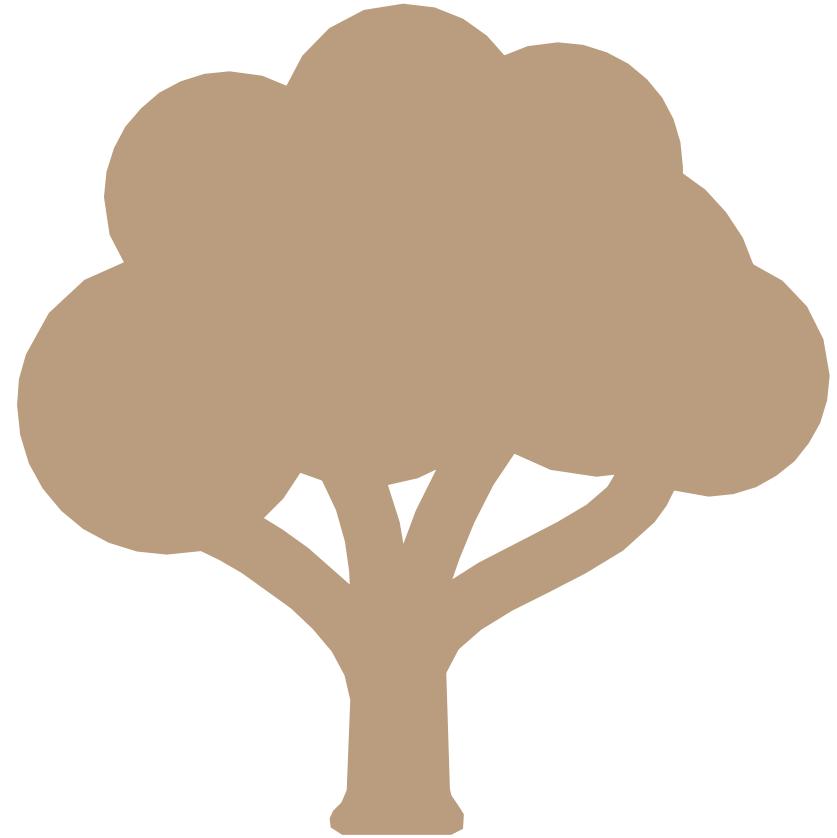


ADDRESSING
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GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENTS

Neighborhood Ecology Corps

An example of partnering with a community to address environmental issues while focusing on academic access through recreation

Formed a program to diversify our student composition by working with youth in their home communities



Vision

The Neighborhood Ecology Corps (NEC) inspires young people to reconnect with nature and develops eco-literate citizen scientist who create and sustain biophilic neighborhoods that are safe, healthy, and sustainable in which their understanding, love, and respect for living things is obvious.

Partners

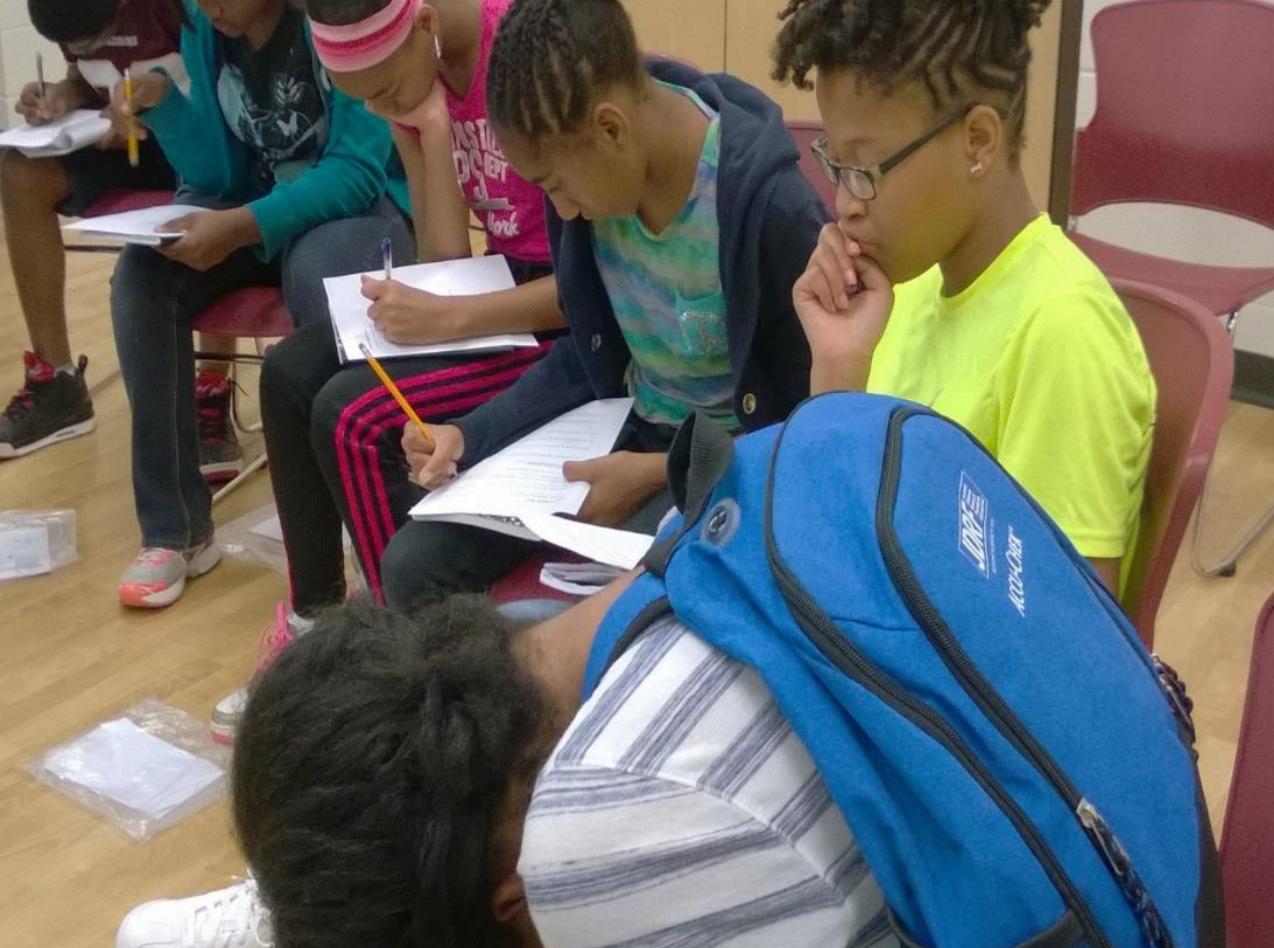
- North Carolina State University, College of Natural Resources
- The Center for Human Earth Restoration
 - Raleigh Department of Parks and Recreation
 - North Carolina State Parks and Recreation
- The National Park Service – Southeast Region
- North Carolina State University Outdoor Adventures Program

Underlying Values

- NEC leaders and the participants recognize that the skills, power, energy, and talent needed to make their neighborhoods livable, healthy, and safe already exist in their community
- Participants are engaged in every phase of the program including design, delivery, evaluation, and program support



FIRST DAY FOREST OCEAN



JOURNALING ABOUT
THEIR EXPERIENCE



STUDYING WILDLIFE
IN THE FOREST

What makes NEC different?



The unprecedented collaboration of partners



NEC connects participants with nature and ecology in their neighborhood



NEC intentionally engages participants in activities on the continuum between public health, environmental justice and conservation

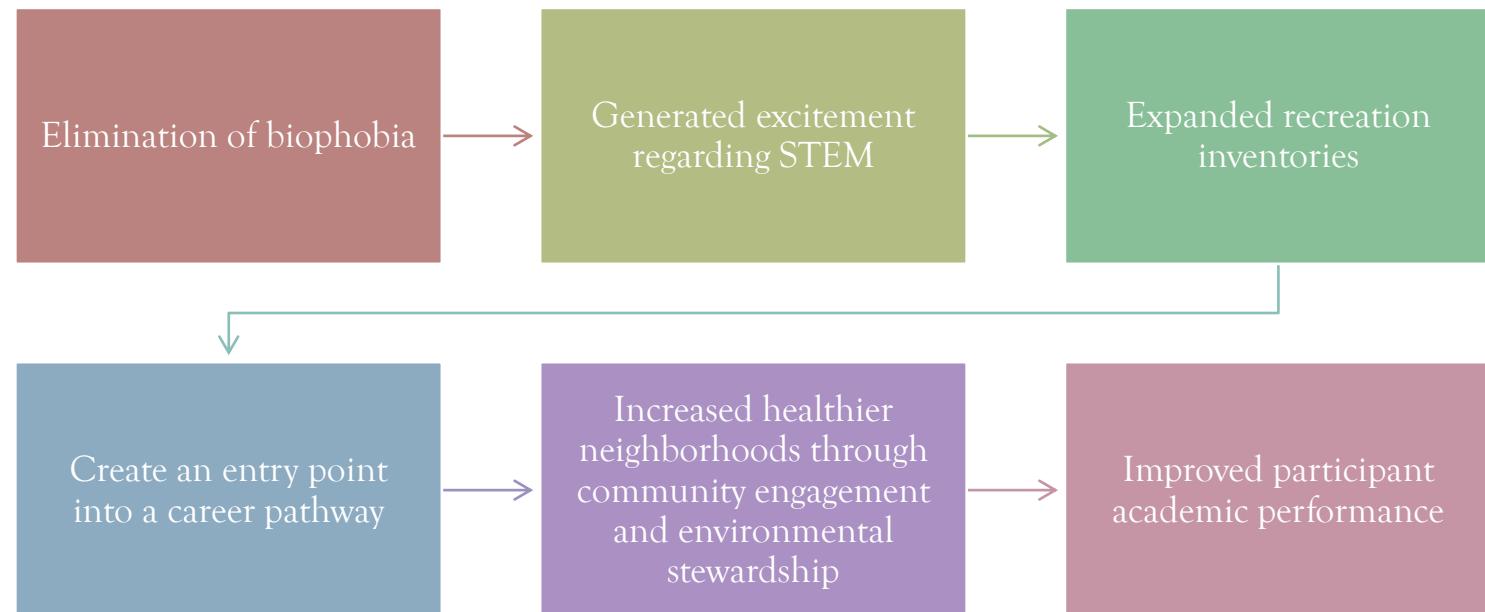


The Community Action Plan



NEC maintains relationships with participants after their initial experience

What is Success?



LESSONS LEARNED



Addressing inequities take time, No quick fixes



Engage people from the community (those that live there and look like the people from there)



Your initiative must address multiple issues



Be willing to explore the policies/laws that govern or impact your practice



You must stay engaged with the community you're working with.

TAKE HOME

- Engage all age groups
- Youth specifically help to engage multiple ages (toddlers, teens, working age, elders)
- Show people the beauty at home and teach about the resources (Water, trees, soil, air) in the neighborhood, then take them somewhere else
- Ask the community what they want and respond to (as well as do) what they said not just what you interpret or think (only)
- Make sure that the opportunities and solutions that are provided addresses their living circumstances as well as environmental factors
- Work with multiple partners
- When developing solutions, think about the solutions through systemic metrics (academics, family structure, economic opportunity, impacts of poverty, environmentally)

