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## **A message from the Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Conservation Ecology**

As we witness the violence that continues to engulf the United States, and recognize that much of this violence appears to target minorities and people of color, we in Fish, Wildlife, and Conservation Ecology find ourselves viewing these events through the lens of a department in a Hispanic-Serving Institution, and in a state where the politics of issues of race, ethnicity and identity are paramount. Over half of New Mexico State University's students are people of color. The institution and the department reflect the tremendous diversity of the state.

Thus it is distressing to us to see violence targeting people of color and the peaceful protestors who support them, as our student body is ethnically diverse. The fear that arises from such events is that this could easily have started in our community. Thus we must be absolute in stating that such unnecessary violence is abhorrent and unacceptable.

Further, we must recognize that the roots of these events are sown in a soil that fails to appreciate the nurturing value of diversity and inclusivity. We are a department that conducts teaching and research activities in a science-based field, and the science regarding diversity and inclusivity is crystal clear. Our experiences have taught us that having people with diverse backgrounds at the table helps identify issues, increase resilience, and solve problems. And we know that students do better when they have role models reflective of their backgrounds. We need to support and nurture the diversity of opinions that derive from a diversity of backgrounds. Yet public policies, unequal opportunities, and perceptions often hinder the advancement of people from diverse backgrounds, limiting representation of people of color at decision-making levels. These problems must be addressed.

Our department conducts work in outdoor spaces. Yet even these beautiful settings can be spoiled for those people who feel they are unable to explore them without risk. We unequivocally believe that everyone is welcome in outdoor spaces and we will continue to foster inclusion in our future development as a department.

To promote diversity and inclusion in the field of fisheries, wildlife sciences, and natural resource management we support recent movements within our field spotlighting biologists and researchers who are also people of color. Leading organizations like [AOS](#) and [TWS](#) have produced pages with links to learn more and connect with each other further. We would also like to share information about our own departmental programs

that promote diversity including the [Natural Resources Career Track \(NRCT\)](#) and [Girls in Outdoor Adventures Learning Science \(GALS\)](#).

We know that this statement and these words are insufficient. As we think critically of how to continue addressing this issue and strive for greater inclusion, we welcome your ideas of how we can improve. Please contact us: [FWCE@nmsu.edu](mailto:FWCE@nmsu.edu)