

Minnesota Environmental Partnership

Equity Statement

June 23, 2021

We will integrate antiracism work into the implementation of our mission statement

MEP's mission statement reads: The Minnesota Environmental Partnership is a coalition that strengthens member effectiveness and builds collective power to secure a healthy environment for all Minnesotans.

1. We will “build collective power” by engaging organizations in coalitional antiracism work, understanding that individual organizations are not as powerful as a coalition.
2. We acknowledge that “Healthy environment” refers to the underlying importance of human health in environmental work and especially for frontline communities.
3. We will name many Minnesotans that historically have been left out of the calculus of environmental protection as we seek to work “for all Minnesotans.”

We acknowledge that MEP does not represent the diversity found in the state of Minnesota.

Overall, the MEP staff is not as diverse as it should be. With the recent additions to the Board, there is more diversity in the board than in the staff.

MEP member organizations are largely White-led. There are few frontline or grassroots organizations directly serving people affected by environmental pollution. Most MEP groups identify as environmental groups and tend toward a privileged view of protecting an environment not focused on people's needs. There is a strong liberal urban slant to the organizations.

In order to best serve “all Minnesotans,” we will ensure that MEP has strong BIPOC representation throughout the organization. We will partner with diverse allies and organizations as members of the MEP coalition, non-member allies, and with other coalitions that serve frontline communities.

We acknowledge there is a large disparity between MEP's current work areas and the needs of Minnesota's Environmental Justice Communities

Minnesota has many environmental justice communities as established by the EPA and identified by the MPCA. We understand that frontline organizations in these communities do not feel validated by mainstream White organizations. We believe there is an untapped role for White allies to support frontline organizations.

MEP has a complex entry process, which requires membership dues and creates obstacles for under-resourced organizations to participate or join. The dominance of White privileged organizations and individuals within MEP discourages diverse frontline organizations from

entering the MEP space. In some cases, this has meant that frontline communities do not have the same access to environmental decision making or policy development that MEP does

.We believe this disparity comes from

- Historical White privilege
- Ignorance
- Racism
- Cultural hegemony
- Fear of letting go, holding on to your advantage.
- Getting too comfortable

We will address this disparity by engaging with frontline groups and individuals and using their guidance to inform our coalitional and policy work, sharing our strengths in policy development and access to decision makers and working as allies. We will modify and reform internal practices and share resources, including grant funding, with targeted allied groups and individuals to help increase access and engagement.

We acknowledge there is systemic racism in MEP and in the state's nonprofit environmental community

MEP has been historically influenced by traditional values drawn from White supremacy and privilege. This model supports White privilege and discourages participation by low-income and BIPOC communities.

In frontline communities, for example, individuals and families are busy with family commitments and often multiple jobs and may not have the free, often unpaid, time to commit to organizing and advocacy. This can make it a challenge for community organizations to engage with MEP. On the other hand, some MEP member organizations have long-term steady funding levels and can sustain professional staff.

MEP will identify systemic racist practices within the environmental community and engage in education, skills building and linkage to practices and opportunities to address these concerns. We will set and follow our own internal antiracist standards and push our member groups to do the same.