

October 2020 MPC Update
Written by Shane Hetzler, Chair

Except for the birth of my daughter, 2020 has been as fun as a Tilt-a-Whirl without a safety belt. The level of fatigue among friends and colleagues has been palpable. In a weird way, a stark acknowledgement of that reality feels a bit liberating. It seems premature to discuss all of the negative things that have taken place in the last 10 months, only because I know that we still have a locust swarm and a frog storm or two still to get through...

That said, I want to share what your Membership and Policy Council (MPC) has been up to this year. I'm grateful that despite Zoom fatigue, at-home impromptu child care responsibilities, economic and job insecurity, and a host of other challenges facing our members, this committed body of nine volunteers has seen progress on several fronts in these unprecedented times.

To increase our working knowledge of the many facets of Guild staff endeavors, we instituted a staff speaker series. This provided an opportunity for the MPC to learn firsthand about the true depth and breadth of Guild programming from a new Guild staffer each month. I for one was humbled by how little I knew of the Guild's nationwide activities. We were all collectively inspired by the dedication and commitment of these folks to the Guild's mission of "*practicing and promoting responsible forestry as a means of sustaining the integrity of forest ecosystems and the human communities dependent upon them.*" From the innovative Gravitas Peak Wildland Fire Module to the Model Forests program (and so many more), the last few months were a real eye-opener. Our increased knowledge of staff activities will help us to create new linkages between staff and members at both the regional and national levels into the future.

When the pandemic originally reared its ugly head, we on the MPC spent time helping the Guild pivot programming to more webinar-based formats and we reached out to members in our respective regions about how the Guild could better serve them. Since the killing of George Floyd, we have spent considerable time examining and discussing how the MPC, the Guild, and the forestry profession at large can be improved through more deliberate diversity, equity, and inclusion (or DEI) efforts. Our conversations have helped inform staff efforts to seek grant funding for furthering DEI initiatives within the Guild – in an organization and a professional field that are (to be blunt) both historically and woefully white male-dominated. We have a road to travel that at times will be uncomfortable, awkward, tense, and slow. However, this seems downright trivial considering many of us have never been on the receiving end of something as toxic as institutionalized racism. That said, we also have a lot of potential within the Guild. To quote a fellow MPC member, "I am grateful that the MPC and the Guild give me a space within my profession to discuss matters of racism and inequality within forestry; I don't have that anywhere else." While we cannot stop at simply discussing, I am grateful to belong to an organization that welcomes the dialogue to begin with, and actively seeks ways to better itself.

Through this difficult year, we've recently picked up momentum on several different fronts. We have promising leads for new student engagement in the SUNY and University of Montana systems. Our upcoming Guild-style Plantations Management webinar on Oct. 29th is open for registration on the Guild website. We've started work on new Policy Statements on both Plantations Management and Fire and Forest Management. If that weren't enough, we have an upcoming election for three positions on the MPC. Each of this year's nominees would be welcome additions to the Council. Please watch for the candidates' statements and bios in November and cast your vote during election time! While we're on the subject, please vote in that other election on November 3rd as well.