

# Land Access For Underserved Communities

How conservation groups can reach underserved and BIPOC groups through land conservation projects and community engagement.

Massachusetts Land Conservation Conference, 2024



## What you will learn today:

- Three rules for connecting new and different community members to local lands and waters, and
- Case studies can provide some inspiration and best practices [Kestrel: Maybe you could suggest something better here?].

# Agenda:

- Findings from around the country
- Kestral Land Trust's experiences in Massachusetts
- Questions and discussion

## My research:

Purpose: To learn what makes some people + nature/sustainability initiatives successful.

Method: Conducted 45 interviews of practitioners in a diversity of communities across the country.



## **Findings: Three rules to connect people to nature**

Rule #1: Just do it.

Rule #2: Be patient.

Rule #3: Put justice, equity, and anti-racism at the core.



## Pre-Requisites For The Three Rules

You need a both a *sense of urgency* and some *leadership*. To help you get there you may need to invest in a good Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion training to “level-set” staff and board.



# Three rules to connect people to nature

## Rule #1: Just do it.

- Don't be afraid to "fail fast."
- Understand that you will make some mistakes.
- Be comfortable with imperfection, and embrace learning by doing.
- The sooner you try these things the more and the faster you will learn and evolve.



# Three rules to connect people to nature

## Rule #2: Be patient.

- Go slow to go fast. Work at the “speed of trust.”
- Work at the “speed of trust.”
- It may take several years for you to feel like you have made progress.
- You may find later that the trust you built has set you up for transformational change.





# Three rules to connect people to nature

Rule #3: Put justice, equity, and anti-racism at the core of your work.

- Be ready to have humble and honest conversations about your work, and the work of others in your community.
- Ask your community, and yourselves, whether your work benefits *everyone* in your community.
- Seek out new people and open a dialogue.



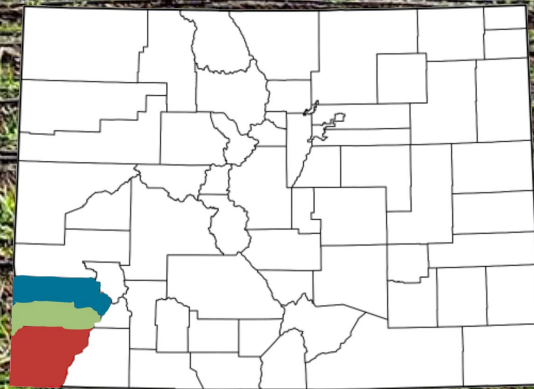
# Three rules to connect people to nature

Rule #3: Put justice, equity, and anti-racism at the core of your work. (con't)

- Be prepared to listen and absorb, without reacting to it right away.
- Don't be surprised if you realize that building power for others might be the best way to improve the environment for everyone in your community.



# Case Study: Montezuma Land Conservancy, Cortez, CO



## MLC Cornerstones:

- Montezuma County is an agricultural county with a diverse mixture of white, Ute, and Spanish-speaking people.
- They had a sense of urgency: board and staff knew that doing transactions would not be a long-term growth strategy.
- Board and staff agreed they were ready to try.



# MLC's evolution

## Awareness

Recognition that MLC had an urgent need to do more than transactions.

## Exploration

Took title to a working farm (not just easements), which became Fozzie's Farm.

Ran a small farm and partnered with educators.

Received new (first) grants for programs.

## Learning

Discussions from Fozzie's Farm about what it meant to be "anti-racist."

Held workshops to learn about barriers to land access.

Hosted regular meetings with Ute Mountain Ute tribe.

## Adaptation

Expanded educational programs to include job training.

Launched Equitable Land Access Project.

Co-hosted Traditional Harvest Project with Ute Mountain Ute tribe.

## Leadership

New Exec. Director has deep commitment to anti-racism and conservation.

Hired Ute Mountain Ute tribal leaders

Helping other land trusts on this journey.



# Discussion

Questions?

What has worked for you?

What would you do differently?