

# Study finds lack of diversity among fisheries scientists

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Researchers who study fish put a high value on biodiversity in the field, yet a new study found a surprising lack of diversity among fisheries scientists themselves.

According to the 2010 United States Census, 51 percent of the people in the U.S. are women. That same year, a study of Ph.D. students in the [biological sciences](#) documented that 52 percent of the students pursuing doctorates were women – roughly the same percentage.

However, the new study by researchers at Oregon State University and the U.S. Forest Service found that roughly even split soon disappears – in both federal government positions and in academic institutions. The researchers found that 74 percent of federal fisheries scientists or managers are men, as were 73 percent of the university assistant professors, 71 percent of associate professors and 85 percent of full professors.

The lack of diversity is even more pronounced when analyzed by race. In 2010, the U.S. population was 64 percent white, and participation in biological sciences Ph.D. programs was 69 percent white. Yet only roughly 10 percent of all fisheries science, manager and faculty positions were occupied by minorities.

Results of the study are being published this week in the journal *Bioscience*.

"It is clear that the [fisheries science](#) culture is one dominated by white men," said Ivan Arismendi, an Oregon State University research faculty scientist and lead author on the study. "There has been a lot of concern expressed in recent years about diversity, but the numbers don't seem to reflect that concern. It is important to begin turning the process today because the hiring we're doing now will last a generation."

Brooke Penaluna, a research fish biologist with the U.S. Forest Service's Pacific Northwest Research Station and co-author on the study, said the reasons for the disparity are not completely clear.

"We are graduating women on a 50-50 basis in the biological sciences, but the hiring rate is not keeping pace with the degree rate," Penaluna said. "For some [women](#), it may be the biological clock butting up against the timetable of career advancement. That doesn't explain the disparity among minorities.

"We need to look more closely at possible institutional biases. Women, for example, have fewer professional publications and are not asked as often by senior-level scientists to publish. And some federal positions may be in geographic locations that are not attractive to all candidates. We need to create environments that are welcoming so people want to stay – and those conversations can be uncomfortable."

The authors suggest diversity training and a diverse composition of search committees at both the federal and academic institution levels, as well as increasing the pool of female and minority candidates, and programs to insure their success and [career advancement](#).

Provided by Oregon State University

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