

Statement of Purpose

If someone told me, as I was failing out of business school, that I'd go on to finish my undergrad in ecology and apply for graduate school in five years' time, I would have called them crazy. I wish I could say that I committed myself to a life of improvised field tools and amateur coding abilities early on, but that didn't manifest for me until well after high school. I was serving with an AmeriCorps program, the Washington Conservation Corps (WCC), after receiving a two-year degree, when I became motivated to pursue this interest academically. The WCC offered long, sweaty hours to ponder the outdoors and I often found myself perplexed with the interfaces of all the natural systems surrounding me and my team. I learned so much in those three years and corrected a lot of my misconceptions about the environment, but I wanted to know more.

I became curious about ecosystem services and the strategies we implemented in the field for habitat preservation and recovery, so my undergraduate courses emphasized natural resource management. In the program, I mostly cut down and limbed up trees to reduce fuels in potential wildfire areas, but I also implemented best urban management practices for erosion control, stormwater management, and urban forestry. These were the subjects I focused my undergraduate work on, which led me to conduct, present, and we plan to publish research on the interface between forest carbon dynamics and adaptive management for old-growth restoration. I've since taken a temporary position as my advisor's research assistant to study water-use in trees for urban forest and stormwater management planning, and this will eventually become my thesis.

As a current post-baccalaureate student at Evergreen, I'm continuing to exceed my self-imposed expectations and make an impact on my community. I've taken advantage of my free time by volunteering with local non-profits like the Puget Sound Estuarium and Capitol Land Trust to help increase public awareness, improve public education in the sciences, and build a network of professionals motivated to make a difference. Community service is an integral tenet of my personal philosophy and I've been volunteering in social and environmental work since I was in grade school – from spraying “no-waste” on storm drains as a cub scout, to pulling ivy from trees with the Sierra Club, and sourcing clothing donations and serving food to at-risk youth and people experiencing homelessness in my hometown. My most fulfilling experience, however, was responding to natural disasters with Americorps which earned me a promotion to help administrate the WCC's largest disaster response operation in program history.

My final source of purpose for this endeavor is the recent news that I'm soon to be a father, and I couldn't think of a better place for my child's first few formative years than in an environment inspired by learning and discovery. Although I've been motivated by curiosity up to this point, the mission to preserve for the future is now squarely in my sights. My indigenous heritage refers to this as *the seventh-generation philosophy* which calls for the consideration of 150 years into the future when making impactful decisions. I'm not quite planning that far out yet, but for the next two years, I would be honored to work toward that goal as a student in the Master of Environmental Science program at the Evergreen State College.