

## Statement of Purpose

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During the summer of 2019, I stood where the asphalt overbank met the cloudy water of the Los Angeles River. A Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*) passed through a grassy island into the water, whisking its head underneath in search of food. It was surprising, given that I'd never seen this river as much more than a dry, concrete blemish dissolving into the metropolitan backdrop. But this earthen-bottom section, known as the Glendale Narrows, was undergoing revitalization — and as a result, teeming with life, biodiversity, and ecosystem function. It was a small snapshot of Los Angeles moving to increase its climate resilience by creating shade refuges to mitigate heat island effects as well as creating carbon sinks. Witnessing restoration projects like this one is just one of the small but powerful actions that have inspired me to take action and dedicate my career to conservation. With the passing of the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 and California's Nature Based Solutions Executive Order N-82-20 (30x30) in 2020, there has been growing recognition of the importance of biodiversity and conservation in the fight against climate change. I believe that now is the ideal time to pursue a master's degree.

My journey to this point has hardly been linear, but I believe my education and work experience in the music industry have benefited me. Attending the prestigious Berklee College of Music and working as a production coordinator, educator, and musician allowed me to hone and develop various management skills; it also shed light on the fact that I never felt truly grounded or passionate about my career in the music industry. As the daughter of two environmental scientists, I gravitated towards my roots; spending my free time with my hands in the dirt, hiking through California's regional parks, and helping friends green their urban spaces. In 2020, I began formally studying horticulture at UCLA Extension, obtaining my horticulture certification in 2021. With a passion for native plants and ecology, I received my Native Plant certification from the Theodore Payne Foundation, a Los Angeles non-profit that promotes the ecological benefits and education of California native flora. I also began to help with local restoration efforts, volunteering in the field with the Audubon Center, Tree People, and Friends of the LA River. Through these programs and my diligence, I obtained my current positions as Operations Manager of Fig Earth Supply Nursery and as an Affiliate Restoration Ecologist at the consulting firm Great Ecology. While I'm so proud of my achievements thus far, it's clear that a master's degree is critical to obtain and contribute to the kind of work I'm hoping to achieve.

At The Evergreen State College, I'd be keen to focus my work on strategic conservation planning, particularly in urban areas. With 80% of the United States population living in urban spaces, we are particularly vulnerable to climate disruption. At the same time, we are uniquely positioned to help solve these problems and implement changes. I want to focus on the steps we can take to create a sustainable city infrastructure, including but not limited to water, energy, greenspaces, transportation, and housing, all

while being mindful of conserving, restoring, and maintaining biodiversity and ecosystem function. I know this change can happen nationwide, as I've seen the steps my home city of Los Angeles has taken, including passing the LA County Biodiversity Motion. This change requires LA County facilities to use 75% native plants in the landscape, saving water and simultaneously enhancing biodiversity. Making sustainability a priority in city planning will require consistent effort, but I want to be one of the voices amplifying that message through my leadership and problem-solving.

I see Evergreen as the ideal next step. As an applicant coming to graduate studies mid-career, I am looking for a non-traditional, interdisciplinary program. I am excited by the team-taught classes, the narrative evaluations, and the cohesive student graduate cohort, all of which will provide diverse perspectives and direct feedback. The way the curriculum pairs theoretical knowledge with professional skills (such as GIS and survey methods) and environmental justice will produce a balanced and contemporary skill set. These skills, met with Evergreen's unique career development and academic advising, will ultimately help me compete in the workforce. Finally, I would be remiss not to mention Evergreen's excellent location in Olympia. Studying in the capital of Washington would allow me to learn firsthand about the interrelatedness of conservation and policy from state agencies and legislators.

For the last three years, I have worked to round out my undergraduate studies through self-education and classes at UCLA Extension. In addition to the biology courses completed to obtain my horticulture certificate, I've taken courses in statistics, calculus, and ecosystem studies. My professional experience as a coordinator/operations manager has taught me to be resourceful, juggle multiple projects at once, manage project timelines, think critically, and use my interpersonal skills to communicate with people of diverse backgrounds and personalities. These transferable skills will allow me to be an attentive contributor to the Evergreen graduate program and keep building my expertise as a manager and catalyst of change in the workforce.

I am eager to continue my education at Evergreen State College, where I can bring my unique knowledge and background to the table. Collective action to protect our planet takes inner and outer work. It weaves scientific precision with imaginative thinking, compassion with analysis, and scientific methods with integrity. To this end, I've taken the time to understand my strengths, weakness, and importance, and now look to Evergreen to help me with the outer work - an environmental studies degree.