

I cannot remember a time when I was not fascinated by wild spaces, concerned about the future of our planet, or obsessed with exploring the outdoors. I have followed my passion for the environment both personally and professionally for decades, and deepening my formal study of environmental science is the logical next step in my life and career. As an outdoor education teacher, adventure education guide, writer, and recreation services professional, I have spent countless hours at the point where humanity and the environment meet, acting as a bridge between people and the outdoors. As a guide, it has been my work to lead people through their discomfort to a greater sense of their own capabilities, their relationship to natural spaces, and the importance of safeguarding our natural resources for future generations. Now, I am the one looking for a guide, ready to begin a new adventure of professional and personal discovery, and I believe the guide I need is the MES program at The Evergreen State College. Earning this degree is the best avenue for me to achieve my goals of working in professional natural resource management, ecological restoration, and science communications. I loved working as an outdoor education guide and have a fulfilling job in parks and recreation, but I really yearn to be immersed in the complicated world of environmental work and sustainability. I cannot let go of my fascination with the puzzle that is ecological stewardship and I want to pursue its study so I can be a leader in natural resource management.

Although I do not come from a traditional science background, I have many skills and experiences that would help me as a scientist and science communicator. I started my journey in high school as an amateur naturalist, teaching outdoor skills to the Boy Scouts and summer camp programs, satisfying my craving for wildness by exploring the greenspaces of Columbus, Ohio, examining the hidden worlds of the urban ecosystem. In college, I almost studied biology, but a creative writing class stole my heart instead, and I spent those years honing my writing and

communication skills. However, I also stayed close to my passion for environmental issues, learning about the environment by living at the Denison University Homestead, a student-run, intentional community with a focus on sustainability, where I tended chickens, grew vegetables, fiddled with solar panels, helped build an Earthship, and learned valuable lessons about community. During college, I also spent a semester abroad in Mongolia, immersing myself in the wildness of the steppe, and conducting an independent research project on camels, camel herding, and folklore. As a writer, I focused heavily on the interface of humanity and nature, a theme I would continue to explore long after graduation.

Post-university, I began leading adventure programs and teaching outdoor education, starting out as a bushcraft and wildlife tracking instructor before embarking on many years of leading experiential education and study-abroad programs whose curriculum focused on environmental and social issues, volunteer work, personal growth, and outdoor skills. It was an amazing journey that took me throughout Southeast Asia, Southern China, Central America, South America, and parts of Africa, including the Greater Kruger Region of South Africa where I trained as a naturalist, guide, and wildlife tracker. Perpetual motion, however, is unsustainable, and eventually I started looking for ways to transition to a career in natural resource management. I applied to many entry-level jobs and internships, focusing on opportunities as a field technician and science writer, but without a degree or field experience, I was unsuccessful. While looking for environmental jobs, I worked as a writer for organizations like Educational Connections and the African Network Against Extrajudicial Killings and Enforced Disappearances (ANEKED). Through my work as an international program leader and writer, I have developed strong communication and interpersonal skills that allow me to connect with

folks from diverse backgrounds. These skills are particularly valuable for environmental work where it is necessary to engage with the public around challenging, controversial issues.

In 2021, I became the community services coordinator for the North Bellevue Community Center, managing and designing programs and services primarily for seniors. Working for the City of Bellevue has been an excellent opportunity for me to gain experience as a supervisor and project organizer in the community services and recreation sector. At the North Bellevue Community Center, I developed many skills that are applicable to natural resource management including: civil service leadership, data collection and analysis, project management, identifying and serving community needs, recreation program design/implementation, and volunteer coordination. Although this has been a great opportunity, it has also highlighted for me the fact that true passions lie in natural resource management and science communications. I think that my professional and personal history have given me a strong foundation as a future environmental scientist and I hope that Evergreen College will give me the knowledge, experience, and credentials to fill in the missing pieces I need to work in this field.

Of all the schools I considered, Evergreen feels like the best fit. I am applying to Evergreen because I am looking for a respected program with an emphasis on experiential learning, that prepares me for a professional track in natural resource management, and where my professional history will be considered an asset. I value Evergreen's collaborative, interdisciplinary approach to learning, the institution's commitment to social and environmental justice, and the opportunities for professional internships that are incorporated into the program. I believe my unique professional history will be an asset to your program and to the natural resources field and I hope to join your academic and professional community this fall.