

Statement of Purpose

I am in my final year as an undergraduate at The Evergreen State College and I look to the future at the master's in environmental studies (MES) program as the logical next step in my academic career. I chose to pursue the MES program after a rigorous deep dive with hands on work through education, community volunteerism, and employment. Though I may not be clear on what my thesis will be yet, I am confident that my experience and interests in environmental studies will culminate with a piece of research that will be published and will shape positive change in my lifetime.

I am a Bachelor of Arts and Science student here at Evergreen and will be graduating in the spring of 2025. I have taken a wide range of topics here on the *Find Your Own Way* path. Foundational writing and research skills lead to interests in botany, mycology, and marine science. Approaching academic topics in a non-traditional way allowed me to bring creativity into connecting the dots between disciplines. Accessibility is a theme that continues to re-emerge as a topic within the sciences and in learning how people best absorb information.

I found passion in the concept of remediation as a tool of hope in a world that is saturated with fossil fuel spills and outdated agriculture experiments. Looking towards hurricane recovery in the advent of the climate change crisis, one sees the same tools of remediation as a band-aid for communities struggling to recover water sources and polluted soils. Heavy metal contamination and chemical exposure in natural environments have long term impacts on human health and the survivorship of all species that it vitiates. Through the academic journal research I have done at Evergreen, I have developed confidence in developing voice in what has been

learned, and what has yet to be. I want to use my knowledge and skills to create real change in the world, and the MES program will provide the skills needed to take the next step into research that can be applied to funding, further research, and to legislation.

I am at the end of completing my 1,200-hour Certificate in Herbal Medicine at the Chestnut School of Herbal Medicine in Asheville, NC. The school was heavily impacted by Hurricane Helene with its entire garden and apothecary lost to massive flooding and landslides. Similar to the curriculum at Evergreen, Chestnut emphasizes diversity, equity, and inclusion as part of its coursework; and herbal medicine sovereignty and justice are openly discussed. Several medicinal species fall into the category of threatened or endangered due to overharvesting from both pharmaceutical companies and grassroots medicine workers. Often these species represent a cultural keystone as they are used not only medicinally, but also in ceremony with an Indigenous spiritual practice. Culture awareness, step-point counts, and chemical constituent analysis are all factors that should be considered when assessing whether a plant should be harvested. Deeper research with these important plant and fungal species is integral in ensuring that biodiversity remains. The interdisciplinary curriculum offered in the MES program at Evergreen fits with the type of work I would like to pursue with medicinal and culturally significant plants and fungi.

I am a Salmon Steward who volunteers for Thurston County as a salmon biology docent. I do in-person outreach in the fall when the salmon are returning on their run up stream at McLane Creek. I came to this through my academic work at Evergreen and in finding ways to make positive change in the local community. Service as a salmon steward shows solidarity with local Indigenous tribes as the salmon represent a cultural keystone species. Sharing data about chemical run off and tire chemicals are a few ways that salmon stewards help in educating others in the community that are excited about fish and their habitats. The experience of working with

local community members in the field to raise awareness around salmon life cycles and the environmental impacts salmon face in their struggle for survivorship deepened my dedication to stewardship and service. My pursuit of a MES degree would solidify my knowledge and experience with these topics that I have hands-on experience with.

For the past year I have worked as a writing tutor and consultant in Evergreen's Writing Center. Thanks to my foundational writing and research experience I developed through my AA degree at Seattle Central College, I naturally dove deep into academic and creative writing here at Evergreen. I have taken several classes on writing, as well as developed my tutoring craft through additional trainings and workshops through the writing center. Last year I was able to participate in a graduate student's thesis from UC Davis that assessed writing centers and alternative grading systems within academia. It was a participatory moment that inspired me to consider graduate school. I want to highlight that my experience as a graduate student will predictably be writing heavy, and I am confident that I have developed fluency with research and writing technique for entrance into the MES program.

As I look toward a future that is uncertain due to the climate crisis and the exploitation of so many species, I remain dedicated to employing the knowledge and skills I have culminated to create positive change where I can. The interdisciplinary curriculum as an undergraduate at Evergreen, the experience as a student of herbal medicine at The Chestnut School, the service as a salmon steward for Thurston County, and the one-on-one support I provide as a writing consultant at the Evergreen Writing Center; are all viable experiences and foundations that have prepared me for the master's in environmental studies at The Evergreen State College. Thank you so much for reading and for your consideration.