

Statement of Purpose

Tori Chaplinski

On a snowy, windy day, while harnessed to an eroding hillside I set my mind on attending college. I was laying erosion control blankets over invasive weeds, driving stakes through the frozen mud to stop the slippage of a hill. This ridge had once been a thriving forest but now was crumbling downward to destroy the wetland below and endangering the homes that sat above. This area had been almost irreparably damaged through the use of poor forest management practices. My role was to act as the boots on the ground restoration effort. Yet, as rappelled down through the freshly fallen snow to the bottom of the hill, I found myself compelled to understand the science behind the mitigation protocols I was implementing and how this area had reached such a fragile state.

This erosion mitigation effort was undertaken during the two years I spent as a Washington Conservation Corps member, where I worked on a variety of environmental restoration projects across the region. These experiences opened my eyes to the continued need for dedicated environmentalists in our changing world. While my role centered on executing plans devised by environmental professionals, I became increasingly captivated by the questions that shaped those plans – the ‘why’ behind each protocol, strategy and decision. To satisfy my curiosity and make a lasting impact, I realized I needed to pursue higher education so that one day I might be among those creating the plans.

As an adult who had thought my schooling ended eight years ago following high school graduation, this revelation motivated me to begin my journey at Evergreen. Throughout my undergraduate studies, my interests have evolved and expanded, shaped by the guidance and knowledge shared by my professors and mentors. I have explored various fields within the natural sciences, including environmental biology, chemistry, rangeland ecology, and oceanography. One constant link among these interests has been the impact public policy has on each and every one of these fields.

In my environmental biology and chemistry classes, I found myself most intrigued with the remediation efforts aimed at addressing issues that directly affect public safety, such as acid mine drainage and industrial waste cleanup. In my rangeland sciences course, my attention shifted to the conflict surrounding wolf pack management and its impacts on the personal and economic welfare of cattle ranchers through governmental policy. Similarly, in biological oceanography, I became particularly fascinated by how the disjointed and muddled management structure of marine protected areas often impedes the successful implementation of effective marine refuges.

Now, as I prepare to graduate with my Bachelor of Science, I recognize that I am not ready to stop learning and growing as an environmental scientist. The Master of Environmental Studies program offers an invaluable opportunity to continue exploring the impacts, successes and methodologies of environmental policy. Additionally, the thesis option of the program will allow me to tailor my research to my specific interests, enabling me to grow further as a scientist. The Evergreen State College is the right graduate institution for me because of its interdisciplinary programs, location, and my own personal experience as an Evergreen undergraduate.

I believe I am an excellent fit for the MES program, having gained valuable world experience from before and during my time as a student. I have held positions with the Washington Department of Ecology, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Washington Conservation Corps, and here at Evergreen. I have been a dedicated and enthusiastic student as reflected in the narrative evaluations seen in my official transcript. I am confident I will bring that same passion for learning into the MES program. I am excited to contribute to the Evergreen graduate community and eager to continue my growth as an environmental scientist.

Thank you for your consideration,



Victoria Chaplinski