

Letter of Purpose, Masters of the Environment Application

Hello. My name is Claire “Kestrel” Thompson. I grew up here, at the tail end of the Puget Sound, out in Boston Harbor just north of Olympia. My formative years were spent walking along the beach and through the woods around my childhood home, interacting with the dockworkers at the marina, park rangers on the beach, and chasing my friends around the woods. As I grew, I knew I wanted to learn as much as I could, fascinated by every aspect of the world around me. However, I too watched the beaches and woods change; the trees being cut down for houses, the starfish once plentiful under the docks fading in size and number.

In eighth grade I was assigned a project; to make a tangible difference either in my community or in myself. I chose to follow in my father’s footsteps and step into the Capitol Building to draft, lobby, and hopefully pass a bill. I succeeded, and the Olympia Oyster, *Ostrea lurida*, was awarded the title of State Oyster. I learned so much, both about policy around the environment and climate change. I used my bill to talk to policymakers about ocean acidification, which hadn’t quite entered the public zeitgeist yet. I got to be there for the opening of the *Ostrea lurida* hatchery in Port Gamble Bay, and I knew in my bones this is what I wanted to do for the rest of my life.

I applied for Western, and I chose them because of the robust programs they had for Marine Ecology and Biology. I was all set to apply for a Bachelors of Science in Biology, but a chance meeting with the director of Environmental Science Admissions changed my mind. I didn’t want to narrow my scope to just one species, I wanted to explore the human side and how it fits within the wider sphere of the science of nature. I learned so much, and then I went to take my knowledge into the world.

One of my primary internships was at the Bellingham Parks and Recreation VolunTeen’s program and their Dog Waste Task Force. Both got me out into the community, talking to teenagers, kids, and adults. I felt more assured than ever that I had chosen the right path. I was able to use my knowledge of Ecology with the VolunTeens to answer and prompt questions about invasive species, riparian areas, and the history of the parks we helped to restore. I learned a lot, and I felt like I was exactly where I was meant to be.

I took a two year break, to settle into myself and to come home. I fell in love all over again, with the marina and the beach and the woods and Olympia herself. I scouted around for jobs, but the market has not been in my favor. So I asked a few friends of my father, and they suggested I turn my eyes towards Evergreen. I read about your program, and it sounds exactly like what I’m looking for: A chance to explore the intersections between the natural and the human, science and policy, and how we can change the world for the better.

I would be honored to study at Evergreen, and join the ranks of the alumni who have studied here at the base of the Puget Sound. I can’t wait to do another internship, to meet peers and professors and learn from their perspectives and passions, and to learn more about how we as humans can be better stewards for our environment. I hope you will consider my application, and I look forward to hearing more from you. Thank you.