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Master of Environmental Studies

### **Statement of Purpose**

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My connection with nature informs every aspect of my life. I find inspiration, fulfillment, and self discovery through this connection, and my experiences have fortified the tethers that bind me to the natural world. By applying to the Master of Environmental Studies program at Evergreen, I seek a career path which nourishes this bond. Within the interdisciplinary scope and adaptable learning model of this program, I intend to use my familiarity with the natural world as conduit for further growth in knowledge and skills that support equity and mend our Earth. This opportunity would provide me with the next step in my journey of environmental studies.

My interest in environmental science percolated through a childhood of outdoor recreation. On bike rides after school in Alaska, I took notice of the boletes and amanitas that dotted my local trail. Later, while living in Phoenix, my fascination ossified after a trip to the San Francisco Peaks, verdant mountains juxtaposed with the surrounding high desert. There, the mushroom season aligns with the monsoons, and I was fortunate to gather many choice edible mushrooms while using my field guide to identify new species. This interest followed me beyond high school graduation, where I began to pursue an associate degree from Phoenix College to accumulate transfer credits and develop a scholarly ethic. During this time, I learned about the Field School Program with American Conservation Experience from an acquaintance who shared stories of camaraderie and discovery. My path still undefined, I recognized this as an opportunity to learn more about myself, my passion for environmental science, and my beloved state.

The Field School Program introduced me to a broad scope of conservation science. Each week of the semester was dedicated to a different project, location, and specialty. We took classes and acquired college credits and certificates that supported my pursuit of conservation science. I am fond of my experience, education, and the relationships I made through the program; however, FSP's working philosophy dissuaded me from "Band-Aid" conservation solutions to deeply rooted ecological problems. I identified the need for longevity in environmental efforts.

A mentor within FSP worked for Audubon Arizona and urged me to apply for the MacKenzie fellowship the following semester. Similar to Field School, this fellowship was multidisciplinary, but focused on ornithology. This fellowship introduced me to seeking change through policy, collecting and utilizing survey data to leverage environmental protection, and the enduring power of community investment through youth outreach and education. I adapted the qualitative and quantitative skills I developed through my study of fungi to learn bird species of the Sonoran Desert. This experience presented alternatives to the reactionary quality I observed in some conservation efforts. Between the Field School and the MacKenzie fellowship, I learned

that effective approaches to environmental science are holistic and give weight to social justice and equity.

These foundational experiences supported my decision to pursue my bachelor's degree in Environmental Science and Sustainable Studies at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, Arizona. As an undergraduate, I learned how to articulate the issues I identified within the world of conservation, and gained an understanding of the framework in which change and environmental protection is conventionally sought. I studied ecology, geomorphology, political science, environmental policy, outreach, and climate science. Outside of school, I advocated for equitable transit as a member of the cycling community. In my final semester, I took 'Environment and Social Change' with Dr. Brian Petersen, which I credit as my most influential experience of college. This class presented methods for disrupting the status quo and softened the walls of institutions I had previously thought impenetrable. My final project for this class combined my passions for equitable transportation, cycling, and social justice. By reviewing incident reports and conducting a community survey, I produced a report of the most dangerous local sites for pedestrians and cyclists, which improved public safety.

Following graduation, I moved to Seattle to be closer to my community and to find work complementary to my career path. To acclimate to my new home, I study the ecology of the region as a volunteer with the Puget Sound Bird Observatory and Urban Raptor Conservancy, nurturing my passion for birds and wildlife and honing my field research skills. In the summer of 2024, I led a crew of high school students with the Student Conservation Association. I recognized the students' experience with SCA to be similar to the Field School program that was so formative for me, and I saw an opportunity to extend the perspectives that connected me with the world of environmental science and social justice. As I developed new professional skills and connections, I found inspiration to further my education and take actions that invest in my future.

Applying to the Master of Environmental Studies program at Evergreen is a culmination of my journey of growth and self-improvement. Through this program, I aim to broaden my experience of environmental disciplines and explore the complex intersections of ecological systems, social justice, and sustainable solutions. The Evergreen learning model aligns closely with how I seek knowledge, and I believe it is an environment which complements my generalist skill set and creative approach to problem solving. I recognize the power in asking meaningful questions and the discoveries that come from indulging in curiosity. The ability to incorporate fluidity into the structure of an education and the encouragement to follow interests as they arise are traits that make this opportunity unique and are central to my inspiration to apply.

With this degree, I will be well equipped for the environmental science field and able to increase my social impact. Evergreen offers an environment where I can identify a professional outlet for my philosophy of environmental equity, which I look forward to refining through specialized coursework, research, and real-world experience. Admittance to this program will push me toward my goal: to contribute meaningful and lasting solutions to environmental challenges and the betterment of both social and ecological communities.