

Made Yates
MES Application
Statement of Purpose

To the Graduate Admissions Board of the Evergreen State College:

Thank you for considering my application to the Masters of Environmental Studies program. Through my academic and professional work in conservation, restoration, and environmental education, I have pursued my lifelong goal to help protect and advocate for our precious natural spaces and to nurture a sense of appreciation and connection with the landscapes we move through. My dreams for my career and academic future include playing a part in research that focuses on forest conservation and restoration, evaluating the ways in which land use and management impact ecosystem services and function, with an emphasis on ecocultural restoration principles and centering the long-term needs of local communities. In order to pursue this work, I hope to attend The Evergreen State College's MES graduate program.

In my undergraduate studies, I focused on tropical restoration ecology, watershed surveys, and botany. I received my BS in Environmental Science from the University of San Francisco in May of 2020. I was fortunate to participate in multiple field research opportunities, including a water quality monitoring project in collaboration with the National Parks Service, and tropical forest and riparian restoration projects in Borneo, Malaysia along the Kinabatangan River. In Malaysia, I was able to participate in restoration work planned, executed, monitored and maintained by the local community, that focused on sharing the benefits of their restoration and ecotourism programs with the entire community, creating a sustainable model for conservation-minded systems which serve to protect Borneo's precious and biodiverse landscapes. In these projects, I found a deep passion for field research and restoration work, as well as a sense of how critical it is to embed care of the local community in the foundations of the research we hope to do as ecologists.

My professional journey has been driven by a desire to merge my many passions—ecology, botany, creative expression, social justice and advocacy, restoration and conservation—with hands-on fieldwork and education. In my career, I have focused on ecosystem restoration and conservation, as well as science communication and field science education. At the Walker Basin Conservancy, my crew specialized in plant identification, invasive plant removal, native seed collection and population surveys. I currently work as an Environmental Science Educator with the outdoor education nonprofit NatureBridge, where for the past three years I have led student groups through experiential inquiry-based science programming in Olympic National Park. Additionally, I have participated in a community science watershed monitoring project in association with NOAA through my work with NatureBridge to help assess ecosystem recovery following the removal of the Elwha River dams in 2011. These professional experiences have instilled in me a drive to protect and advocate for our precious natural spaces in the face of climate change and policy shifts. Using my skills as a science communicator, fieldwork technician, and research scientist, I hope to take part in projects which connect communities with the restoration and conservation of their natural spaces in a mutualistic relationship between community needs and ecological rehabilitation.

Last summer I attended the Organization for Tropical Studies' Tropical Biology graduate field course in Costa Rica where I gained extensive experience designing and conducting group and individual research projects across a range of tropical ecosystems. This course focused on research design, statistical analyses, analytical tools for ecological research, and scientific communication and public outreach. Taking this class cemented my decision to pursue a higher degree in order to grow my knowledge and skillset and transition professionally towards restoration planning and fieldwork projects that serve to encourage adaptive capacity in restored systems, addressing the long-term outcomes of restoration work and community needs as climate change and policy shift the ecological balance.

To the MES program, I will bring an enthusiasm for lifelong learning, resilience and positivity in times of struggle, and a knack for creative problem solving. I have a longstanding desire to create collaborative & inclusive learning environments. I look forward to the opportunity to learn about the lives and work of my peers and mentors, bringing curiosity and clear, open communication to create relationships of reciprocity and synergy. As someone with a wide range of interests and passions (scientific, creative, and otherwise) this program offers a multidisciplinary approach that would allow me to explore and investigate the intersections of ecological and sociological impacts as they emerge in my studies and future work. Having spent the past several years on the Olympic Peninsula, this program would allow me to base my studies in an ecosystem that I am both familiar with and passionate about. The Evergreen philosophy of fostering an interdisciplinary learning community and holistic approaches to environmental challenges aligns with my own goals of centering community needs in my work and implementing multi-functional strategies in restoration projects.

I want my research to be guided by the stories, needs, and requests of those tied to the communities and lands I work on, learning ways to not only restore disturbed landscapes to sustain their communities, but also help to honor and preserve the biodiversity and traditions embodied in them. Thank you for your consideration of my application, and I look forward to the opportunity to continue expanding my understanding of the systems we move through and my own roles in their transformation and stewardship.

Sincerely,

Made Yates