**The Sara Ann Bilezikian Fellowship**

Two-year award worth $8,531 for 2016-2017 and the same amount or higher for 2017-2018 for one incoming MES student.

**Criteria:**

* Applicants must demonstrate that they share similar commitments, beliefs and goals to those of Sara Bilezikian, a former Evergreen student.  Sara believed in and was an advocate for peace, human rights, and a safe environment. The recipient will share these beliefs and plan to implement them either through their careers or through the life they will live.
* Financial need will also be taken into consideration.

**Required to Apply:**

* An essay, not to exceed 500 words, that addresses your past experience with environmental protection, environmental advocacy and social justice; how your studies in the Graduate Program on the Environment fit into your long-term plans, how completing the program will help achieve your goals; and what you plan to do upon graduation from the program.

**Jessica Brown**

It is often said that our main purpose in life is to help and serve others as well as the world around us. From a young age I heard this from my parents on a regular basis, but it wasn’t until I experienced this firsthand that I truly believed it to my core. Three years ago I had the opportunity to volunteer my time and 23 years-worth of veterinary assisting skills through World Vets in Nicaragua; a non-profit organization that focuses on the concept of One Health while providing free veterinary aid and disaster relief in developing countries around the world. Since that first trip, I’ve been hooked; on the country, the people, and the feeling of contributing to the greater good of the planet. As early as the 6th grade I knew that I had a love for the environment and animals and I made that known to all who knew me by joining Greenpeace, by speaking out for those without a voice, and by holding ‘Save the Planet’ signs with a friend on Earth Day. Since that time, my passion for the environment has only continued to grow over the years through my own learning and with my undergraduate studies in Biology. The MES program at Evergreen is exactly what I need in my life to fulfill my goals of becoming a strong presence in the environmental studies field and contribute to worldwide change. The interdisciplinary approach along with the focus on internships are the main reasons why the MES program is a perfect fit for me. I have a wide range of environmental interests, however, some of the topics that I would like to focus on are ocean conservation, wildlife and insect conservation, biodiversity, and environmental racism. I also have a strong inclination to concentrate my graduate studies to environmental and social issues faced in developing countries and indigenous communities. Through my work with World Vets I’ve had the opportunity to build relationships with people from some of the most impoverished areas of Nicaragua and it has given me the desire to become more involved with the environmental issues they face. For instance, I’m particularly interested in the potential development of the Lake Nicaragua canal; which would threaten human rights by cutting through indigenous communities and forcing hundreds of thousands of people out of their homes, as well as causing irreversible environmental damage. I am also currently involved with the movement to protect Sacred Oak Flat, the largest known Apache archaeological site with a vast ecosystem from damaging development by a foreign mining company. As a single mother, it would be an honor to be awarded with the Sara Ann Bilezikian Fellowship because it would provide me with a financial means to fund my graduate studies at Evergreen that will help me follow my dreams. With my positive attitude, dedication, and passion, I am confident that I will follow in Sara’s footsteps by contributing a great deal to making a positive change in the world.

**Maxwell Calloway**

Throughout the world, regimes wield authority in order to maximize economic reward through violent exploitation of natural resources and the people that rely on these environments for food, shelter and water. I believe that a large part of the fight for sustainable restoration and conservation relies on a shift in economic mindset. There cannot be a separation between the environment and the stakeholder communities that rely on them. I hope to utilize the skills gained from the Evergreen Masters of Environmental Studies program in order to facilitate stakeholder engagement with natural resource research and decision-making. Such horizontal management has the ability to empower indigenous stakeholder communities and amplify the voice of grassroots conservation and restoration efforts. Such a shift would represent a feasible alternative to current modes of extraction and consumption that are so often used to justify violent conflict. Specifically, my interests lay in fisheries management and more broadly, issues surrounding access to clean water. I believe that the economic benefits behind collective wildlife and natural resource management represents a powerful incentive that generates immediate results. Such results are an important gateway into broader ecological issues that are not in the current portfolio of economically calculated assets.

**Leslie Carman**

I have been dedicated to environmental protection, advocacy, and social justice as an Environmental Studies undergrad at Knox College. I chose to take classes with focuses on protection such as Conservation Biology, classes dedicated to advocacy such as Environmental Advocacy Campaigns, and classes with emphasis and applications in social justice such as Community Engagement and Environmental Ethics and Justice. I did many independent and group projects in these classes including preserving biodiversity, advocating for increasing plantings and biodiversity on Knox campus, education equality in Galesburg, Illinois, and equality in food systems. I also joined clubs and organizations such as the President’s Sustainability Council, Garden Club, Knox Food Coalition, Blessings in a Backpack, and Knox Advocated for Recycling and Environmental Sustainability. As an undergrad, I started my own business, Enkidu, with the sole purpose to provide sustainably grown organic produce to area residents at or below local grocery store prices. I was successful for a year, but could not cover the costs or obtain outside funding and instead turned my efforts to the Knox Prairie Community Kitchen. I shared many goals with KPCK, including their goal to create their own organic garden to provide local residents a place to learn how to grow their own food and serving that organically grown produce at their biweekly free meals. I began working with KPCK on a project with the Knox Food Coalition to help KPCK obtain buying power in partnership with Knox College to purchase affordable local meat. I then began volunteering at KPCK by serving and cooking meals while attending board meetings. After volunteering with KPCK for some time, I was offered a position as the Knox Corps Knox Prairie Community Kitchen Associate. As the Knox Corps Associate for KPCK, I started managing the new gardens to teach local children how to start seeds, working with those needing community service hours in the garden, recruiting volunteers, obtaining funding for garden use, and developing plans for disabled gardens and raised beds. Since graduation, I have been working on a post-baccalaureate project to increase biodiversity on campus by working with the President’s Sustainability Council 2018 goals to convert 10% of campus into non-mowed areas. I have been focusing on re-introducing native species on campus and planting monarch waystations. I hope to teach a class this summer through Knox College for Kids about women in science. One of my goals with the class is to invite women from the Knox faculty as well as Knox students studying quantitative and qualitative sciences to show girls local and real role models working to make the world a better place. I would like to work through the MES program at Evergreen to continue promoting environmental protection, advocacy, and social justice. As a graduate student and after graduation, I would like to continue to promote equality and sustainability in food systems by working with local organizations and through Enkidu to promote and provide affordable, local, biodiverse, sustainably grown food to low income groups.

**Keegan Curry**

I didn’t always know what I wanted to do, except that I wanted to help others. In 2012, that instinct lead me to a documentary filmmaker who was investigating the Keystone XL pipeline battle in East Texas. We were on the ground for months, working with landowners and protesters who had formed an unlikely coalition. It was heartbreaking when the state supported TransCanada instead of its citizens, leaving farmers and students trapped in lawsuits, and gaping fields where there used to be old growth trees. I had always felt a deep connection to nature, but this was the moment when I truly understood the human impact of irresponsible energy policy. I had ventured out to find a story, but I came back with a purpose. I wanted to go beyond the film world and find the most effective strategy for combating environmental injustice. The Master of Environmental Studies program is the ideal place for me to develop my existing passion into a grounded scientific skill set. MES alumni love to highlight the interdisciplinary approach to teaching environmental issues, and with my diverse background in filmmaking and AmeriCorps service, I am excited by the prospect of gaining new knowledge in areas like research design and quantitative methods. I wish to contribute to a future that is both ecologically stable and socially equitable, a key aspiration of MES’ political ecology coursework. By channeling my interests into a rigorous academic thesis program, I can enter the world of professional environmental work with the legitimacy that comes from earning an internationally recognized degree from The Evergreen State College. And with an extensive network of nonprofits and government agencies, I am confident that MES will help me launch a successful career as an advocate for the victims of fossil fuel development. There is no issue that lights a fire under me like oil and gas pollution. If I wanted to be a volunteer videographer for an anti-fracking group, I could start today. Media is important, but I have a much grander vision for how I wish to influence environmental policy. I have a deep need to understand and apply academic theory to the politics of protest before I get directly involved. I believe that by training as a social scientist and studying the problematic relationship between research and legislation, I can more effectively address the issues that I care about. The MES faculty and guest lecturers bring an incredible resource to the table, offering the foundational philosophy and experience that I need in order to conceptualize and enact real change. Learning to think strategically–and unilaterally–about fossil fuel resistance efforts will transform me into an environmental leader. Beyond Evergreen, I will fight to empower frontline communities and build coalitions that can truly reinvent our energy infrastructure, not only for ecosystems, but for the people within them. True progress in clean power must involve a social justice initiative, otherwise “clean” is simply another word for privilege.

**Jessica Demetro Stowe**

I believe that my passion for wildlife and the environment, as well as my educational and professional background, make me an excellent candidate for the Masters of Environmental Studies at the Evergreen State College (TESC). I’ve always been determined to go to college. I am the first one in my family, on both sides, to earn their Bachelor’s degree. I know that I owe this determination to my mother; whose second language was English, who never went to school past third-grade, and who always wanted more for her three daughters. I haven’t had a very traditional upbringing or education, and I have had to deal with family and health issues since I was very young. Despite these obstacles, I know that they have made me the person I am today; someone who is adventurous, resilient, and compassionate. After spending most of my childhood outdoors in either the evergreens of Washington or the fields of Montana, I grew up with a love for animals and nature. I think it was only natural that after I took my first environmental science that I knew I wanted to pursue a career in studying and conserving the environment. One of the most beneficial aspects of learning at Evergreen, are the countless opportunities to study abroad and acquire hands-on-experience. Nothing has inspired me more than when I was able to explore the tropical rainforests or coastal waters of Costa Rica. It was the most amazing experience that I will never forget. My experience working with the community has considerably influenced my decision to apply for this program. In high school, I started working for Garden-Raised Bounty (GRuB), a non-profit organization dedicated to providing good food to all people. This two-year program taught me many skills, including leadership and community outreach, but more importantly it instilled in me the concept that a healthy environment equals healthy people. In 2010, I spent a year volunteering as a marine naturalist intern with People for Puget Sound. I facilitated the Puget Sound Pier Peer events and educated the community about what lives in their backyard and emphasized the importance of maintaining a clean, healthy and sustainable Puget Sound habitat. I believe that community awareness is essential to motivating change. In 2012, after receiving my BS degree from TESC, I began working at the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR). I have been able to learn and experience so many great opportunities, including conducting various field survey and laboratory research, traveling around the Puget Sound, and presenting at conferences. I have been employed with DNR for almost four years now and hope to continue working there as I earn my graduate degree. My objective for attending this program is to acquire the means to accomplish my passion of preserving our environment. My aspiration for the future is that I am able to find a career where I can work with people and the environment interchangeably. I strongly believe that neither can flourish while the other suffers.

**Aiden Forsi**

I have been a long-time advocate for the environment, beginning in 2007 as a volunteer environmental educator for a county-wide outdoor education program. My experience there drove me into environmental studies, learning the science of the natural world, the policy that both protects and harms our environment, and the impacts of those policies on communities the world over. Those studies now inform my work in environmental education and native habitat restoration, which will in turn inform my graduate research into environmental policy. My long-term plan, simply put, is to have a positive impact on environmental issues in the Pacific Northwest. Questions of natural resource management are difficult to answer, as they stem deeply from both social and ecological sources. With the interdisciplinary nature of the Evergreen Graduate Program on the Environment, I can begin to piece together effective methods of management that are based in the reality of the physical world as well as the realities of community needs and their lived experiences. My goal in completing the program at Evergreen is to immerse myself into each side of these issues, through coursework and by engaging with the environmental issues facing Olympia and the state of Washington. My courses, thesis, and internships will all focus on how to bridge the space between ecology and society. Upon graduation, I want to begin a career in either environmental planning or environmental policy at a state or regional level. I enjoy working with the public, and as environmental issues affect all of us (albeit disproportionately), I want to be in a position where I am both educator and mediator, the person who can bring political actors and stakeholders up to speed and into meaningful conversation. As long as there is work to be in creating collaboration in resource management, I want to be involved. I have spent the last decade working up to this point, from my beginning as a fifteen year-old educator to now as a twenty five year-old managing volunteers in habitat restoration and environmental education. I am ready to take on the new responsibilities and challenges that a Masters program and my future career in environmental policy will entail. With Evergreen, I am excited to collaborate with my cohort and with the community of Olympia to foster understanding at the crossroads of natural and social science.

**Elise Frischmann**

I believe that the intersection of peace, human rights, and environmental sustainability lies in the creation of safe and equitable communities—where all people have access to clean water, affordable transportation, good jobs, unpolluted air—and in our ability to sustain these communities for future generations. These goals, however, are intimately connected to the myriad environmental issues created by our societies. Learning about others’ experiences in regards to these challenges, and seeing my own role in these issues, has motivated me to work toward a different future. During my junior year of college, I participated in a four-month study abroad trip in India titled “Social Justice, Peace, and Development”. While there, I was first exposed to the many connections between human rights and access to a safe and healthy environment. For example, we visited a sweatshop where laborers worked long hours in dusty, particle-filled air to manufacture Nike clothing for American consumers, and I researched the millions of individuals forced from their homes because of rising sea levels and drought caused by climate change. In addition to this new awareness, I came home with the desire to understand how these intersecting challenges were affecting American communities. As I dug deeper, examples flourished: such as the impacts of mountaintop removal on Appalachian communities and ecosystems, driven by our continued reliance on coal for electricity; or the effects of rising sea levels and warming waters on the Quinault Indian Nation. My awareness and passion for the connections between human rights, social justice, and environmental health has been growing, but my path—completing an undergraduate social sciences degree, volunteering and working in social service roles, a few courses taken in environmental studies—has not yet enabled me to address these issues in a bigger way. A graduate degree in Environmental Studies and receipt of the Sara Ann Bilezikian Fellowship would help me gain the tools and knowledge needed to address the basic needs that every community has—energy, water, transportation, waste management—in environmentally sustainable ways, while ensuring equity and increased resilience to climate change. Additionally, I believe that many components of this work would align well with my interests and strengths—including collaborating with different organizations and groups; interacting with diverse individuals; and conducting systems-level analysis and planning. Overall, my passion for this work stems from a desire to honor the rights of others, the Earth, and myself by being involved in efforts to foster more just and sustainable communities. Because I have not personally experienced many of these injustices, and because I am granted privilege by many parts of my identity, I believe that my role is to serve as an ally, a listener, a learner, and a collaborator in efforts to foster such communities. Every individual has the right to live a healthy and fulfilling life, and this right cannot be separated from the health of the natural systems around us. I would be honored to receive the Sara Ann Bilezikian Fellowship, and to be able to start this work.

**Michelle Horkings-Brigham**

While living in Europe, years ago, I realized that the trees were dying. As a ballet dancer, with limited education, I felt helpless to solve the problems unfolding as a result of anthropogenic forcing. I wanted to do something to alter the self-destructive cycle of human waste suffocating the natural environment, and triggering so much social injustice. After retiring from ballet, I volunteered time working in a Fair Trade store that sold items produced in developing countries. The work was rewarding, knowing that I was making a difference, however in 1988 I attended an event in California that introduced me to the topic of Climate Change, and dramatically altered my life’s direction. I became passionate about living a sustainable lifestyle, believing that personal sovereignty is lost when we do not make the time, or have the interest, to grow a garden. After a long journey to obtain my Green Card, I was employed in overseeing translation, foreign publishing, and event coordination in an international school and corporation dedicated to empowering and improving the lives of others. On occasion, I presented the information I had garnered about the implications of a changing climate and need for individual sovereignty. Life took an odd turn and I found myself recovering from a tumor, and without work, in 2013. The purposeful good of it all was the opportunity it presented to continue my education. I became a first generation college student at age 53. Educating my mind was a significant part of my healing process, I treasured every moment, and have continued to do so in the IES program at Evergreen. In my passion for nature, sustainability, and wanting to contribute to making the world a better place, I pursued my Associate Degree in the SPSCC Horticulture Program through Worker Retraining. I took an unpaid internship with the Thurston County Foodbank, where I worked in the Kiwanis gardens and helped in efforts to support struggling members of the Olympia community. I finished my AAS degree in just over a year while taking additional classes in Spanish, Web Design, Math, Chemistry, and Biology. I wanted to learn about Washington State’s native flora, Integrated Pest Management, agriculture, landscape design, and botany, and to be able to communicate with Hispanic people living in this country, design my own website, and have a deeper knowledge of Math and the natural sciences. My goal in the Evergreen MES program is to take the next step in my education to help solve ongoing issues that are pressing to humanity and our environment. I want to actively work with others to find enduring solutions. I have plentiful life experience, however what has been missing is a depth of knowledge regarding environmental issues, and environmental justice in this country. Through my experiences in the Evergreen IES program my interest has been intensified, and I look forward to broadening my knowledge and giving back to my community. Therefore I would welcome consideration for this scholarship.

**Katrina Keleher**

I have long been fascinated with the intersection between social justice and the environment. Social justice and human rights are deep-rooted in my upbringing and in my family. In the 1960’s my uncle marched with and took some of the first color photographs of Martin Luther King Jr. on the streets of Selma and Washington. In 2004 my grandfather, a transgender woman born in the early 1920’s, fought for his gay son’s right to adopt a black child. In 2003, my mom and dad held my little hands as I marched and witnessed Barack Obama speak at the anti-Iraq war protest in Chicago. After leaving the Midwest for college in 2010, I continued my family’s legacy of fighting for peace and justice by leading and attending climate justice rallies, anti-coal train marches, environmental advocacy campaigns and projects, and by educating underprivileged youth and adults about climate change and environmental ethics. Environmental justice, I have come to understand, is social justice. I recognize that social justice emanates in many forms. Inequality exists in the forms of economic, racial, gender, sexual orientation, and education identities. Justice is equality, fairness, and opportunity. My privilege—my race, my citizenship, my upbringing, my sexual orientation and my education—has provided me with opportunities that are likely unattainable for the disadvantaged. I recognize my privilege, and I understand that I can fight and work for those who are less fortunate than I. I truly believe the avenue for me to continue to succeed in this work long-term is through the MES program at Evergreen. As a graduate student in the MES program, I will expand my skillsets and understanding of climate justice and community sustainability, and I will apply this knowledge through potential graduate assistantships and internship opportunities in the Olympia community. I am particularly interested in Evergreen’s partnership with the Sustainability in Prisons Project, as it provides a relevant intersection between social justice with environmental education. After graduating from the MES program, I plan to use my skills and passions in climate change, social justice, community sustainability and education to lead, educate and inspire communities to work towards positive environmental change. I will stand up for human rights, the environment and science. I will use my strengths to help others, and I will work towards lasting, sustainable impacts throughout my professional career. I will strive to make Evergreen and Miss Bilezikian proud.

**Wendy Lagerquist (>500 words)**

I was a child living in the Cottonwood Bottoms area of Salt Lake City, Utah. Our house was located on a flood plain surrounded by creeks, canals, and irrigation ditches. Our family savored the music of toad song every night during the summer months. A resident toad who lived under a flat rock in our back yard would emerge every summer. I showed a neighbor boy who tried to take the toad home. My first advocacy campaign was to fight to get the toad back to his natural home under the rock. The neighbor boy reluctantly returned the toad because the toad was “my toad” according the the boy’s mother. My first environmental advocacy experience, saving that toad, taught me about property rights in environmental conservation. Sadly, the toad song at my childhood home disappeared by the time I was in high school. What happened to the toads? Was it the loss of habitat? Mosquito abatement? Water pollution? Global warming and subsequent climate change? The disappearance of the Cottonwood Bottom toads drove me into environmental advocacy. Fortunately, I befriended Ted Wilson, then mayor of Salt Lake City and future director of the Utah Rivers Council. On our runner’s club training runs, I shared my concern for the Cottonwood Bottom toads and he talked to me about his politics, campaigns, and the environmental organizations of the area. Through him, I learned of the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance (SUWA), the Utah Rivers Council, and the local chapter of the Sierra Club. The memory of the Cottonwood Bottom toad song inspired me to take action. I worked with SUWA, The Sierra Club, The Utah Rivers Council, the recycling committee at the University of Utah, and Families Against Incinerator Risk (FAIR) at Salt Lake City Utah, canvassing neighborhoods, signing members, filling petitions, phone banking, and stuffing envelopes. My advocacy did not end there. I volunteered as a river ranger for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in Price, UT, the Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association (NSEA) and served as a founding member of the The Next Generation Energy Cooperative (NEXGEN), a project of A W.I.S.H. in Whatcom County, Washington. In Olympia, WA I joined the earth team for The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). I later became involved with Alliance for Democracy, becoming a producer and director for a new television series, Reclaiming Democracy at Thurston Community Television (TCTV). I then served as vice president to the board of directors for TCTV for two terms. Professional Background I have a Bachelor of Science in Geology from the University of Utah and worked as a hydrologist for the United States Forest Service. During my work as a hydrologist, I became trained in GIS, participated in water rights meetings, managed fresh water ecosystems, learned about the bio fauna and flora for determination of at risk and degraded streams, determined water pollution from local abandoned mines, and worked on the issue of flooding and effects of man-made flood control development around surface water systems. My job as a hydrologist fostered my interest in water pollution and toxicology in soils. After moving to Olympia, I worked with the state of Washington’s Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) doing GIS work for the DNR’s aquatic resources department and the DFW’s GIS team. Interest in Environmental Science I am interested in toxicology. If accepted in the MES program, I plan to focus on toxicology and how it relates to air and water, it will weave my diverse interests in environmental advocacy, natural science, and GIS skills into a career path in ecological stewardship. I am a hobby beekeeper and am active in the local beekeeping club. As a beekeeper, I have experienced the effects of colony collapse disorder on my bees. I am also a SCUBA diver. I have seen the effects of anoxic currents on the wolf eel while diving in the Hood Canal. The cover page of this document depicts a toad, wolf eel, and a honey bee. I placed them there because it sums up my passion for the environment. It started with my dismay over the disappearance of the local toads in the Cottonwood area of Salt Lake City where I grew up. It is sustained by the struggles of creatures in the Puget Sound and the plight of the honey bees worldwide. A Masters of Environmental Science from Evergreen would tie my life experiences of science and activism together.

**Portia Leigh**

While being a lifelong citizen of the Pacific North West, with a Bachelor’s degree in Environmental Science and 3 years of environmental restoration/habitat monitoring experience, you will find that I am committed with a passion to preserving our Puget Sound. While being on the ground of these restoration efforts, I long to be a part of the planning and policy and seeing a project all the way through. This goal has urged me to pursue a graduate degree in environmental studies. Below I have described my experiences in more detail. Receiving a degree at the University of Washington has given me extensive research experience through Environmental Science classes and collaborating with other programs such as NOAA. This experience has fueled by desire to learn more about the intricacies of the Puget Sound and to share my knowledge with others. I have worked for the University of Washington as well as volunteered on many research experiences that have included anywhere from identifying point source plastics in the Puget Sound to studying invasive phytoplankton. I have had experience collecting biota for taxonomic identification using microscopes and dissecting scopes. I have written reports, created websites, and presentations on my analysis of various findings with the use of graphs using Excel, figures, spreadsheets, and GIS maps. With over 3 years of habitat enhancement, land mitigation, and property maintenance, I worked with the Department of Natural Resources and Department of Transportation restoring wetland, prairie, and woodland oak ecosystems. I led various crews in planting projects, reading and interpreting maps and planting plans, and invasive weed removal projects, including pesticide application. While working for Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife as a Scientific Tech 3, my duties included conducting fish passage inventories designed to locate and assess natural and human made in-stream features that might pose a passage problem for anadromous and resident salmonids. I was responsible for organizing, conducting, and analyzing on-site evaluations on human made structures on streams. I also conducted habitat assessments to evaluate fish use in streams and possible habitat gained by removing barriers. These experiences have given me the foundation to start my career and have shown me my strengths and weaknesses to focus on in future education. Pursuing graduate work in environmental studies will help better myself in writing and reviewing scientific articles, writing and reviewing financial grants, being more efficient with Arc GIS, and finding an environmental niche to focus and specialize in. After completing my degree in the MES program, I plant to become a leader in educating the public on the importance of environmental conservation and playing a lead role in funding restoration projects and seeing them through. By building off of the knowledge I’ve gained so far, I look forward to becoming more efficient and prepared in utilizing these valuable skills for my future.

**Esmael Lopez (>500 words)**

My name is Esmael Lopez and I was born at the end of tulip season, in the small farming community of Mount Vernon, Washington. My parents were hard workers who traveled from Texas to Washington to work in the berry fields of Skagit Valley. I have faced many hardships in my life, all of which, have motivated me to advocate for my community. I want to obtain an advance degree so that I can work along side my indigenous brothers and sisters to create a self-sufficient, culturally relevant, ecologically sustainable way of life. I grew up as a kid working in the fields in Skagit Valley Washington, I remember picking strawberries all summer and being embarrassed of returning to school in the fall with the red stains on my fingers. I would scrub and scrub but the stains remained as if to remind me that I could never change who I am or where I come from. My whole childhood I attended school with both farm worker and farm owner children. Only a small minority of farm workers stayed in the valley all year round and most often I found myself without friends. My parents began working in a chicken processing plant, and we never moved again. I still remember kids telling me that I couldn’t play with them because “Mexicans play dirty” and just tease me. Being so young I thought that it was normal to deal with this racism from other kids. I didn’t realize that many adults in my community felt the same way towards Mexicans until middle school. I wanted respect – thus, I became the leader of a gang and ended up spending most of my young life in and out of jail. After serving 3 years in prison I was released and within two years of my release I lost both my parents to disease. I couldn’t help but feel like god was punishing me. I began to participate in a number of community leadership roles in conjunction with organizations focused on social change. I have organized human rights festivals, “know your rights” workshops, financial literacy classes, helped coordinate the Annual Farm Worker Solidarity March for 10 years, and received an award from the Skagit County Prevention Council for my work in crime and violence prevention with youth and families. Through my Aztec spiritual practices, I have come to understand the need for a change in our relationship with Tonantzin, mother earth. I understand now that this is my calling. To work with my indigenous relatives decolonizing our communities through, spirituality, culture, empowerment and self-determination. Indigenous people have been historically excluded and disenfranchised. I want to empower communities of color to unite and participate in changing our relationship with the land by understanding ecology through an indigenous lens. I want to work with Native American tribes to reduce their carbon footprint and create jobs for young people. I want to help bring peace through traditional ecological knowledge and ceremonies that will heal the world from the damage of colonial extractavism. This is my vision and I know I will achieve it but will you help me?

**Sheila Marie**

I have had a strong interest in environmental issues virtually my entire life. Beginning as a child, my mother taught me organic backyard gardening, and my father took me hiking, camping and fishing at many of the regional, state and national parks in California. These activities instilled in me a strong conservation ethic, in which I see the value of nontoxic agriculture and wildland preservation to maintain human and planetary health. Eventually, as an adult, I carried on these traditions, taking my own children hiking, camping and fishing, and developed increasingly creative methods of organic gardening. Although my undergraduate degree is in History, I am nonetheless drawn to wildlife conservation and sustainable agriculture, enough so that I gave up a previous pursuit of a career in Law in order to plan conservation projects and eventually earn an MA in Environmental Management and Planning at Sonoma State University. As part of my career development in environmental planning, I volunteered at several Sonoma County environmental organizations in fundraising, grant proposal writing and project planning. For my thesis project, I directed a group of Bodega Bay landowners who were interested in forest and creek planning and restoration, walking them through the process of designing a sustainable forest management plan and obtaining grant funding for several phases of the project. After moving farther north to my current residence in Paradise, California, I held several community workshops for small landowners to teach them how to design and implement their own private forestland fire control measures, a project which I plan on continuing in Washington. I am applying specifically to Evergreen’s MES program, because I am in the process of moving to my cousin’s organic farm outside of Olympia and will be in close enough proximity to Evergreen to take on-campus courses. At the farm, I will have access to several prospective project areas, including a sustainable tree farm, a pristine salmonid stream, a large biodynamic farm and a cabin running on alternative energy. I am strongly interested in sustainable agricultural methods such as organic and biodynamic gardening. I am currently working on two potential graduate projects relevant to my interests: an inexpensive pvc greenhouse infrastructure design which I hope to test and refine for production and a new sustainable organic composting method which I plan on describing in an article or book. Once I have obtained my credentials in Environmental Studies, I plan on applying to colleges in the greater western states which offer lower division courses in Environmental Studies for the purpose of teaching Introduction to Environmental Studies online. I am excited to begin offering courses with the innovative design methods I learned in a graduate certificate program I recently completed in Online Teaching and Learning at California State University East Bay. I feel strongly that online courses in Environmental Studies can be an effective and convenient method for imparting to the next generation of educators and leaders knowledge of sustainable solutions to environmental problems.

**Kale McConathy**

In the past I have consulted my father on many water quality efforts regarding the cleanup of Vancouver Lake in Vancouver Washington. I also testified in front of the Vancouver Clean Water Commission with regard to unlawful dumping done by the Port of Vancouver. I have been involved with local bicycle cooperatives for years, helping low income families and homeless individuals with bicycle repair, maintenance and building of free bicycles. I have been a part of the Bike Me bicycle advocacy group in Vancouver WA, advocating alternative urban transport. I plan to study plant pathology in the MES program and incorporate those studies into sustainable solutions for control of invasive species in the pacific northwest. This would suppress the need for environmentally harmful pesticides and help address the root problem of invasive species which is a noted lack of pathogens/predators. I want to study these methods of biocontrol and explore their potential application to specific “bully species” within the northwest. This would be part of a holistic approach that could help keep bully species in check and prevent mass takeovers of natural areas by species such as Himalayan Blackberry and English Ivy. Some may say this is a pipe-dream, but success in responsible biocontrol has happened in the past and I want to contribute to efforts such as these. With a MES from Evergreen I could make this dream a reality.

**Lauren McKenna (>500 words)**

One of the first steps needed in addressing environmental issues is stating that they exist. It is both frustrating and disheartening to hear people say, in 2016, that climate change is "not real" or that environmental degradation is a non-issue that has nothing to do with humanity, that there are bigger fish to fry. It is encouraging, however, to see people dedicated to educating others about environmental issues and sometimes even risking their lives in the process. As a young budding environmentalist, I was under the impression that by caring about the earth, I cared less about people (a ridiculous notion!). I do believe that many people still believe this - that environmentalists are angry, only care about polar bears, and don't care about people or the economy, etc. In my experience, I have observed the absolute opposite. In partaking in a March for Climate Action, in which people from all over the country and from all walks of life got together to walk across the country, educating people about the effects of climate change and about how we - the communal "we" - can come together to mitigate these effects. This last year, a mentor - a woman who spent time in prison for protesting the lack of women's rights in the 70s – and I participated in a few “Shell No” actions together in Seattle. What I saw were people of all ages, ethnicities and walks of life coming together to not only bring awareness of Shell's actions and the risks of arctic drilling, but also to celebrate the natural and cultural heritage of Puget Sound and beyond. At nuclear disbarment protests I have attended, one might expect a lot of anger; I have always witnessed love and a desire to come to understanding with the other side. I have observed that people who are willing to speak out against injustice of any kind are, in fact, extremely joyful and loving and deeply human. They do not see acts of injustice as singular tragedies. They know that the roots of injustice are deep and understand that “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere”, as Martin Luther King also believed. They also understand that if we truly want peace and justice, we must live it out in our everyday lives and in the small choices we make daily. If we want peace in the world, we must also have peace within ourselves and with our neighbors, family and communities. I would not consider myself an activist or even an environmentalist. I am simply another young person trying to navigate the world in a way that does no harm and does not allow injustice to continue. For me to learn about injustice and then sit back and complain about the state of things does nothing. My hope is that while continuing to learn about environmental justice through graduate school, I will also continue to be involved in activism and seek out opportunities to hear from people who are deeply impacted by environmental issues, whether they are in my own community or abroad and collaborate with others to brainstorm ways to address. I am currently working on a GIS project that addresses how low tree canopy in Tacoma correlates with environmental justice and if there is a solution that addresses both the low canopy AND the community’s wellbeing. I am unsure if what I do will make a tangible difference, but I have to start somewhere! Again, a good starting point is figuring out that there is an issue at all and moving forward from there.

**Amanda Mintz**

Environmental education found me by accident. Although I have always been an educator with my first legitimate job in childcare at age 17, the sciences were my passion. Environmental science found me by accident, too; many years ago, I took an online class in environmental science during which I researched and wrote about the newly proposed Elwha dam removal project, still in its first phases of Environmental Impact Assessment. This introduction sparked my passion for environmental restoration, leading to earning a bachelor’s degree in environmental science with a certificate in restoration ecology. Later, I briefly worked for the Adopt-A-Stream Foundation, a small non-profit organization, knocking on doors and “selling” our free restoration services to private landowners on small, rural streams. I was surprised and a bit shocked by the lack of understanding within the community of how land uses affect water quality, which can lead to public health crises. At this time I also began to learn more about social and environmental justice, and became inspired to find ways to connect people from underserved communities with nature. I earned a master’s degree in teaching with the intent of teaching in Seattle’s urban core. Having taught in childcare centers and preschools for much of my adult life, I knew that developing relationships with young people and helping them reach their full potential was the key to inspiring them to improve their own communities, including the natural environment. Eventually, I ended up where I am now; teaching preschool in an environmental education center, where we take our students outside each day, rain or shine, and explore the forest and wetland, intentionally weaving nature themes and social-emotional learning into our curriculum. I also volunteer my time with Seattle Tilth, where I teach others how to identify and install native plants in a wetland buffer at a local urban farm in Rainier Beach, one of Seattle’s most diverse neighborhoods. I intend to remain in environmental education, extending my reach to a wider audience that will include adults and children alike. Because Evergreen’s Master of Environmental Studies is both comprehensive and thesis based, I will have the opportunity to broaden my focus on a variety of environmental topics while gaining essential research, analysis, and technology skills. Completing the Master of Environmental Studies program at Evergreen puts me on a path toward achieving my goals as an expert teacher, leader, and mentor. My future may include pursuit of doctoral studies. At the very least, Evergreen’s Master of Environmental Studies will provide me with the content background and technical skills I need to advance in the field of environmental education while also creating opportunities to apply my new skills in a variety of situations, such as adult education or environmental planning and sustainable development.

**Tara Newman**

From a very young age, I have been part of a community in which I was surrounded by people who care a great deal about animals, the environment, and social justice, and who instilled those values deeply in me during my formative years. I remember participating in peace vigils as a young child, standing on the side of 4th avenue with handmade signs and learning about nonviolence and compassion. Environmental education was also important in my childhood, and I spent most of my time playing outside learning about the natural world. These early experiences shaped my perspective into one of respect for the intrinsic value of wildlife and natural systems, rather than only seeing value in what the environment can do for us. As it becomes more urgent to find solutions to environmental problems as well as social issues, this deeply entrenched sense of compassion and personal responsibility is what motivates me to work in the environmental field. I received a degree in environmental science from Western Washington University in 2013. My coursework gave me an understanding of environmental systems, and I found it fascinating to learn about the complex interactions between their components. I completed many hands-on field research and monitoring projects. I also had the opportunity to complete an environmentally focused study abroad program in Costa Rica, where I worked on environmental issues and education involving the complex social justice issues that come into play when native people depend on resources we try to protect. My university experiences intensified my passion for learning about the environment, both scientifically and with regard to its connection to social justice issues. I went on to work for The Nature Conservancy at a prairie restoration project in Indiana, where I gained experience in all aspects of land stewardship. I was able to not only see the effects of our project on plant and animal communities, but on the surrounding human community as well, and I dedicated myself not only to restoring the land, but also to developing positive community relations. I currently conduct wildlife surveys for Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, where I have gained experience working on a long-term scientific study, the outcome of which will have important social impacts in our state. Environmental and social activism are inseparable, and I believe that community involvement is the key to bringing about change. I have volunteered on environmental restoration projects and social justice issues in my community, working with organizations including Olympia Fellowship of Reconciliation, Center for Natural Lands Management, and People for Puget Sound. Pursuing a graduate degree in the MES program will allow me to continue to grow into a leadership role professionally, so I can design and direct research projects and conservation efforts. I want to have a career where I can not only study wildlife, but also apply the results of my research to plan, assess, and implement environmental restoration projects to benefit ecosystems, wildlife, and communities in a way that is ecologically and socially sustainable.

**Lucy Pierce**

Growing up in the suburbs of a Midwestern rust belt city I found solace in rural environments. My childhood was spent riding our horse through cornfields and woods, picking apples from orchards, and swimming in the Great Lakes. In 2012, I graduated from Otterbein University with a Sustainability Studies degree. I participated in extracurricular activities that presented me opportunities to see what environmental and community activists in my city were contributing to and being a part of. My sophomore year, I served as an AmeriCorps member for a student organization called Students for Environmental and Ecological Developmental Stewardship. I partook in the management and growth of Otterbein’s Community Garden. During the summer, I supported the Westerville Area Resource Ministry’s summer lunch program for students. I coordinated “after-lunch” activities to promote outdoor education and healthy lifestyles in young students, as well as, facilitated families’ access to the food pantry in Westerville. As a student AmeriCorps member I aspired to bring healthy food access to families in Westerville, as well as, provide students an opportunity to get outside of the classroom and learn in our community garden. After college, I was offered a scholarship to study abroad in Switzerland. Experiencing graduate work abroad furthered my interest in pursuing a Master’s degree; however I wanted to gain practical and real-world experience before applying to a program. I pursued a full-time AmeriCorps position for the only environmental program in Ohio. I was placed with a non-profit organization working to combat water pollution caused by pre-regulation coal mining. From my experience I gained a great deal of hands-on knowledge about community organizing, field work, and the state’s environmental departments. At Evergreen I want to explore human impacts on the environment through our food system. The Graduate Program on the Environment will advance my career path and give me opportunities to gain practical and theoretical knowledge. My research interests have fostered a curiosity in strategies to combat environmental degradation, caused by the food industry. A shrinking water supply, growth of pesticides and fertilizer application, exploited farm laborers, dwindling biodiversity of crops, increasing use of fossil fuels, and foreignization of food supplies, are areas that I am interested in researching. I am passionate about finding new avenues for cultivating a system in which producers, distributors, and consumers strive to positively impact the environment and society. Through my graduate work I aspire to a career where I will stimulate a more sustainable food system by organizing, managing, collaborating, and facilitating change within a company or organization. I am interested in increasing awareness of the complexities involved in contemporary food systems through education, community outreach, and global initiatives. As a global citizen who has lived both domestically and abroad, I engaged academically, professionally, and socially within the communities where I have lived. I engage with the communities around me to promote environmental awareness and social justice. Through my volunteer experiences I have gained insights into possible career opportunities that I believe can be applied practically with a Master’s degree.

**Katherine Rogers**

Following in the footsteps of Sara Ann Bilezikian, I seek an Evergreen experience that will allow me to advance peace and harmony among both people and the planet. More specifically, I hope to work tangibly on sustainable social development in relation to the natural world. Through careers in archaeology, publishing, and advertising, I could not ignore the need to contribute more tangibly to our world’s most pressing problems. I attempted to satisfy this need by contributing my spare time and energy to philanthropic causes. I volunteered at local soup kitchens and most recently at Seattle’s Beacon Food Forest, which aims to rehabilitate local ecosystems and support public health. While working in advertising, I took on pro bono projects for the National Parks Conservation Association and The Wilderness Society. It wasn’t enough. The deep-seated desire to make a lasting, positive impact in environmental protection and sustainability became too intense to ignore. I have applied to Evergreen with the hopes of the program’s interdisciplinary nature enhancing and extending my passion for conservation by allowing cross-pollination between sociology, policy, economics, and other disciplines. I also plan to learn a great deal from Olympia’s government and nonprofit leaders. This is what I hold to be true: Protecting the earth and its resources is the most imperative task of this time in human history. My long-term goal is to lead conservation and sustainability efforts via policy and environmentally responsible development. Ultimately, I hope to shift consciousness on a deep level toward a healthy, sustainable relationship between people and the planet.

**Pamela Ronson**

With love for the earth comes a deep and real responsibility to give back to it through generous and creative stewardship. Gifts of care and renewal model reciprocity that engenders strong relationships between humans and their natural environment. Through gratitude, I reclaim my agency and responsibility to creation through peaceful, nonviolent solutions advancing environmental and social justice. I defend what is important to me through daily, small, achievable acts that promote peace, human rights, and safety in our natural surroundings. Environmental protection requires safeguarding our natural world from diminished biodiversity. Being a member of the Washington Environmental Council (WEC) pushes me beyond my comfort zone to attend Lobby Days in Olympia to request funds for organic farming, food security, and equitable food access. I telephone people to motivate them to ask their representatives to protest crude oil by rail transport. I rally friends to stand in front of our mayor to demand closer evaluations of Environmental Impact Statements where the value of natural capital is not reflected in the price of goods. I wrote letters to the governor, published in the Seattle Times, to raise efforts for decreasing our outdated dependency on fossil fuels. I have signed letters to prevent dam construction and instead fund renewable energy sources. I have called on legislators to fund public grants that drive environmental stewardship programs. Environmental advocacy promotes the beauty of the natural world with macro and micro actions to nourish what is integral to our being. I have planted native trees, removed invasive species, and built wetlands to aid natural habitat restoration. I helped formerly homeless persons access garden therapy. For work, I teach organic gardening on a 5-acre urban farm. On weekends, I teach how to sort waste and build soil through composting. As a forest steward, I conducted field studies to track the health of conifers in Seattle parks. I contribute to the local food system by paying dues at the Central Co-Op and buying produce from local farmers. An Environmental Policy Process class at UW helped me leverage citizen access to shaping policy. In my work, I enact anti-racism and anti-oppression approaches to end poverty through social justice. I address food security by increasing access to healthy, affordable, organic foods for low-income residents and promote self-sufficiency through gardening as a food resource on our urban farm. I endorse an onsite work-trade program and conduct bilingual environmental stewardship classes evaluating suitable salmon habitats in the neighborhood. Evergreen’s MES program fits my long-term plans to establish deep connections to people through the medium of the natural environment. At the intersection of environmental protection, advocacy, and social justice, I wish to learn from the earth about our greater interconnectivity. Completing the MES degree advances my knowledge of the environment through a holistic, interdisciplinary approach empowering me to learn from, and not about, our natural world. After completing an environmental assignment with the Peace Corps, I will address food security and human rights in the environmental arenas of international development.

**Kellie Rorex**

One of my greatest passions is canoeing. I love the feeling of gliding on top of the water and experiencing all the life that a body of water supports. The only problem is I live in the middle of the Sonoran desert where drought is common and where yearlong accessible waterways are not. For me, it was this unconventional hobby that first got me involved in environmental work. Through canoeing I first experienced not only how the global water crisis was affecting what I loved but also how ignorant travelers were polluting waterways and surrounding areas with invasive species. To loose what I only had so little of was heartbreaking, it was then that I knew I had to be the one to make a difference. While I was starting out as a volunteer troop leader for the Girl Scouts of Southern Arizona, I was in charge of leading a group of seven and eight year olds through a journey all about water. I knew this was going to be a great opportunity to spread awareness about the water crisis in my hometown, and I wanted to make this meaningful for my girls. It was extremely important to me that they took an active interest in everything I had to share with them about the wonders of water and how they can make a difference in their world. Over the course of a few months I helped the girls plan an art exhibit for their friends and families that concerned all aspects of water. They had demonstrations, paintings, and water themed food and pamphlets about water rights around the world as well as rights to water for animals. I surprised the girls by sending out invitations to multiple environmental groups in Tucson as well businesses that supported water rights and conservation. Tucson Water attended a few of our events and decided to sponsor my girls save water project. Currently, I am working with the Girl Scouts and Tucson Water to develop a pamphlet and a poster that spreads the word on water conservation and water rights everywhere. I plan to continue being an advocate, not only for human rights to clean water, but also for the right for people to have access to healthy food. While in the MES program I hope to study the positive effects that green living spaces and community gardens have on low-income communities and how community conservation leads to more stable ecosystems. After graduating I hope to work on sustainable farming techniques that allow people to have access to clean water and food that does not destroy the environment or require a large amount of space. As we move in to a new era where the human population will be twice as much as it is today, I hope to minimize our footprint on earth while simultaneously maximizing our ability to live a healthy life.

**Paula Smillie**

Fresh out of college studying Environmental Science at Huxley, I was determined to work the earth. Joining AmeriCorps allowed me to do just that. I got the repair streams by replanting native plants, monitor streams for spawning grounds, do outreach teaching to elementary school kids. I learned so much in a short period of time while making a difference in the habitat around me. I can actually go back to those same sites in Bellingham where I planted a foot and a half tall samplings and now see thriving forty foot tall shade makers for the much needing salmon found in Whatcom Creek. It was an amazing feeling and left me still today craving for more. After two years with the Washington Conservation Corps, I found myself working for a farm chemical supplier in Eastern Washington. These farmers grow peas, lentils and wheat enough to feed a growing world. You know as well as I how hearty and fulfilling a good cup of lentil chili can be; wholesome and locally grown yet most likely on land that was protected from weeds and bugs with herbicides and pesticides. These chemicals are the bread and butter for many companies in that region and a must for large scale, mass-producing farmers to protect their crops. To see the other side of “organic” was eye opening, yet made me realize the good that comes with the bad. The balance that must be made between humans’ sustainability, and the ecosystem where we thrive. I want to explore how sustainable construction, preservation and protection of our waterways can lead us to maintain this necessary balance so humanity can continue to use our prevalent aquatic resources without over using and polluting them.

**Kenzi Smith**

I left my geology undergrad studies happy with my time there but dissatisfied with the prospect of working for an oil or mining company, which is what most geology graduates end up doing. Sure, the money is good, but for me, it was never about that. My real life goal was to help care for the earth in whatever way I could. So right after graduating I started search for opportunities where I could do just that, knowing that nothing else would be as satisfying. I ended up on a Washington Conservation Corps (a branch of Americorps) restoration crew, specializing in urban forestry and funded by the Department of Natural Resources. Our crew worked with a different city each month—mostly ones with no budget to afford their own restoration staff. As a result we worked in urban natural areas in many poorer cities, removing invasive plants and replacing them with natives to maintain local ecosystems, and to beautify the natural areas for park visitors. In my time with the WCC I learned that people in lower-income areas tend to have less access to parks and natural areas in general, much less well-maintained ones, both because of the lack of these spaces in poorer areas and because of the expenses of traveling to ones further away. But I believe that everybody, regardless of socioeconomic status, should have easy access to nature, and that the wealthy do not deserve better access to these spaces than the less well-off. So the work I got to do in the WCC was especially meaningful to me, combining aspects of social justice with environmental restoration—doing good on two fronts. Now that my term of service is over, I'm looking for ways to continue doing the kind of amazing work I got to do with the WCC. I've decided that if protecting the environment and connecting people to nature is what I want to do career-wise, further education more focused on the environmental field will be integral to giving me the power to protect the planet. I haven't yet figured out exactly what type of work I want to do post-graduation (I'm aiming to cram in as much internship experience as I can to help me figure this out), but I know that ultimately I'd like to end up working for either a government agency or non-profit. The organizations I got to work alongside during my Americorps service—the Department of Natural Resources, Mountains to Sound Greenway, and Forterra—inspired to be like them one day, doing altruistic work to care for the earth. This is important to me both for the sake of the planet's ecosystems themselves, and for the sake of people's right to live on and enjoy a pristine and beautiful planet.

**Marissa Steinheimer**

As a strong advocate for women's rights and environmental justice, I am an ideal candidate for this scholarship. Since the age of ten, I have been active in the non-profit organization, Girls on the Run. This program’s mission is to promote healthy habits and confidence in young women. I began as a child participant in the program and later became a volunteer, counselor, and mentor. In Girls on the Run, I learned the importance of fostering a positive self-image in young girls. I believe that certain aspects of a woman's self-confidence and worth is shaped at a young age and should be facilitated throughout their life. I have benefited from such programs and my confidence was shaped by positive female role models. Working towards a degree in mathematics, I also learned the challenges of being a woman in a male dominated field during my coursework. My personal strength has helped me to overcome derogatory stereotypes about female aptitudes in STEM disciplines. As a lifelong resident of Texas, I am familiar with individuals with a variety of different viewpoints toward environmental protection and management. And unfortunately, some of them are quite negative. For example, in many communities in Texas, including where I went to college, it is nearly impossible to recycle. Residents have to actively seek out recycling locations and deliver the recyclables on their own because there is no local pick up containers. This inconvenience discouraged environmentally-beneficial behaviors. I feel lucky to have had an education and upbringing that taught me environmentally-conscious behaviors and “green” habits in my daily life. I am pursuing a career in environmental studies, specializing in environmental education and policy-making, to help spread these good practices on a larger scale. I have experience working in education and I have seen the impact that programs in environmental conservation can have on children’s lives. I have listened to several excited children proclaim to me all of what they went over in a lesson that day about environmental conservation. It is important to pursue these programs, researching outcomes and finding the best teaching methods, then implementing them in schools. Future generations will be more environmentally conscious if given the opportunity. I hope to use a Masters of Environmental Studies to work in a field I am passionate about, help preserve land globally, and educate the youth on the impact of environmental decimation and preservation.

**Kelli Stephens**

A sting of pain courses through my gut whenever I hear the phrase, I like animals more than people. This is something I hear quite often when volunteering at the humane society and with Northwest Trek. Of course, I understand why it’s expressed; it’s always difficult to witness an innocent animal’s life altered by someone’s misguided actions, and I stubbornly would have defended this expression ten years ago. After all, my love for wildlife engendered my current environmental career goals. However, a summer spent in Kenya forever changed my beliefs when I realized how many innocent people also suffer from humanities negligence and how sustaining our natural resources will ultimately restore our basic rights of life. All life - people, animals, and plants - should be free from suffering. Filling our hearts with animosity towards those who disagree with us only hinders our abilities to make positive, lasting changes. Growing up in suburbia USA, I was sheltered from how many people are stripped of basic human rights. The suffering I witnessed in Kenya opened my eyes to this cruel reality. Every day I watched a mother and her young daughter forage through a trash dump in search of nourishment and how they were relentlessly exposed to the elements and biting mosquitoes. I was able to buy them bread and milk while there, but once I was back in the states I worried about their health and future. This experience made me realize the extent environmental destruction has on all life. My environmental concerns can no longer be abated by protecting animals alone; I want to ensure people around the world have access to shelter, healthy food, and clean water by restoring and sustaining our delicate natural resources. What has attracted me so greatly to Evergreen’s MES degree is that it is interdisciplinary. In order to focus my career on balancing economic needs with conservation efforts, I need an advanced understanding of ecosystems, environmental policies, climate change and much more. This education will help me advocate for developing greener alternatives in our daily activities in order to preserve and repair our natural resources. A radical change is needed to shift our current thought process, and I intend to be a part of this movement. Our overuse of damaging luxuries like plastics, fuel, processed foods, and wasteful energy consumption is rapidly destroying our planet. We take for granted how easy it is to pick up a hamburger, and also how environmentally destructive that hamburger is as forests are destroyed for grazing land, fresh water is depleted, and greenhouse gases are emitted by animals living a life of misery. Upon graduating, I plan to focus my career on finding greener alternatives to our current destructive habits while increasing local economies for a sustainable future. I’m ardently drawn towards tackling global issues after witnessing how much our behaviors affect biodiversity around the world. We are ruining our symbiotic relationship with the earth, and I intend to devote my life to achieving this balance again.

**Angela Vincent**

For six and a half years, I worked as an environmental scientist for the EPA Region 5 (R5) in Chicago. In 2009, the R5 Deputy Regional Counsel hired me for a science and policy position with the R5 Office of Regional Counsel as an Environmental Careers Program (ECP) intern. As an EPA ECP hire, I completed a two-year career development program with temporary rotations to the Wetlands and Watersheds Branch in R5 and the Gulf Ecology Division in Florida. In 2011, I successfully competed for an Environmental Scientist vacancy in the EPA R5 Water Quality Standards Section. Most of my EPA work experience has been in Clean Water Act implementation, particularly water quality standards regulations. In 2014, I requested a half-year rotation to the EPA Region 10 (R10) Office of Water and Watersheds in Seattle. In that position, I worked on state water quality standards matters in Idaho and Oregon including a mercury TMDL for the Jordan Creek, a tributary to the Owyhee River. I made this request for a temporary rotation to the EPA R10 after my husband accepted a job offer in Olympia. Shortly after my rotation to the R10 office ended in July 2015, I resigned from my position with the EPA R5 in Chicago, and focused instead on continuing my education. I am now a Geographic Information Systems certificate student at the University of Washington Tacoma, and will complete this 25-credit certificate by June 2016. I am pursuing a GIS certificate because I am fascinated by how geospatial analysis tools can help mitigate environmental problems. I would like to pursue the MES degree at Evergreen because I think it will give me a competitive edge when I reenter the workforce. Furthermore, I appreciate that Evergreen’s MES program is flexible in that students can attend part-time or full-time. If I am admitted to the MES, and I apply for and accept another job or internship between now and September, I can still enroll as a MES student for fall 2016. I especially like that several MES adjunct faculty work for Washington State at either Departments of Ecology, Natural Resources, or Fish and Wildlife. I can see myself continuing to work in an environmental regulation and protection career at the Department of Ecology, or at another state or federal agency. Alternatively, I may work for an environmental consulting firm in the Olympia area. In summary, I am excited to pursue graduate research, and for the opportunity to network with a cohort of like-minded peers and faculty who are environmentally conscious. The fact that I have discretion in selecting my thesis topic is a very appealing aspect of the MES program. There are many environmental problems that concern me. Two potential MES thesis topics that I’ve considered recently include food waste and electronics waste. Last month, France passed a law prohibiting French supermarkets from throwing away or intentionally spoiling unsold food. Meanwhile, each year, about 40 percent of food produced in the U.S. is wasted.