Carly Rose APPROVED AND LIVE

Leading up to this program, I have worked with people and organizations to build knowledge on various topics related to environmental studies – those topics include wild and native plant identification, edible and medicinal plant use, Pacific Northwest mycology, sustainable building with cob and straw bale, and organic gardening – to name a few. I completed a summer internship at the High Desert Center for Sustainable Studies in Colorado when my son was a baby. I value environmental education for individuals of all ages, which was why I volunteered to teach at the High Desert Center. I wanted to gain knowledge and skills in environmental studies to pursue my greatest interest and to open up possibilities for a career in the environmental sector. So, I returned to school to gain natural science prerequisites in Botany and Geology, and applied to the MES program with an essay titled “Protecting water resources in western Washington via the Wildfire Disaster Funding Act.” The rest, as they say, was history.

During my time at MES I hope to build expertise in Environmental Sociology, with a special focus on environmental justice and community planning. I am exploring different electives through MES such as Restoration Ecology, Urban Ecology, and GIS to further this goal. I will combine my background in Sociology with these topics to further develop my knowledge of Environmental Sociology. I am also interested in supplemental courses through the Master of Public Administration program. These include Politics & the Nature of Leadership, Resilient Organizations, and Community Planning & Development. In MES, we have the unique opportunity to apply up to 8 credits of MPA courses to our degree. This is an excellent option for me, as I am interested in public administration as it applies to environmental sociology and justice. I hope to build skills and professional connections regarding these areas of study and plan to pursue a PhD in Environmental Sociology upon graduation.

Through lectures, coursework, and hearing from other students I’ve been surprised by a lot of random things. Such as: much of the phosphorus utilized by plants in the Amazon comes from nutrient rich dust from the Sahara Desert. What?? I have learned so much, and especially through the research of my cohort. We all conduct research of interest and present at the end of each class, and I have learned about so many different environmental topics this way. I especially appreciate that we come from a wide range of interdisciplinary backgrounds; it is truly an amazing experience to combine the knowledge of marine biologists, ecologists, social scientists, etc. in our learning process. So far one of the best memories in MES was the field trip in first year that gave our cohort an opportunity to connect and get to know one another. I think my favorite part of MES is the smaller cohort and the relationships that we build with one another throughout classes. We all bring something important to the class. Every cohort will be unique based on the student membership, and that is exciting and amazing! The program evolves each year with its students.

My first year in MES taught me what a huge time commitment grad school is. It is challenging to balance work and school sometimes, especially if I am working over 25 hours per week, and especially near the end of each quarter. I also raise two children so you can imagine the commitment it takes. However, it is possible to achieve a degree even with such commitments, and I look forward to the moment when I graduate with a completed thesis. I don’t think anyone knows yet, but I’m going to walk with my kids at my side at graduation (…the secret’s out now). It’s hard work, so choose topics to study that interest you! You will invest in your education if you focus on research that drives you forward in pursuit of your personal goals.

Heidi Zarghami APPROVED AND LIVE

Before coming to the MES program I was an artist specializing in Eco-Art sculpture. I graduated from the University of California Santa Cruz where I studied art and ecology. I worked under Newton and Helen Harrison who informed my practice and strengthened my understanding of systems thinking, as well as Beth Stephens and Annie Sprinkle who taught me the importance of environmental education.

My visual arts background has informed my environmental studies by instilling within me the importance of the visual design of information and the power of mapmaking in understanding the surrounding environment. During my time in the program I hope to improve my mapmaking skills and academic writing in order to gain employment after graduation within local city government in creative planning and design.

Evergreen and the MES program is a rare find for someone like myself. Although my previous research and artwork have been about mapmaking, environmental education, and city design, my degree in the arts disqualified me from many of the environmental programs within the US. I was also accepted at the Masters of Art and Ecology program at the University of New Mexico, but their program did not have a single environmental science professor. MES, on the other hand, is a program focused on the scientific study of the environment while also recognizing the multiplicity of disciplines that work together to conserve, restore, and reimagine our surroundings. I was thrilled to be accepted and contribute to the program.

The highlights so far of MES are the hands-on practical skills gained because my attendance within the program. Not only have these experiences been personally enriching, but they are also resume-building and network-strengthening experiences. The program has worked closely with many institutions, including the JBLM Fish and Wildlife where I completed a summer internship doing GIS field mapping of prescribed burn sites. MES fits right in with how I spend my time outside of school: I love to be out in nature whether it’s trail running, hiking, camping, or backpacking. The rest of my down time is spent on volunteer activities with local Eco-Artist Carrie Zigler, or back at JBLM Fish and Wildlife with Dennis Buckingham.

My thesis is focused on sustainable city design. How can cities that are facing challenges from extreme weather events related to climate change be made more sustainable and resilient while also improving the health of their citizens and the natural environment? Specifically, how can green infrastructure (porous surfaces, green roofs, and vegetation) can be implanted within the urban environment to support and improve the manufactured grey infrastructure (storm drains, dams, sea walls) in the processing of stormwater during extreme weather events? I will be looking at a single city to determine how to answer both questions effectively.

Jessica Converse APPROVED AND LIVE

I am a United States Navy veteran. I was a Persian-Farsi translator with an Associates degree in the language. After I fulfilled my contract, I moved to Corvallis, OR to finish my Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science with a Spanish minor. I graduated in 2017, and went to work for Northwest Youth Corps as a crew lead for one of their conservation crews. After completing that contract, I got a job as a Spanish speaking teaching assistant at the Corvallis Montessori School.

My journey to MES has been a few years in the making - I wished to attend Evergreen in 2007 for my undergraduate degree, but instead decided to join the Navy. In 2019, I was feeling the need to expand my educational and experiential knowledge and the idea to come back to my Evergreen dreams has come to fruition!

Though I’m a new student, I already feel encouraged and supported by the staff I have had the pleasure of engaging with. Beyond that, I have enjoyed taking advantage of the MES Weekly emails, having applied for internships, research, and online education opportunities

While I’m here, I hope to take advantage of the multitude of opportunities available through Evergreen State College, my cohort, and its partners. I am excited to learn skills that will enable me to meet my desire for equitable environmental justice and action. I hope to network and gain professional writing experience. When I get to my thesis, I’m curious about bioremediation of toxic materials. I know throughout my time at MES I will have to write like I have never written before.

As I start grad school, I want to send this positive message out to you. May all beings be happy and know the natural joy of being alive. May there be peace on Earth. May all beings awaken.

Zack Hovis APPROVED AND LIVE

Before getting accepted into MES, I graduated from The Evergreen State College with a Bachelor of Science Degree in 2015 focusing on ecology, hydrology, and arthropology. Following this, I worked as an arthropology technician for the Pacific Northwest Research Station at Mount St. Helens identifying and sorting out insects and spiders from pitfall trap samples all across the north slope of the volcano. After that, I worked for the Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) for two years doing restoration and trail work. In that time, I expanded my professional career by learning a great deal about restoration practice and theory, herbicide application, and trail operations.

My time in the WCC galvanized me into wanting to learn more about restoration and land management. Evergreen’s Master of Environmental Studies seemed to be an excellent match, considering that I graduated with my Bachelor's from there.

Relevant to my experience at Mount St. Helens and in the WCC, for my thesis I am working on developing a way to use arthropods as a tool for determining the effectiveness of restoration in Washington prairies. Specifically, how arthropod (such as insects and spiders) communities are affected by the presence of native or invasive vegetation. After I graduate, I intend to continue this line of work as a part of restoration land management.

**Will Campbell** EDIT

BA, BS, MPA, 20 years @ WA Department of Fish and Wildlife

Why at MES? Cognitive Engagement

Hope to do while at MES? Pacific Crest Trail

The most prominent connection is negative. A faculty member created a hostile environment, affecting my health. I am considering leaving MES for a different Masters at another University.

High quality individual students. I cannot think of a single person who is less than qualified. The are intelligent , professional, and a pleasure to work with.

Worst thing? A Specific faculty member.

Surprised? Yes. The degree to which a brain injury in Iraq has hampered my abilities. I didn’t anticipate the severity of my injuries in an academic setting.

Demands of MES consumes the majority of my time. Because of my injury, considerable effort is needed, beyond the average student.

What is env studies? Promotes growth in complex reasoning, valuable in all aspects of personal and professional life.

Advice? Ask informed students if specific class and faculty member if the class matches your goals. It is critical to the learning process in MES to take a class where the instructor facilitates your growth - Faculty should be a good match in terms of intelligence, personality, and mutual respect. If an instructor fails to meet your needs, take a different class; even if it is not perfectly aligned with academic goals. Choose carefully.

Alexis Haifley APPROVED AND LIVE

After completing my undergrad in Criminal Justice, I worked several jobs in government service and the non-profit sector before moving to Olympia and getting a job with the state. I currently work full time, so when school is in session I'm definitely limited on my free time. However, during summer break I enjoy traveling, hiking, scuba diving, and reading books for fun.

I was encouraged to apply to MES because my supervisor and several coworkers are alumni of the program and highly recommended it. I wanted to gain expertise in marine sciences, build community, and explore networking opportunities, and MES seemed like a great fit.

Honestly, it has turned out to be that great fit; I've loved almost everything about the program. I've become a much better writer since my first year. The flow of the classes and the shared learning style was very different than anything I encountered in my undergrad. Having the classes split between lecture and seminar was a learning curve at first, but one I gained great value from and one I still look forward to. The discussions in seminar are deep, thought provoking, and respectful. And my cohorts are some of the most intelligent and hardworking people I know.

For my thesis… I'm really not sure yet. As a part time student on the three year track, thesis work doesn't start until the last year. While in my second year, I'm taking full advantage of electives and internships to develop some ideas and hopefully a thesis question.

A word of advice for incoming students: take advantage of every opportunity you can that MES offers! It's so much harder to find jobs, internships, conferences, etc. when you don't have a community to help you. I was offered an amazing opportunity through Schmidt Ocean Institute where I was able to live aboard a research vessel while the ship was mapping seamounts off the pacific coast of North America. I found the internship through the jobs page that the MES staff puts together each week. I would have never known about it otherwise! I work in a science industry for the state, and have for several years, and I've had more success networking because of MES than I have in my job.

**Danielle Kies** EDIT

Before coming to MES, I obtained four Associate of Applied Science Degrees (AAS). The AAS degrees are in Forestry, Water Quality, Park Management, and Geographic Information Systems (GIS). I also have a Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS) degree in Forest Resource Management.

I came to the MES program, because I wanted to obtain a Masters Degree relating to the Environment with the freedom to choose my own thesis topic.

During my time in MES, I am hoping to accomplish research into invasive vegetation as well as strengthen my public speaking, presentation, and writing skills.

My thesis is to answer the question: What are the top noxious weeds in Washington State that affect salmon habitat?

During my time in MES, I have connected deeply with two students, but I feel a unique connection to most of the other students as well. I also have a strong appreciation for each of the faculty members. I always try to think of my education like a career, where the students are fellow employees and the instructors are my bosses; this keeps a healthy professional relationship both in the classroom and moving forward after graduation.

My favorite part of MES is having the flexibility to focus each of my assignments towards my passion of invasive vegetation ecology.

The most challenging part of MES for me is keeping up with all of the reading assignments.

Since starting MES, I have been surprised by what I have learned in regards to indigenous tribes. This knowledge that I have gained has inspired me to want to continue learning more about their history and culture.

Outside of school I enjoy hiking, collecting tree cones, using my identification skills on various plants, playing video games, and creating art.

To me, environmental studies means that I get to learn more about the environment and how we work within that system. The environment is the most precious and most powerful thing on earth, it gives us life and can take it away, and we need to protect it with everything we have. Therefore we must learn about it so that we have a better understanding of how to protect it and what its needs actually are.

Never give up, my life was on a totally different path and now I can't believe what I have actually accomplished through determination and stubbornness. You have the power to make the changes necessary to keep moving forward, so do it, and do not be afraid to ask for help along the way, you will always have a chance to pay it forward some other time.

**Danika Davis** EDIT

I received my BS in Environmental Science from UW and have had multiple seasonal positions with state and county agencies such as the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Fish and Wildlife, Thurston County Public works and Pierce County Parks and Rec.

I have been unable to obtain permanent employment pertaining to my current degree.

I want to strengthen my communal network and expand my knowledge in complex environmental issues that we are facing today and in the future.

I work full time and have obligations as the caretaker of Deschutes Falls Park. I also like to hike and spend time with my pets.

To me, it means a vested interest in, and advocation for, the protection of the environment.

Kevin Maxwell Lester APPROVED AND LIVE

I graduated from Pacific Lutheran University in 2016 with a BFA in studio arts: painting and a minor in art history. During my time in undergrad, I focused on ecological themes, and environmental literature to supplement and inspire my artwork and writings. The first of these environmental literature courses took me to Antarctica, and I fell in love with ecology through the lens of polar themes. I have since visited Antarctica again with PLU, and Alaska’s Arctic Ocean by means of obsession with polar ecology.

I came to MES because of the welcoming and multidisciplinary approach to studying wildlife and the environment. The broad brushstroke of MES allowed for myself and my fellow students to pursue our passions, wherever that may lead us. I am consistently surprised by the broad scope of MES. Students research ecology, politics, sociology, and psychology all under the same roof. It is unlike any other academic experience I’ve encountered, and fosters students to have a more wholistic approach to research.

MES provides the freedom to pursue my passions in a rigorous academic environment. I can make whatever research project I start work for me in my future career goals. Now, thanks to MES, I’m a mini-expert on many things polar ecology related - my true passion. This program does have challenging writing expectations, though I know good writing can take me anywhere. For that, I appreciate the challenge, and my writing has gradually improved as I have studied under MES. Hard work pays off in this program.

When it comes to MES: pursue your passions, and dig deep. I joined MES with a goal to be more involved in events and the academic community. I found an outlet for that goal, making connections at MESA (MES Student Association) and MES events. MES offers an instant network to government and private organizations, one only has to take the opportunity and powerful research partners will appear. I personally have regular meetings at Washington DNR HQ in downtown Olympia conducting research as a volunteer in Washington’s wild-lands on the weekends. These opportunities have improved my thesis work as well; I have coordinated with Pacmam, Cascadia, NOAA, and WDFW on my project. Be involved, reach-out, and you will find amazing things will come to you as long as you take the initial step out the door.

My thesis focuses on the distribution and abundance of marine mammals in the Southwest Puget Sound. Aboard my research vessel the SEAWOLF, a 28 ft. live-aboard sailboat, I count marine mammals with GIS software in hopes of creating the first accurate abundance estimate of marine mammals in the region since 1999, and the first ever seasonal variability map of these fascinating creatures.

Once I have completed my research and obtained an MES degree, I wish to pursue my passion for the poles and head north to study the Arctic in Alaska seeking a PHD in ecology. With the doors to further research wide open, I will continue work in both the Arctic and Antarctic learning as much as I can about the wonderful natural world at the edges of the globe. I’m hoping to one day take those experiences back to the classroom and foster another generation of polar explorers.

Angela Dillon APPROVED AND LIVE

The MES program came highly recommended by my colleagues and since I am always looking for opportunities to improve my knowledge and experience, I decided to apply.

Before coming to MES I received a Bachelor of Science from the University of Washington with a major in Aquatic and Fishery Sciences and a minor in American Indian Studies. I spent some time at NOAA dissecting Pacific cod, Pacific halibut and flathead sole. I monitored water quality in Snoqualmie for a few years. I currently work for the Puyallup Tribe as a Stock Assessment Biologist. Outside of class and work, I volunteer with an organization that gets kids involved in after school activities. I also plant trees at volunteer planting events in Snoqualmie.

My thesis is looking at the value of restoration as it relates to food availability for juvenile Chinook. I will examine the current conditions of prey resources on Clear Creek in Puyallup, Washington, in order to estimate the energetic potential of a restored system. How is the invertebrate community characterized in developed reaches of Clear Creek? Is the invertebrate community different in restored reaches of Clear Creek? What are the diet preferences of juvenile salmon in Clear Creek? Does energy dense taxa promote growth, survival, and residence of juvenile salmon in Clear Creek? These are some of the questions I hope to answer in my research.

During my time at MES, I hope to create partnerships with different entities and individuals that will facilitate strong working relationships within my community. I hope to complete my thesis, a project that is relevant to the issues impacting salmon and their habitat.

**Kris Hill** EDIT

Associate Degree in Photography, BA with focus on gender, environmental conservation, and social justice

Graduated from Evergreen with BA, MES program at Evergreen was the only grad school in PNW that I found that had a good foundation of social science and justice intersecting with environmental conservation.

I hope to combine Queer/Trans advocacy (as well as for all marginalized identities) with environmental restoration/conservation work. I also hope to have a community empowerment role in an organization such as GRuB as well as teaching as an instructor at an adjunct level.

How can a truly diverse and inclusive organization focused on environmental work be created and sustained?

How can we shift the hegemonic demographic of cis-het white men and women that hold powerful positions in environmental organizations to be diverse and have a larger pool of ideas, lived experiences, and problem solving systems.

How do we shift spaces in the environmental sector (ag, forestry, environmental education, recreational, "green spaces" etc.) from being dominated and only accessible to white, heteronormative spaces to include those made to be "othered."

How do we create safe space and "queer" spaces to address issues that all living beings are interconnected to?

Worked with campus satellite food bank and hold a position with the Undergraduate Food and Agriculture Path program.

Fiber arts-knitting, sewing, needle felting

Gardening

Socializing

Spending time outdoors

Of all the branches of ES, I plan to close the gap that humans are separated from the "environment"/Nature, and that environmental issues are social justice issues. I hope to learn, promote, and practice ecology/education with a lens similar to Rachel Carson, in that humans are interconnected to the environment and what we damage in the "environment," we cause harm to ourselves, and that the "business as usual" towards natural resources needs to end, and that we shouldn't accept living in a toxic environment.

From my experience at OSU and transferring to Evergreen, I feel that a liberal arts approach to college education is what is needed for the future of college as a system. We need to be a society that provides spaces for self growth, understanding inequity, and being able to collaborate with others who do not share our own identities.

**Savannah Richard** EDIT

I graduated from Evergreen in 2015 with my Bachelor’s of science degree in Ecology. After graduating I moved to Arizona where I worked as a seasonal field technician for NAU then I moved to Portland to work as a Restoration technician. This past year I moved back to Olympia and worked with the Center for Natural Lands Management as an AmeriCorps member and native plant propagation technician.

I want to stay in the Pacific Northwest and since I completed my undergraduate degree at Evergreen I know it’s a good fit for me.

I want to expand my knowledge base especially pertaining to GIS, non profit management and restoration ecology.

I want my thesis to explore advances in restoration ecology, specifically soil ecology and rhizosphere connections.

I love to forage for mushrooms and other wild edibles. I also like to hike, backpack, kayak, snow shoe and snowboard.