

2021 Conservation Connect Fellowship Program With Practicum

The National Forest Foundation (NFF) invites graduate students (pursuing a master's or doctoral degree) to apply to the 2021 Conservation Connect Fellowship Program. The fellowship includes a summer 2021 or academic year 2021-22 practicum at NFF's Missoula, Montana office, a field office, or hosted by a partner organization.

WHAT FELLOWS GAIN

- Applied experience with conservation programs and projects through a practicum project. For example, depending on the project, fellows may work with diverse stakeholders, support and facilitate collaborative efforts, coordinate and implement projects, conduct research to improve conservation programs, and develop training curricula and strategic communications.
- Mentoring from skilled conservation professionals at the NFF and other nonprofit host organizations.
- Trainings in collaborative conservation, facilitation practice, the roles of the National Environmental Policy Act and U.S. Forest Service, and other topics.
- Real-world understanding of forest and public lands management.
- An expanded personal and professional network.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL FOREST FOUNDATION

Chartered by Congress, the National Forest Foundation (NFF) was created with a simple mission: bring people together to restore and enhance our National Forests and Grasslands. The NFF is the leading organization inspiring personal and meaningful connections to our National Forests, the centerpiece of America's public lands. Working on behalf of the American public, the NFF leads forest conservation efforts and promotes responsible recreation on the 193 million acre National Forest System. We believe these lands, and all they provide, are an American treasure and are vital to the health of our communities.

In 2006, NFF created Conservation Connect to serve community-based groups and Forest Service employees working on collaborative stewardship of National Forest System lands. Conservation Connect offers a variety of technical assistance and peer learning opportunities to support capacity building around collaborative stewardship issues. The objectives of Conservation Connect are to:

- Foster peer-to-peer and community-to-agency connections.
- Support exchange of knowledge, tools, and best practices.
- Identify common challenges and move to team problem-solving.
- Promote the development of new understandings around the ecological, social, and economic objectives of collaborative forest stewardship.
- Build the organizational capacity of collaborative groups.

The NFF uses the following definition of collaboration: A process through which a broad array of interests, some of which may be in conflict, enter into civil dialogue to collectively consider possible recommendations and actions that improve the management of natural resources to benefit both the environment and surrounding communities. Collaboration is different from a partnership. Collaboration involves a diverse array of stakeholders while a partnership engages a few parties that are interested in working together on a specific project. Through the support of collaboration among stakeholders, the Forest Service, and other land-managing agencies, NFF supports the development of collective agreements to address the complicated challenges facing forest management.

ABOUT THE CONSERVATION CONNECT FELLOWSHIP: DESCRIPTION, TERMS AND ELIGIBILITY

NFF believes in the value of matching the cutting-edge knowledge acquired at the graduate level of universities with practical, hands-on experience. The purposes of the Conservation Connect Fellowship Program are to align NFF's collaboration and conservation work with a practicum and experiential education opportunity, and to build a cohort of next generation leaders in the field of natural resource conflict resolution. The NFF will strive to meet each fellow's learning objectives, while also effectively extending the capacity of NFF and its partners to deliver conservation results for National Forests and Grasslands. NFF gives fellows the chance to gain direct experience in the variety of NFF and partner functions.

We are looking for students with interest and academic experience in collaborative process and natural resource conflict resolution and on-the-ground science applications. We will also consider applicants with an interest in nonprofit administration, grants administration, communications, or marketing. Please note that this is not a research fellowship. Fellowships are funded and administered by NFF, with NFF or partner organizations providing the practicum experience. The program requires an on-site practicum either at an NFF office or at a participating host organization, with an expectation that the fellow will work at least 360 hours. Exact dates of practicum work are flexible.

FELLOWSHIP COMPONENTS

Practicum (at least 360 hours)

The NFF will match each fellow to a practicum either at the NFF Missoula office, an NFF field office, or a partner host organization for a practicum. The practicum will take place either over the summer or the academic year, with specific dates to be determined individually. The summer practicum schedule will require the fellow to complete their 360 hours over ten to twelve weeks during the summer of 2021. The academic year practicum is the same number of hours spread over a longer timeframe. During each practicum, the fellow will focus on one or more projects. NFF will strive to match fellows with practicum opportunities according to the fellow's learning objectives and host organization needs. In addition to their practicum project(s), fellows may spend a portion of their time (up to 20%) performing tasks associated with nonprofit administration.

Professional Development and Networking (estimated 50 hours over the total 12 month Fellowship)

- Conservation Connect Advisory Council Meeting: Each fellow will have an opportunity to participate in an in-person meeting of the Conservation Connect Advisory Council, composed of leading thinkers in the field of natural resources collaboration (currently planned to be in person June 14-16, 2021, near Coeur d'Alene, ID). The meeting will offer the opportunity to meet members of the Advisory Council and work closely with NFF staff.
- Fellow Orientation: The NFF is planning an in-person orientation, June 16-17, 2021 near Coeur d'Alene, ID, immediately following the Conservation Connect Advisory Council meeting. The orientation will provide training in a variety of topics, including collaboration, best practices for neutral facilitation, NFF's approach to engaging community interests, working with the Forest Service, and relevant federal laws.



- Peer Networking and Trainings: Fellows have the opportunity to participate in a quarterly videoconference or in-person “check-ins” where the NFF offers trainings and supports fellows meeting as a group to discuss issues that arise, share accomplishments, and solicit feedback from both their peers and NFF.

Mentor Support

Each fellow will be matched with a mentor from the NFF or the host organization. We encourage fellows to schedule regular meetings with their mentor to talk through questions and ideas as they correlate their practicum work to the theories and methods they are studying at their university.

Evaluation

Fellows are required to participate in a post-fellowship evaluation process conducted by NFF. NFF will collect feedback and metrics on fellow’s experiences and accomplishments throughout the 12-month period.

Fellowship Award

The NFF awards fellows a \$5,000 stipend over a period of 12 months, with \$4,000 at the beginning of their practicum and \$1,000 at the conclusion of their fellowship. NFF will also pay for approved travel expenses associated with participation in the fellowship program and practicum.

Eligibility

Graduate students pursuing a master’s degree or doctorate are eligible for the Conservation Connect Fellowship. We anticipate students will have taken coursework related to the study of natural resources, conflict resolution, collaboration, or non-profit management.

Important Dates	
February 15, 2021	Applications due
February 18 - March 15, 2021	Supervisors and mentors review applications and schedule interviews
March 30, 2021	Fellow selections announced with practicum matches
May 6, 2021	Fellowships begin with web orientation
June 14-17, 2021	Conservation Connect Advisory Council meeting and in-person fellowship orientation near Coeur d’Alene, ID
Early June - August, 2021	Summer practicums (specific schedule arranged with each fellow)
TBD - May 2022	Academic year practicums
September 2021 - May 2022	Quarterly web trainings and meetings



CONSERVATION CONNECT FELLOW SELECTION PROCESS

The NFF will select Conservation Connect Fellows based on their readiness to take advantage of what the fellowship offers, both in terms of professional development and practical experience and the strength of their application materials. The review committee will review written materials and will conduct interviews of candidates.

The NFF will award fellowship funds in two phases, with one payment of \$4,000 awarded at the outset of the practicum and the second payment of \$1,000 awarded during the evaluation at the conclusion of the fellowship, 12 months after initiation.

The NFF is committed to offering opportunities to as many students as possible and prefers providing stipends to students who do not already have internship funding available to them through other awards, fellowships, or scholarship programs.

** The National Forest Foundation welcomes a diverse pool of applicants and maintains a policy of nondiscrimination.*

APPLICATION MATERIALS

The Conservation Connect Fellowship application is an electronic compilation of the following components into a single PDF submitted to lzamesnik@nationalforests.org by February 15, 2021. **REQUIRED:** Clearly mark in the subject of the email: 2021 Conservation Connect Fellow Application.

1. **Cover Letter:** In one page, describe in a compelling narrative your interest in being a Conservation Connect Fellow and how your studies and career plans fit the intent of the fellowship. Please be sure to include your mailing address, email address, and phone number.
2. **Personal Statement:** In 250 words or less for each response, address each of the following three questions:
 - a. What life experiences have led you to choose your current field of study?
 - b. What is the topic of your master's thesis or doctoral dissertation, and how would a Conservation Connect Fellowship enrich its content and value?
 - c. Please describe three learning objectives for the fellowship.
3. **Resume** of academic and professional experience.
4. **Practicum Selection Form:** Please identify up to three practicum projects you are interested in using the table on the next page. Submit your project preferences using this survey link: <https://nationalforests.typeform.com/to/CfShdJce>.
5. **Letter of Recommendation (submitted separately):** The fellowship application requires one letter of recommendation from a member of the faculty in the student's academic program. The letter must address the merits of the applicant and their fit for this fellowship. The NFF requests the **letter writer** email a signed copy of his/her letter directly to lzamesnik@nationalforests.org by February 15, 2021 with FELLOWSHIP and the applicant name clearly in the subject line.

QUESTIONS? Email birey@nationalforests.org and lzamesnik@nationalforests.org



	Practicum project title	Practicum location <i>(may change due to Covid-19 status)</i>	Timeline for practicum	Practicum project description
1	Southern Idaho Forest Fund Program	Boise, Idaho	Summer 2021 and into Fall 2021	This Fellow will support the development of a new program of work, the Southern Idaho Forest Fund. Specifically, this Fellow will oversee the development of a landscape scale restoration strategy in collaboration with an Idaho-based stakeholder advisory group.
2	Wood for Life Tribal Fuelwood Initiative	Flagstaff or Northern Arizona	Summer 2021 and into Fall 2021	The primary focus of the project is supporting the expansion of a new partnership between the Navajo and Hopi tribes, Forest Service, and NFF focused on connecting wood from restoration projects with tribal communities in need of firewood (more info here: https://www.nationalforests.org/who-we-are/regional-offices/southernrockies/wood-for-life-tribal-fuelwood-initiative). Through this project, the Fellow will assist in coordination of the core team, develop outreach materials for interested participants, conduct stakeholder analysis and interviews, and develop a short report and/or map summarizing findings and any recommendations.
3	Facilitating and Coordinating Forest Collaborative Groups – summer practicum	Missoula, Montana	Summer 2021	Fellow will assist with facilitating the Beaverhead-Deerlodge Working Group and the Panhandle Forest Collaborative during the summer of 2021, potentially including in-person meetings and field trips. The Beaverhead-Deerlodge Working Group meets monthly and the Panhandle Forest Collaborative meets every other month.
4	Facilitating and Coordinating Forest Collaborative Groups – academic year practicum	Missoula, Montana	Academic Year 2021-2022	Fellow will assist with facilitating the Beaverhead-Deerlodge Working Group and the Panhandle Forest Collaborative during the 2021-2022 academic year. The Beaverhead-Deerlodge Working Group meets monthly and the Panhandle Forest Collaborative meets every other month.
5	Increasing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the NFF's grantees and internal operations	Flexible	Summer 2021 into Fall 2021	This fellowship practicum will use and build upon information the NFF has gathered about grantees to reduce barriers in the grantmaking process. Existing information includes survey and eligibility data; additional research including qualitative interviews could be incorporated. In parallel, the project will work to build internal strength and direction at the NFF through participation in and support of the staff DEI Working Group.

6	Colorado Project Coordination & Communications	Colorado	Summer 2021 with flexibility into Academic Year 2021-2022	Based on interest and skills, the Fellow will potentially assist with the following projects: (1) volunteer event coordination and NFF representation for projects on Colorado's majestic 14ers, (2) coordination and project support for the Front Range Trail Stewardship Strike Team and other recreation projects, (3) communications and marketing support, including writing, blogging, and creating marketing materials, and (4) committee coordination and facilitation to assist with the Eagle County Community Wildlife Roundtable.
7	Gunnison Stewardship Fund and Sustainable Tourism and Outdoor Recreation (STOR) Committee	Gunnison, Colorado	Summer 2021 or Academic Year 2021-2022	The Fellow will work with the NFF Stewardship Coordinator to grow partnerships and programming with the Gunnison Stewardship Fund and Sustainable Tourism and Outdoor Recreation (STOR) Committee. This work will be cross-boundary, with the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Colorado Parks & Wildlife, National Park Service, and local municipalities.
8	Partnerships on Every Forest	Flexible	Summer 2021 or Academic Year 2021-2022	NFF is working with the Forest Service's National Partnership Office to strengthen partnerships on every national forest through on-site visits and the documentation and dissemination of partnership lessons learned, challenges, and opportunities. The Fellow will assist in these efforts by working closely with the US Forest Service to conduct partnership assessments and implement partnership strategy.
9	Innovative Finance Webinar Series	Flexible	Summer 2021	The Innovative Finance for National Forests (IFNF) grant program supports the development and implementation of innovative finance models that leverage private capital to support the resilience of the National Forest System and surrounding lands. NFF provides technical assistance to ten grantees in the current cohort. Many of the grantees will be completing their projects in the coming year and we would like to provide a platform for them to share the innovative approaches and what they have learned exploring or developing these ideas. The Fellow will put together a webinar series for the IFNF projects to encourage sharing and connection around these projects.
10	Applying Forest Climate Policy on the Landscape	Eureka, CA	Summer 2021 on site, with some virtual work into the fall	The Fellow will work with the Watershed Research & Training Center to support community organizations and land management agencies in applying state-of-the-art geospatial infrastructure to identify forest climate adaptation and mitigation opportunities spanning California's southern Cascades, Modoc Plateau and North Coast regions. This practicum will focus on building and supporting the tools and strategies necessary for partners to move forest climate policy from concept to collaborative landscape implementation.

