



Nelson Institute for
Environmental Studies
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

THE COMMONS

For alumni and friends of the Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies
at the University of Wisconsin–Madison

Earth Day programming to focus on environmental justice

By Rebekah McBride



Join the Nelson Institute for a virtual celebration of Earth Day Thursday, April 22 through Friday, April 23, 2021. This event titled, [Nature at Work: Inspiring Just Responses for an Unruly World](#) will feature a wide range of live and prerecorded sessions from speakers who will discuss the ways in which an unruly cli-

mate, biodiversity decline, and water scarcity are placing a significant and unjust burden on the most vulnerable populations.

The virtual conference will feature keynote speaker **Ayana Johnson**, PhD, a marine biologist, policy expert, and writer who will discuss her book, *All We Can Save: Truth, Courage, and Solutions for the Climate Crisis* as well as conservation solutions rooted in environmental justice including the Urban Ocean Lab, a think tank she founded for the future of coastal cities.

“The Nelson Institute’s Earth Day programming has become a global phenomenon. People tune in to learn and share about environmental issues, sustainability, and justice from around the world,” said Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies Dean **Paul Robbins**. “This year is likely to be even bigger, with programming that touches on issues ranging from food and energy to Indigenous Ecological Knowledge. And Dr. Ayana Johnson’s keynote is a *be there* event; her book, “*All We Can Save*” is important, moving and urgent.”

In addition to the keynote address, the learning event will fea-

ture several live and prerecorded sessions on a variety of topics ranging from equitable outdoor access and the food, energy, water (FEW) Nexus to Nature-based Solutions (NbS) and the parallels between COVID-19 and climate change.

Following the success from last year, the Nelson Institute will once again be partnering with the [Wisconsin Sustainable Business Council](#) and [Evolution Marketing, LLC](#) to lead a virtual session on sustainable business. The session titled, “The future of work: how to create a just & sustainable workplace culture” will explore emerging trends and data related to the changing workforce landscape and dive into how businesses are adapting. From the lens of social sustainability, you will hear directly from businesses showcasing actions you can take to address these

trends and how to be prepared for the future of work.

“We are excited to offer the 2021 Earth Day programming virtually again this year,” said Nelson Institute Assistant Director of Community Engagement & Alumni Relations, **Emily Reynolds**. “The 2021 Earth Day: Nature at Work: Inspiring Just Responses for an Unruly World will feature an array of talks with speakers from Dr. Ayana Johnson to Green New Deal architect and Climate Policy Director at the Roosevelt Institute, **Rhiana Gunn-Wright**, to Professor of Environment and Sustainability **Kyle Whyte**, and many others sharing their perspectives on critical environmental topics.”

View the complete [program](#) and [register](#) now!



Dr. Ayana Johnson

Nelson Institute mourns the loss of Carrie Lee Nelson



Carrie Lee Nelson

Carrie Lee Nelson, the widow of Nelson Institute namesake, Wisconsin governor, and U.S. senator Gaylord Nelson, died March 15 at her home in Kensington,

Maryland. Nelson was a great supporter of the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the Nelson Institute.

Her daughter **Tia Nelson**, a [Nelson Institute Board of Visitors](#) member emerita and managing director of the [Outrider Foundation's](#) Climate Change program, shared memories of her mother's life with the *Wisconsin State Journal*, stating that it was in her mother's “nature to want to care for others” and that “there was absolutely nothing traditional about the way my mother walked through the world.”

The Nelson Institute faculty and staff extend our condolences to the Nelson family. [Read more about Nelson's life](#)

Connect with our campus partner, the Loka Initiative

The Nelson Institute is a proud partner of a new initiative on campus focused on bringing faith leaders and scientists together on climate change and the environment. You can [learn more about the Loka Initiative](#) and [sign up for its newsletter](#).

All We Can Save: Truth, Courage, and Solutions for the Climate Crisis with Dr. Ayana Johnson

Thursday, April 22
6:30-7:30 p.m. CDT
LIVE online session

Join keynote speaker, marine biologist, policy expert, and writer [Dr. Ayana Johnson](#) and [Sumudu Atapattu](#), the director of Research Centers and senior lecturer at the [University of Wisconsin-Madison Law School](#) for a discussion of Johnson's book, *All We Can Save: Truth, Courage, and Solutions for the Climate Crisis*. Together, they will explore conservation solutions rooted in environmental justice including the Urban Ocean Lab, a think tank Johnson founded for the future of coastal cities.

UniverCity Year partners with Egg Harbor to eliminate single-use plastics, Nelson Undergrad spearheads the project

By Janel Hutchison

[The Village of Egg Harbor in Door County, Wisconsin](#) is emerging as a local sustainability leader by initiating several projects that aim to improve the environmental, social, and economic wellbeing of the community. In addition to becoming the first [Green Tier Legacy Community](#) in Door County, Egg Harbor is also partnering with the [UniverCity Year program](#) (UCY) to improve the village's infrastructure.

“In Egg Harbor, we realize that there are thousands of people that are going to visit here annually, and we started thinking about what we can do to minimize their environmental impact...”

UCY is a University of Wisconsin–Madison program that connects university education, service, and research activities with cities to further the practice of sustainability. In UCY's partnership with Egg Harbor, a key goal is to eliminate single-use plastics within the village — something that Egg Harbor sees as essential to protecting the health of its Lake Michigan coastline, as well as encouraging sustainable living for its residents and visitors.

“In Egg Harbor, we realize that there are thousands of people that are going to visit here annually, and we started thinking about what we can do to minimize their environmental impact,” said **Lydia Semo**, Egg Harbor's environmental and sustainability coordinator. “So, we set this goal to eliminate single-use plastics... not only to minimize pollution, but [to] inspire our visitors to act more sustainably when they return home, and [to] inspire our residents to travel more sustainably as well.”



Lydia Semo, Egg Harbor's environmental and sustainability coordinator.

The project was inspired by Egg Harbor's “Green Tier Task Force,” which was formed shortly after Egg Harbor became a Green Tier Legacy Community in 2017. Green Tier is a Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources voluntary program that provides supportive resources to businesses and communities that commit to taking a systematic approach to improving their environment. For Egg Harbor, launching the Green Tier Task Force has resulted in sustainability initiatives including the installation of LED lights along the village roadways, energy-use evaluations, and the expansion of recycling and composting programs.

“Being a Green Tier Community has really helped us a lot,” said Semo. “It's helped us better communicate and network with other communities in Wisconsin. And there's just been nothing but positive sustainable goals, education, and communication that have come from it.”

Now entering its fourth year as a Green Tier Community, Egg Harbor's sustainability goals are continuing to expand. This past year Egg Harbor has taken on perhaps its most ambitious plan yet

— eliminating single-use plastics in the village.

A student steps up, and the project takes off

Eliminating single-use plastics is one of six sustainability projects that UCY is assisting with throughout its [2019-2022 partnership with Egg Harbor](#). The project took off in summer 2020, when University of Wisconsin–Madison undergraduate **Dylan Lennie** took on the initiative as the focus of an independent student research project.

Lennie is a senior at UW–Madison double majoring in [environmental studies](#) and [physical geography](#), while also pursuing a [Nelson Institute sustainability certificate](#). His work on the eliminating plastics project was overseen by **Tim Lindstrom**, a recent graduate of the Nelson Institute's Environment and Resources PhD program and instructor of *Environmental Studies 126: Principles of Environmental Science*.



Dylan Lennie, a UW–Madison undergraduate who took a leading role in UCY and Egg Harbor's elimination of single-use plastics project.

Lennie first met Lindstrom during the fall 2019 semester while taking *Environmental Studies* 126. At the end of the semester, Lennie asked Lindstrom for recommendations on possible internship opportunities, a request that Lindstrom said came at just the right moment.

“Dylan’s timing in this instance was perfect. I had just been contacted by **Gavin Luter**, Managing Director at UniverCity Alliance, who knew of the Egg Harbor opportunity and was reaching out to campus contacts,” said Lindstrom. “So, my role was merely to play matchmaker and then get out of the way once Dylan and the Egg Harbor folks were off and running.”

While Lindstrom served as an advisor to Lennie throughout the project, he took a “hands-off” approach that allowed Lennie to emerge as a leader. Likewise, Lindstrom said the UCY partnership was an opportunity for Lennie to gain real-world sustainability experience while also engaging in community service, something that is central to the Nelson Institute’s mission.

“I was thrilled to help facilitate this opportunity for Dylan because environmental stewardship in service of the Wisconsin Idea is central to the mission of the Nelson Institute and this partnership checked all the right boxes,” said Lindstrom. “It’s been immensely rewarding to observe Dylan grow over the years, and the Egg Harbor internship undoubtedly played a large role in shaping Dylan into the thoughtful, outward-focused, and soon-to-be-graduated person that he is today.”

Partnering with Egg Harbor to eliminate single-use plastics

Lennie began working in partnership with Egg Harbor at the beginning of 2020, at which point he was working with Semo to develop a single-use plastics elimination plan.

Initially, Lennie said the goal of the project was to begin the transition away from single-use plastics by surveying the plas-

tic consumption of Egg Harbor businesses and then conducting a cost-benefit analysis for replacing plastic materials with compostable products.

But 2020 had other plans. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Lennie said it became clear that it was not the right time to be asking businesses to commit to reducing their use of plastic.

“The goals of the project switched completely a month in,” said Lennie. “COVID took hold and it was pretty clear that those goals weren’t necessarily going to work for this past summer. Because these businesses, who [rely on] that five-month summer period of people coming to Door County, took a huge hit just from lack of foot-traffic. And the businesses were more worried about how they would get through the summer health-wise... switching to compostable products wasn’t on the front burner.”

Realizing these challenges, Lennie pivoted to focus on preparing business owners to make the switch to compostable products.

Laying the groundwork for a plastic-free Egg Harbor

Instead of pushing businesses to eliminate plastics immediately, Lennie launched a communications campaign aimed at educating business owners on the negative impact of single-use plastics in the Great Lakes region and informing them of Egg Harbor’s goal to eliminate single-use plastics.

Engaging in this work initially took the form of daily phone calls and emails with business owners to get the conversation started. Lennie also created a flyer to communicate the initiative’s key points of information and published a blog post high-

lighting how Egg Harbor residents can become more sustainable consumers.

However, after several weeks of trying to connect with Egg Harbor businesses remotely, Lennie was finding it difficult to form meaningful connections through phone calls and emails. He felt like he hit a wall.

“I realized pretty quickly that I wasn’t going to get a lot done if I couldn’t physically go into businesses and knock-on doors and talk to owners to see what people were thinking about the project,” said Lennie. “So, I drove up there one weekend and printed out fliers and walked door-to-door [with Lydia Semo]. That was very successful. I got more done that weekend than I had accomplished in the past three weeks in terms of just general communication.”

Lennie was cognizant of the challenges he would face as an “outsider” coming to Egg Harbor to speak with business owners about transitioning away from single-use plastics. He said he initially felt some nervousness about going door-to-door, not wanting to be perceived as a stranger telling people how to run their businesses.

Recognizing the challenges that Lennie was facing, Semo said she was impressed by Lennie’s ability to make the best of a difficult situation.

“It can be hard coming into a small community as an outside voice and getting people to understand you and trust you. And [Dylan] did a really nice job with



The header of a flyer Lennie created to communicate the importance of eliminating single-use plastics in Egg Harbor.

that,” said Semo. “He was very open with the business owners and he was very professional, and they appreciated that.”

Lennie said the majority of business owners were “on board” and excited about the village’s initiative to eliminate single-use plastics. In addition to directly communicating with business owners, Lennie also presented at a virtual town hall meeting, where he informed businesses and residents on how to make more sustainable lifestyle choices.

[The presentation](#) was broadcast via Facebook Live and Zoom. It provided information regarding the environmental impact of single-use plastics in Egg Harbor, as well as other sustainability topics, including energy-use, water-use, composting, and recycling. The second half of the presentation provided business-specific tips and resources for launching sustainability projects, demonstrating the village’s commitment to helping its local businesses achieve their sustainability goals.

Ultimately, Semo said the presentation served as one of Lennie’s most impactful contributions to the eliminating plastics project.

“[Dylan] essentially put together the whole presentation and just really knocked it out of the park,” said Semo. “We had a lot of positive feedback from that presentation and over 100 views of it just within the first day or so of it being on our website.”

The work continues

Egg Harbor is committed to helping businesses meet their sustainability goals. Semo said this will require a continued dialog about eliminating single-use plastics, as well as resources and assistance for businesses as they make this transition.

While the pandemic may have set back the timeline for eliminating single-use plastics in the village, Lennie feels confident in Egg Harbor’s ability to establish a plastic-free future.

“I think that in the future there’s a very good chance that Egg Harbor, it being a township along the coast of Lake Michigan,

could take its businesses and make them plastic-free to advocate for the Great Lakes,” said Lennie. “And I think that would be huge if Egg Harbor could do that — [to set] an example for other municipalities along the Great Lakes.”

Likewise, Semo is optimistic about Egg Harbor’s future. She said she is encouraged by the progress made by UCY’s partnership with Egg Harbor last summer, and while there is much more work to be done, she has faith that through the village’s determined and forward-thinking spirit, a more sustainable future for the Great Lakes region is on the horizon.

“We [in Egg Harbor] have held ourselves to that standard of being the trailblazer and setting forth these sustainable initiatives,” said Semo. “It’s really a community effort. I’m glad that we’re able to do what we’ve been doing and I’m even more glad to see that other communities are following in our footsteps.”



Egg Harbor, Wisconsin

The Village of Egg Harbor is home to 250 year-round and 2,500 seasonal residents. It is located on the Niagara Escarpment on the waters of Lake Michigan’s Green Bay and is one of the state’s top tourism destinations. In addition to being a Green Tier Legacy Community, the Village of Egg Harbor is a recipient of the Governor’s Tourism Stewardship Award. [Read more](#) about Egg Harbor’s commitment to sustainability.

[Learn how you can support the UniverCity Year program.](#)

CHE research group has successful launch

The [Center for Culture, History, and Environment](#) (CHE) is proud to sponsor several spring 2021 multidisciplinary environmental [research working groups](#). These sponsorships stem from CHE's new research initiative, which encourages cross-disciplinary collaborations in environmental research at the University of

Wisconsin-Madison and beyond.

Research groups interested in sponsorship were asked to submit a proposal in December and those selected became eligible to receive funds for research-related costs. UW-Madison faculty, graduate students, and academic staff were

eligible to apply. Learn more about specific projects in an upcoming edition of *The Commons*.

[Learn how you can support the Center for Culture, History, and Environment.](#)

Equinox storytellers elevate the power of nature

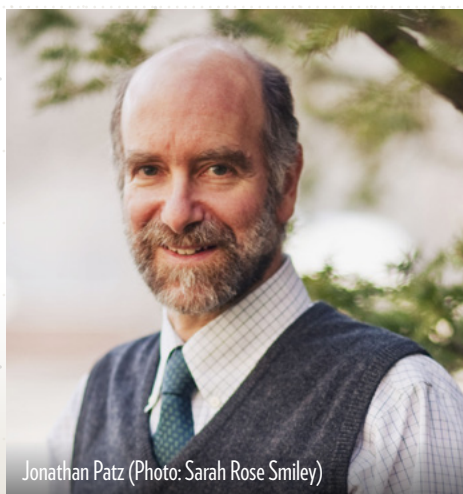
On March 20, the 2021 Spring Equinox, the [Center for Culture, History, and Environment](#) (CHE) co-hosted 20 storytellers and nature enthusiasts for an hour of storytelling centered around the environment. The virtual event included storytellers and attendees from across Wisconsin, including Madison, the Driftless region, Appleton, and the shores of Lake Superior. Keynote speaker and Nelson Institute alumnus [Curt Meine](#) shared [a story of lilacs that bloomed in the autumn](#). Other storytellers shared essays, poems, fiction, drawings, and photography that spoke to the power of nature. Participants

learned about surprising connections between Upham Woods, Aldo Leopold, August Derleth, and the glacial history of Wisconsin. The event was led by CHE graduate students including **Rudy Molinek** who said, "This project wouldn't have happened without the generous support of the [Graduate Public Humanities Exchange \(HEX\) program](#) from the Center for the Humanities. Thanks to this pilot project, [Upham Woods](#) is looking forward to hosting more Storytelling Summits in the future, and exploring new ideas related to storytelling and the environment."



Historic lilac hedge in Cassell, Wis. known for double-blooming in spring and autumn. Photo: Curt Meine

Nelson Institute Professor and GHI Director calls for increased research on environmental disruption and disease dynamics



Jonathan Patz (Photo: Sarah Rose Smiley)

Nelson Institute professor and director of the University of Wisconsin-Madison [Global Health Institute](#) (GHI), [Jonathan Patz](#) is among a group of researchers calling for interdisciplinary collaboration to better understand the roots of zoonotic diseases.

Published March 5 in [The Lancet Planetary Health](#), the call-to-action and research paper titled, "Land use-induced spillover: A call-to-action to safeguard environmental, animal, and human health" details why diseases move from

animals into human populations. The paper describes the infect-shed-spill-spread cycle and how that can be interrupted to decrease zoonotic diseases. It also showcases the impact climate change and deforestation have on increasing the infect-shed-spill-spread cycle.

"We have an opportunity for even earlier prevention by broadening our focus to include relationships between environmental disruption and disease dynamics even before the first human is infected," Patz said. [Read more.](#)

While ozone in the stratosphere is critical to maintaining life on Earth, surface ozone, shown here, is a toxic gas to most plant and animal species. NASA merges satellite data with models to provide a snapshot of chemistry throughout the atmosphere at any given time and help predict air quality worldwide. Photo: NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center/Scientific Visualization Studio

UW atmospheric scientist bridges science, policy, public health to bring space-based data to the world

Gaylord Nelson Distinguished Professor of Environmental Studies & Atmospheric and Oceanic Sciences, [Tracey Holloway](#) was recently named director of the third generation [NASA Health and Air Quality Applied Sciences Team \(HAQAST\)](#), having served as director for previous

generations as well. HAQAST is made up of 14 lab groups and over 70 researchers who use NASA satellite data to improve understanding of air quality in the U.S. and around the world.

In addition to her work with HAQAST,

Holloway also works on her own research, teaches, and mentors. She is also involved with the [Earth Science Women's Network](#), which she helped start, and [Science Moms](#), a program which connects mothers concerned about their children's futures with climate science. [Read more.](#)

Dean Paul Robbins featured on Wisconsin Sea Grant podcast



Nelson Institute Dean **Paul Robbins** was featured on a recent episode of the [Wisconsin Sea Grant](#) podcast Introduced highlighting the environmental challenges of aquatic invasive species. The episode titled, *Becoming Invasive* explores the cultural and political themes surrounding invasive species. Robbins is featured between minute 15:00 and 29:00 of the podcast. The episode is available [here](#) or wherever you listen to podcasts.

Professor James LaGro named Landscape Architecture Foundation (LAF) fellow



James A. LaGro

Nelson Institute affiliate and [Department of Planning and Landscape Architecture](#) professor [James A. LaGro](#) has been named a [Landscape Architecture Foundation \(LAF\) fellow](#). As a part of this fellowship, LaGro will “develop ideas that have the potential to create positive and profound change in the profession, environment, and humanity.”

Specifically, LaGro plans to advance the science of landscape architecture by surveying landscape architects with doctorates to identify additional opportunities for doctoral education and mentoring in landscape architecture. This fellowship will run from June 2021 to late-spring 2022.

Assistant Professor Morgan Edwards bridges policy and climate science

By Rebekah McBride

Fossil fuel phase-out is at the heart of [Morgan Edwards'](#) research. A Nelson Institute [Center for Sustainability and the Global Environment \(SAGE\)](#) member and assistant professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison's [La Follette School of Public Affairs](#), Edwards utilizes her background in engineering, science, and policy, to study the intersection of energy transitions and the climate



Morgan Edwards

crisis, specifically focusing on the multi-dimensional impacts of human energy use.

"Since I was in high school, I knew I wanted to work on climate change. It's a big, complex problem that's deeply intertwined with many other societal problems,"

Edwards said. "As a student, I couldn't decide whether I wanted to focus on science or policy. At first, my plan was to go into policy. Along the way, I kept noticing how the way we measure environmental impacts can shape policy outcomes in hidden but important ways. This got me really interested in the science."

After high school, Edwards attended the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill where she earned her de-

"I felt an immediate connection with the Nelson Institute and the Wisconsin Idea, that research should solve problems and improve people's lives beyond the classroom."

gree in environmental science and economics. She continued her education at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) earning a Master of Science in technology and policy and later, a PhD in engineering systems. Upon graduation, Edwards worked as a President's Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Maryland before joining the Nelson Institute and La Follette School of Public Affairs in 2020.

Edwards now focuses much of her research on accelerating the phase-out of coal power plants, fixing leaks in natural gas distribution systems, and assessing the equity implications of large-scale use of negative emissions technologies.

"My research focuses on energy transitions and the climate crisis. I draw on mixed quantitative and qualitative methods, combining large datasets and community knowledge with systems modeling, to assess and track the multi-dimensional impacts of human energy use" said Edwards. "My projects focus on fossil fuel phase-out and, more recently, carbon dioxide removal. For example, right now I'm assessing policies to accelerate the phase-out of coal power plants, fix leaky natural gas pipelines and transition to alternative heating systems, and evaluating the environmental and equity implications of large-scale use of carbon dioxide removal."

In addition to her research, Edwards is also teaching several courses including the Cost-Benefit Analysis at the graduate level and Evidence-Based Policymaking at the undergraduate level. Edwards says her goal as a professor is to empower students to create and critically evaluate evidence for policymaking.

"Even though Morgan joined SAGE during the pandemic, she hit the ground running and is already a familiar face within SAGE and in the broader campus community," said Nelson Institute SAGE director, [Carol Barford](#). "Her research, teaching and outreach really strengthen SAGE's mission of policy relevant science."

Edwards shared that she is honored to be a part of the UW-Madison community and is looking forward to continuing to work on new research.

"I felt an immediate connection with the Nelson Institute and the Wisconsin Idea, that research should solve problems and improve people's lives beyond the classroom," Edwards said. "I love being at a world-class research institution that is so deeply connected to communities throughout the state and brings an interdisciplinary perspective to tackling complex environmental problems."

[Learn how you can support the Center for Sustainability and the Global Environment.](#)



Elizabeth Hennessy

Professor Elizabeth Hennessy receives Best Article Award

Nelson Institute and Department of History professor [Elizabeth Hennessy](#) has received the 2021 Leopold-Hidy Best Article Award for her article [“Saving Species: The Co-evolution of Tortoise Taxonomy and Conservation in the Galápagos Islands”](#) in the journal *Environmental History*. The article makes a case for engaging with the famed Galápagos Tortoise as a historical concept rather than operating as if it were a fixed scientific category. The editorial board praised Hennessy for taking “what could have been a mundane history of a change in taxonomic designation and craft[ing] it into a lively essay on the histories of science and conservation and of the very concept of species itself.” In the board’s opinion, the article is “not only captivating in the way it is written, but also encourages environmental historians to push the bounds of the discipline.”

[Read more.](#)



Calla Norris finds her passion in local restoration and conservation efforts

By Olivia Van Den Heuvel

University of Wisconsin-Madison senior and [Community Environmental Scholar](#) **Calla Norris** is exploring her growing passion for conservation through opportunities while obtaining her degrees in [environmental studies](#) ([Nelson Institute](#)) and [people-environment](#) ([geography](#)).

Norris decided on this combination of majors because she was interested in studying interactions between people and the natural world.

“People are like a big ecosystem,” Norris said, “I wanted to learn more about how to bridge the gap between people and nature, and society and the environment.”

She enjoys how broad the topic of environmentalism is but took special interest in prairie restoration because it combines academics with field work and manual labor.

Norris works closely with volunteers at [Goose Pond Sanctuary](#) to aid in restoration efforts. She has participated in and even led controlled prairie burns in the area to promote the growth of prairie grass and wildlife and to mitigate invasive species.

Norris works with Goose Pond as a member of [Nelson Institute’s Community and Environmental Scholars Program](#) (CESP), where students work directly with community members to implement environmental service-learning projects in nearby areas. This program encourages a cohort of students from diverse backgrounds to combine professional development and community service with their knowledge of the environment.

Norris has been participating in CESP for eight semesters and enjoys the real world, hands-on application of concepts she has learned in her classes.

“People are like a big ecosystem. I wanted to learn more about how to bridge the gap between people and nature, and society and the environment.”

She explains that CESP helped her find a sense of belonging and community at UW-Madison.

“In such a large school, it can be really hard to meet your group of people, and CESP allowed me to do that.”

Graham Steinhauer, Land Steward at Goose Pond Sanctuary, has worked with Norris since she began volunteering there.

“Calla was new to prairie restoration when she joined us in 2018. Her enthusiasm, curiosity, and pertinent questions since then are responsible for the dramatic increase in her knowledge of prairie restoration at national, state, and local scales. Dedicated volunteers are invaluable to Goose Pond and other conservation organizations,” he said.

Additionally, Norris participated in the [Wild Rockies Field Institute program](#) (WRFI), which included a semester of backpacking through the [Colorado Pla-](#)

[teau](#). WRFI creates an immersive outdoor classroom experience where students are taught through experiential learning, a combination of readings and discussions in conjunction with field work and meetings with local community members in the areas they visit.

“It really was that hands-on, tactile learning. We had to carry our textbooks with us, even while backpacking all day,” Norris said.

WRFI allowed Norris to consider different perspectives on environmental issues. She explained that something that might seem small to most could significantly impact local towns, communities, and cultures.

For example, Norris learned that the [Bears Ears National Monument](#) in Utah, a cultural indigenous site, could lose its title as a monument, meaning that the land would be removed from federal protections and could be used for resource extractions like oil drilling. While this decision would be

beneficial economically, it could decimate indigenous land and history.

“People have relied on this land for generations for traditional use and it has a significant cultural importance. Since learning about this, I’ve been seeking out indigenous perspectives as a way to become more informed and more inclusive,” Norris said.

Norris compliments Professor [Cathy Middlecamp](#), CESP Co-Director Robert Beattie and [Nelson Institute Undergraduate Advisor Becky Ryan](#) for helping her seek out opportunities with CESP and WRFI.

“I can tell they really care about my well-being and success, and that’s so special,” she said.

Moving forward, Norris is most interested in a career exploring regenerative farming and restoration of environmental resources. She says she hopes to keep learning about the natural world and is remaining open to opportunities that come her way.

“I don’t know what I want to be when I grow up, but I want it to be outside,” Norris joked.



A picture of a controlled prairie burn, taken by Calla Norris.

She advises current and future Nelson Institute students to take advantage of all the resources around them.

“Seize the opportunities and enjoy them. Go a little slower and do whatever you can to get as much out of an experience as possible, that’s key in education.”

If you are interested in volunteering or learning more about the restoration efforts at [Goose Pond Sanctuary](#), contact [Graham Steinhauer](#) for more information.

[Learn how you can support the CESP program.](#)

Nelson graduate student receives grants to increase justice within food systems

By Rebekah McBride

For Nelson Institute [Environment and Resources](#) doctoral candidate **Sarah Jane Ugoretz**, ensuring a healthy and professional relationship between employers and employees is a key aspect of a sustainable and just food system.

As such, Janes Ugoretz has spent her academic career working to better understand the employee-employer relationship on organic vegetable farms. Thanks to assistance from a [Baldwin Funded Seed Project Grant](#), a USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant, and a [North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education \(NCR-SARE\) Graduate Student Grant](#), this research is contributing to the development of employee-informed labor management recommendations as well as a farmer-facing labor management training program and associated toolkit. These resources will specifically support farmers and employees working on organic vegetable farms in the Midwest.

Having grown up in the region, Janes Ugoretz knew she wanted to focus on Midwestern organic farms. “I wanted to really dig-in and better understand the labor experience from the farmer and the employee perspective” Janes Ugoretz shared. “I had been thinking about the organic certification process, which ensures a certain degree of environmental sustainability, but it doesn’t automatically create social or economic sustainability. I’m mindful that when someone is buying an organic product, there may be an assumption built in that by buying organic, they’re supporting thriving and fairly treated farmers and employees, but the organic label doesn’t guarantee that.”

This led Janes Ugoretz to explore what organic vegetable farmers were doing to support social and economic sustainability on their farms.

“I began by talking with farmers, and one of the things that kept coming up was the connection many would make between their employees and the long-term sustainability of their businesses,” Janes Ugoretz said. “Many also shared that they struggle with attracting and retaining employees from year to year. So that has pivoted my work in a way that I didn’t expect, but I’m happy that it did.”

Thanks to funding from the Baldwin Grant, Janes Ugoretz was able to talk with regional farm employees



for her second round of interviews to learn more about “how they perceive, experience, and create socio-economic sustainability on certified organic vegetable farms in the upper Midwest.” While talking with employees, Janes Ugoretz asked them to share things that they value in a labor experience and factors that might keep them on the farm from one year to the next.

Through these interviews and with previously collected data, Janes Ugoretz is developing resources and tools that can strengthen positive employer-employee relationships and increase equity. These tools are being shared in two ways. First, through a report Janes Ugoretz is compiling to share farm employee feedback and showcase labor management tools, policies, and practices that may serve as jumping off points for farmers who are interested in harnessing this information in a targeted way. Secondly, by offering free, virtual workshops that provide education and training in topics that farm employees have expressed interest in. The first event, organized in coordination with Claire Strader of FairShare [CSA Coalition](#) and Alexia Kulwiec with the [School for Workers](#), took place in early 2021 and had 24 attendees from eight different states.

"The evaluations reflected a positive experience, which is of course exciting," Janes Ugoretz said. In fact, one attendee shared the following in an evaluation. "While I've been a manager on the farm in some capacity for several years, I've never done any formal learning about management skills or conflict resolution. I think this is so useful and important for anyone in management positions—even for people who have been doing it for

In addition to this work related to the Baldwin Grant, Janes Ugoretz is also working with Strader, Kulwicz, and a group of organic vegetable producers to create a labor management training program. The program, [Peer-to-Peer Labor Management Training for Diversified Organic Vegetable Producers](#), is funded through a USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant and through an NCR-SARE Graduate Student Grant.

pleting her dissertation, she looks forward to continuing this work in her capacity as the manager of the Organic Vegetable Farm Manager Apprenticeship Program at FairShare CSA Coalition.

In the meantime, she's thankful for the support she's received from the Nelson Institute and the campus community.

"My advisor **Mike Bell** [a professor in the [Department of Community and Environmental Sociology](#)] has been really supportive throughout, always encouraging me to pursue my ideas and supporting me through the challenging parts. I started my PhD journey in C&E Sociology in 2012 and left and returned a few times, really unsure of what my path was. Happily, I landed in Nelson, but Mike has been with me the whole way, cheering me on." Having the opportunity to do applied work has been crucial for Janes Ugoretz. "Being in conversation with farmers and employees has made this work feel very meaningful."

[Learn how you can support the Environment and Resources program.](#)

"I began by talking with farmers, and one of the things that kept coming up was the connection many would make between their employees and the long-term sustainability of their businesses..."

many years. I really appreciate the work you all are doing."

Janes Ugoretz also shared that an additional outcome of these events is the formation of a listserv that allows farm managers to connect with one another to share experiences, troubleshoot challenges, and more.

For Janes Ugoretz, working on these hands-on projects that are built upon and incorporate farmers' and employees' needs and interests feels like what she's been working towards. As a child she often helped her family in the garden and she has long been involved in organizations that support food systems and equity within the food system. After com-



Thanks for participating in the 2021 Day of the Badger!

THANK YOU! We are grateful to all who participated in UW-Madison's Spring 2021 Day of the Badger. Together we raised a total of \$4,070 for the Nelson Institute and spread a great deal of Nelson spirit and pride all around the world, as well. We are grateful to you all for your support of the Nelson Institute and its continued success!

Support Nelson

Interested in supporting the Nelson Institute? There are many ways to contribute to the Nelson Institute – participating in our events, mentoring our students, providing connections to your personal networks, and making financial gifts. All of these are necessary and important to us and we invite you to invest in our community in the way that makes the most sense to you. [Learn more about all of the great academic programs, research centers, and public programs we offer.](#)

Gifts in any amount are needed and appreciated!



Flood resiliency program draws robust crowd

By Jackson Parr

On March 24, six students from the [Nelson Institute's Water Resources Management M.S. program](#) (WRM) presented their findings from a two-year capstone project identifying ways to improve flood resilience in the Coon Creek watershed. The event was a culmination of the pro-

“The students did an incredible job of immersing themselves into a really complicated topic that sent them working across multiple disciplines and getting to know the community as much as they could with virtual interviews and even a few weeks of socially-distanced field-work, all while living with the stress, uncertainty, and isolation associated with the pandemic. They have been an amazing group to work with,” Booth said.

During the March 24 presentation, the students fielded questions on the watershed hydrology, public infrastructure costs, the framework of a joint powers board, and where the resources to institute flood management projects might come from. Attendees included county officials from Vernon, La Crosse, and Monroe counties, representatives from the water resources community at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and residents from the watershed.

“We’re hopeful our work will contribute to greater resilience to devastating floods that the region has experienced.”

fessional Master of Science program, which provides an opportunity for students to work with a client on a real-world water resources management issue.

“We have really enjoyed working on this interdisciplinary project that has such a direct impact on residents of the watershed and the rest of the state,” said WRM student Jackson Parr. “We’re hopeful our work will contribute to greater resilience to devastating floods that the region has experienced.”

Approximately 50 people attended the virtual presentation, “Flood Resilience in the Coon Creek Watershed”. WRM advisor Eric Booth selected the research topic following devastating floods in the watershed that resulted in the breach of three dams and damages in the millions of dollars.

The students, Rajpreet Grewal, Cathryn Herlihey, Robert Rosner, Rachael Sodeman, Jackson Parr, and Kayla Wandsnider, took an interdisciplinary approach to researching flood resilience. This included taking infiltration measurements across different land uses in the watershed, assessing the changes in land management practices through GIS and determining the economic impacts of changes in land use, conducting interviews with watershed managers and members of the general public, analyzing the institutional landscapes as it relates to flooding, and identifying indicators of resilience within the community.

“I enjoyed making field measurements, talking with local stakeholders, and applying hydrologic and GIS coursework to the infiltration and runoff analysis for the project,” said WRM student Robert Rosner.

Congressional representatives also attended the event, commenting that issues related to flooding and climate change are an ongoing concern at the federal level.

“You’re kind of getting at a lot of the questions I’ve had about flooding and land use and resiliency,” said Tim Hundt, Congressional Aide to U.S. Representative Ron Kind. “Thank you again for the work and we’ll be using a lot of this information moving forward.”

The WRM cohort is continuing work on the written report, which is expected to be published in summer 2021.

Watch the video of the [presentation](#).

[Learn how you can support the Water Resources Management program.](#)



Through campus and industry collaborations, WSB's Grainger Center tackles pressing issues in supply chain management

By Wisconsin School of Business Staff

Corporations worldwide are looking for ways to make their operations more sustainable, and supply chain managers play a lead role in these efforts. Recycling of materials, particularly plastics, is integral to green business practices, but many view it as difficult and costly. In fact, experts estimate that less than 10% of plastic has been recycled since the 1950s.

The [Grainger Center for Supply Chain Management](#) at the Wisconsin School of Business is tackling relevant issues such as this, most recently with the event, "[Sustainable Success: The Future of Plastic](#)," a virtual panel discussion on the recycling challenges inherent with plastic. Through a partnership with the University of Wisconsin–Madison's [Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies](#), the dialogue was the fourth segment in a sustainability series that prepares students to analyze and address pressing issues facing businesses today.

"Supply chain and sustainability are integrally linked, so it's crucial to have an understanding of the issues, many of which don't always have simple, immediate an-

swers or solutions," says Jake Dean, director of the Grainger Center. "Business and sustainability are not at opposite ends of the spectrum, and that's one of the main reasons why we started this longstanding partnership with the Nelson Institute was to open up a broader dialogue for all."



The event featured UW–Madison faculty experts as well as industry leaders such as Steve Alexander, president and chief executive officer of the trade organization Association of Plastic Recyclers, whose

members represent more than 95 percent of the processing capacity for post-consumer plastics in North America.

"There has to be some recognition by the brand companies at one end about the impact of their design in terms of what they're doing to the stream," Alexander said. "At the end of the day, we have to be able to capture more material, process it better, and capture that discarded microbead before it gets into the water stream and the marine environment. They talk about the circular economy. This is all circularly related. There's not one silver bullet out there that is going to solve the issue. It's really multi-faceted."

Speakers also included Illinois Tool Works, Inc. executives Shawn Welch and Carolyn Woznicki. Welch is group president of the company's packaging equipment and consumables platform; Woznicki is vice president of global strategic sourcing and environmental, health, and safety. She is also a member of the Grainger Center executive advisory board, a group of corporate partners that gives students direct access to senior executives at leading

firms renowned for supply chain excellence.

Through collaborations with campus partners like the Nelson Institute and with industry, the Grainger Center focuses on topical issues that affect the supply chain

“We are focused on helping students tackle the challenges of today—whether that’s sustainability or big data or even a pandemic—as well as the challenges that will emerge tomorrow.”
-Jake Dean

field and offer a global perspective, such as sustainability, blockchain, cryptocurrency, big data, and many more.

Topical relevance and industry connections are also vital to another key area for the center: preparing its supply chain management students for career success. The center frequently partners with its industry and center advisory board members from leading companies such as Google, Kraft-Heinz, and Medtronic to offer supply chain students applied learning classes that incorporate guest speakers, site visits, case competitions, and professional development activities.

“The center’s four pillar approach—individualized student development, interdisciplinary orientation, global experiences, and integration of applied learning—positions students to lead regardless of what future area of the supply chain field they may enter,” Dean says. “We are focused on helping students tackle the challenges of today—whether that’s sustainability or big data or even a pandemic—as well as the challenges that will emerge tomorrow.”

Watch the video: [“Sustainable Success: The Future of Plastic”](#)

[Learn how you can support the Sustainable Success Lecture Series.](#)



Spring 2021 CHE Environmental Colloquia

The [Center for Culture, History, and Environment](#) (CHE) invites you to attend the Spring 2021 CHE Environmental Colloquia series on Wednesdays from noon-1 p.m. (CDT)



Ruth Goldstein

April 14

Mercury Rising: Conflict Metals, Alchemy, and Planetary Health

Assistant professor of Gender and Women’s Studies, Ruth Goldstein will examine the contaminated colonial and alchemical legacies that inform the roles that gold miners and chemists play in current extractive rainforest economies that utilize mercury. Efforts to track and mitigate, if not eliminate, the use of mercury in Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining (ASGM) cite the damaging effects for maternal/fetal health. This paper concludes with questions of environmental and economic justice, with the aim of revising toxic endings to mercury rising in human bodies and earth’s thermometer. [Learn more and register.](#)



Radhika Govindrajan

April 21

The Ethics and Politics of Attachment in Central Himalayan Cow-Protection Politics

Radhika Govindrajan, an associate professor of Anthropology at the University of Washington, will focus her talk on how conceptualizing love as work can provide a fresh perspective on scholarly concerns about the politics of love. The talk will address this question through an ethnographic exploration of a right-wing cow-protection movement in the Indian Himalayas. Govindrajan will trace how the different labors involved in loving cows produce a varying set of relationships and obligations that crucially shape the politics and ethics of love.

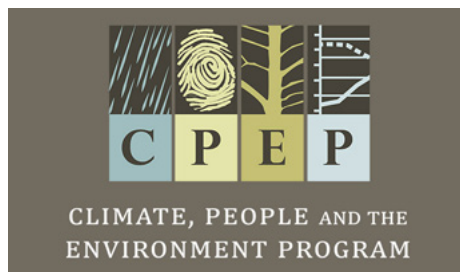
[Learn more and register.](#)



Weston series

The Weston Roundtable Series is designed to promote a robust understanding of sustainability science, engineering, and policy through weekly lectures co-sponsored by the Center for Sustainability and the Global Environment (SAGE), the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, and the Office of Sustainability.

[View upcoming lectures.](#)



CPEP seminars

Each semester the Climate, People, and the Environment Program (CPEP) hosts a weekly seminar featuring lectures by visiting speakers as well as presentations by CPEP faculty, scientists, and students. CPEP seminar presentations are held in conjunction with the Department of Atmospheric and Oceanic Sciences (AOS) and are open to the public.

[View upcoming lectures.](#)



Join us

in celebrating the Nelson Institute year-round by [purchasing branded merchandise](#), shirts, sweatshirts, jackets, bags, and more.



New Alumni Welcome Happy Hour on LinkedIn

Thursday, May 13, 2021 4-5 p.m. CDT

The Nelson Institute invites you to attend a New Alumni Welcome Happy Hour on the [Nelson Institute's LinkedIn group page](#). Anyone with a LinkedIn account is welcome to join. If you do not have an account, you can [join for free](#).

[RSVP](#)



Facebook



Twitter



Instagram



LinkedIn

We invite you to stay connected by updating your contact information by joining [Badger Bridge](#) or making simple updates [here](#).

Feedback or questions about *The Commons*, please email: communications@nelson.wisc.edu