



THE COMMONS

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

Faculty lead Mellon grant project to create anti-racism education

Two Nelson Institute faculty have received funding from the Mellon Foundation “Just Futures Initiative” for their work on a new project titled, “Humanities Education for Anti-racism Literacy (HEAL) in the Sciences and Medicine.” Elizabeth Hennessy, a professor in the History Department and the Nelson Institute Center for Culture, History, and Environment and Monica White, a professor in Community and Environmental Sociology and the Nelson Institute will work together with a team of faculty, students, and community members to address racism in academic disciplines and a lack of diverse representation in STEMM across sectors.



Alumnus named to President Joe Biden’s Presidential Personnel Office

Nelson Institute alumnus and Emeritus Board of Visitors member, Matt Dannenberg has been named the Senior Associate Director for President Joe Biden’s Presidential Personnel Office. During the campaign, Dannenberg served as Wisconsin Coalitions Director for the Biden-Harris Campaign having previously served as the Census Director at the nonprofit, Wisconsin Voices and in several roles with the Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters. A proud member of the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Dannenberg has also been involved in the Native Vote program.



Photo: Creative Commons

Nelson Institute launches the Center for Ecology and the Environment



Center for Ecology
and the Environment
NELSON INSTITUTE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

The Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies recently announced that it will be adding a new center that will focus on ecology. The Center for Ecology and the Environment will continue the work of Wisconsin Ecology, which has been operating as the campus home for ecology for more than 20 years. Formalizing this work under the new center will provide additional opportunities for the 23 different ecology related academic units on campus.

Andrea Hicks named first Hanson Family Fellow

The Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies is pleased to announce that Nelson Institute affiliate and assistant professor of Civil & Environmental Engineering, Andrea Hicks has been named the inaugural Hanson Family Fellow in Sustainability. This fellowship is made possible thanks to a generous donation from the Lewis P. Hanson family through the Hanson Family Fund for Sustainability Research; a fund that supports faculty and student sustainability-related research as well as an annual sustainability-related public lecture.



Professor Steve Ventura retires

After nearly four decades, alumnus and longtime Nelson Institute faculty member Steve Ventura retired in 2020. During his time with the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Ventura's roles have ranged from student to Director of the Nelson Institute Land Tenure Center and Chair of the Land Resources program (now Environment & Resources). His many contributions have earned him several awards which include being named a Distinguished Alumnus in 2020.



Steve Ventura

5-Year 2020 Legacy Campaign was a success!

THANK YOU to the entire Nelson Institute community for your generosity and support during our 5-year 2020 Legacy Campaign!

This campaign honored the 50th anniversary of the Nelson Institute and the 50th anniversary of Earth Day, both of which took place in 2020.

Between January 2016 and December 2020, nearly 700 people contributed \$5.1 Million in financial support to the Nelson Institute, underpinning our excellent research, academic programs, and outreach efforts.

Hundreds more contributed valuable time, talent, and connections that helped the Nelson Institute advance new initiatives, reach new audiences, and prepare our students to thrive before and after graduation.

The Nelson Institute owes its success to our strong, vibrant, diverse community – one in which every individual effort makes a difference. We thank you for being part of our first 50 years and hope that you will stick with us for the next 50! Please know how much we appreciate all of you and how thankful we are to count you among our friends.

To revisit the highlights of our 50th anniversary year, please visit 50.nelson.wisc.edu



Photo: Nanang Sujana, CIFOR.org

Holly Gibbs contributes to several research projects related to deforestation, cattle, and agriculture

Nelson Institute Center for Sustainability and the Global Environment (SAGE) affiliate and associate professor of Geography, Holly Gibbs has been involved in a wide range of research over the past few months. Most recently, her work on deforestation and cattle was featured in *Bloomberg*. Additionally, Gibbs co-authored the paper, "Brazil's Amazon Soy Moratorium reduced deforestation," which was published in *Nature Food*.

Gibbs was also a co-author on the recent *Nature Sustainability* paper, "Impact of palm oil sustainability certification on village well-being and poverty in Indonesia." This paper investigates the effective-ness of Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) certification in reducing poverty among villages with oil palm plantations.



A new compostable food waste drop off site is pictured just north of Parking Lot 76 Ramp near the Goodman Softball Complex on the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus on May 21, 2012. The site is part of an ongoing sustainability initiative to increase composting of pre- and post-consumer food waste on campus. An additional food waste collection station is located in Parking Lot 62. Photo: Jeff Miller/UW-Madison

Andrea Hicks named interim director of Sustainability Education and Research for the Office of Sustainability

Nelson Institute affiliate and assistant professor of Civil & Environmental Engineering, Andrea Hicks will be joining the Office of Sustainability as the interim Director of Sustainability Education and Research in 2021, following the retirement of the previous director and Nelson Institute faculty member Cathy Middlecamp. In this role, Hicks will utilize her back-ground in environmental engineering to enhance sustainability-related research and education efforts across campus.

Nelson Institute Center for Sustainability and the Global Environment (SAGE) aiming for continued growth in 2021

As 2021 begins, Carol Barford, the director of the Nelson Institute Center for Sustainability and the Global Environment (SAGE), is preparing for another busy year. As director of SAGE, Barford supports the ten core faculty and several staff members and students at SAGE who examine the connections between natural resources, technology, policy, human health, security, and changes in the global environment.

Nelson Institute Dean Paul Robbins discusses urban ecology during the COVID-19 pandemic on The UW Now

Nelson Institute Dean Paul Robbins was recently featured on “The Future of Cities” an event hosted by the Wisconsin Alumni Association’s The UW Now, a virtual livestream discussion series that showcases the University of Wisconsin-Madison’s top experts in connection

to current events and issues.

Robbins addressed COVID-19 in relation to urban ecology and the environment. In a

presentation titled “Lessons from Lockdown: Urban ecologies after the Anthropause” he discussed the positive impact the pandemic has had on the environment, such as increased air quality and the reemergence of wildlife in urban areas.



Laurel Fletcher

Nelson Institute administrator named NASA Unsung Hero and receives Pringle Award for University Staff

Nelson Institute Center for Climatic Research (CCR) and Center for Sustainability and the Global Environment (SAGE) administrator Laurel Fletcher has been named a NASA Unsung Hero and received the Pringle Award for University Staff.

Subscriptions to satellite alerts linked to decreased deforestation in Africa

Research led by Fanny Moffette, a postdoctoral researcher in applied economics and an affiliate of the Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies and the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics, gleans new insight into the efficacy of using the Global Land Analysis and Discovery system (GLAD) to reduce deforestation. Recently published in *Nature Climate Change*, the study found that African countries that subscribed to GLAD experienced an 18 percent drop in deforestation over the course of two years, providing evidence that the system could be an effective way to combat forest loss.

GLAD uses satellites to detect decreases in forest cover in the tropics, and then provides frequent, high-resolution alerts when it detects a drop. By subscribing to this service, governments and other organizations receive pertinent data on forest cover, which can then be used to inform interventions. The research suggests that by reducing deforestation, automated alert systems like GLAD could be an effective way to reduce global carbon emissions.



Nelson Institute Dean co-authors paper that warns of “green sacrifice zones,” calls for non-colonial climate action



Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies Dean, Paul Robbins, and senior research fellow at Pompeu Fabra University (Barcelona, Spain), Christos Zografos, are co-authors of the recently released paper, “Green Sacrifice Zones, or Why a Green New Deal Cannot Ignore the Cost Shifts of Just Transitions.” Published in the Cell Press journal, One Earth, the paper evaluates how Green New Deal proposals, which seek to dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions while also progressing social and economic equity, are at risk of becoming agents of colonialism.

Nelson Institute researchers' evaluation puts **MGE** net-zero carbon goal on path to limit global warming

Madison Gas and Electric's plan for net-zero carbon electricity by 2050 reflects a pace of carbon reduction consistent with limiting the rise in global temperatures to 1.5 degrees Celsius to prevent the most severe impacts of climate change, according to an evaluation conducted by University of Wisconsin-Madison scientists. Led by Tracey Holloway, professor in UW-Madison's Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies and Department of Atmospheric and Oceanic Sciences, the study used climate modeling conducted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and compared MGE's goals to modeled,

warming-limiting pathways for the electricity sector in industrialized nations.

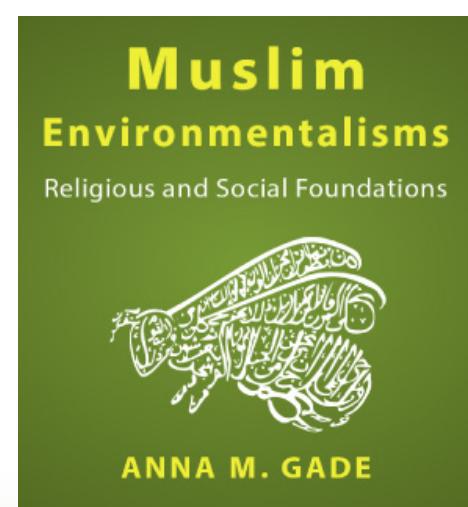


MGE wind turbine farm. Photo: MGE

Associate Dean for Research & Education **Anna M. Gade** received accolades for her book

Villas Distinguished Achievement Professor in the Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies and Associate Dean for Research & Education, Anna M. Gade has received rave reviews for her recent book, *Muslim Environmentalisms: Religious and Social Foundations* (Columbia University Press, 2019). Hailed as an "instant classic" by Omid Safi and a "much-needed addition to environmental thinking" by Anna Tsing, the book has received wide attention and praise in the US and overseas over the past year. The book makes a major

intervention in Environmental Humanities with its provocative claim that the environment is an ethical idea. Not only does *Muslim Environmentalisms* render a complete treatment of religious, political, and scientific approaches to the environment, past and present, but it also engages cutting-edge topics in global Environmental Studies such as the Rights of Nature, decolonizing approaches, and environmental justice.





ADVANCING EARTH AND SPACE SCIENCE

Professor and affiliate receive top atmospheric science award

Gaylord Nelson Distinguished Professor in Environmental Studies & Atmospheric

and Oceanic Sciences, Tracey Holloway and Nelson Institute affiliate and director of the Cooperative Institute for Meteorological Satellite Studies Tristan L'Ecuyer received the American Geophysical Union (AGU) Ascent Award during the AGU fall meeting in December 2020. Holloway and L'Ecuyer are two of only five mid-career scientists from around the world who will receive this major award for their excellence in research and leadership in atmospheric science. Additionally, the University of Wisconsin-Madison is the only institution to have two faculty honored with this award in the same year.

PhD student receives United Nations fellowship, joins hundreds of scientists working on environmental report

Nelson Institute Environment & Resources (E&R) PhD student Elizabeth Berg (pictured right) was recently awarded a fellowship from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to work on the sixth edition of the Global Environmental Outlook (GEO-6), an international report that

aims to assist governments, businesses, and citizens in taking immediate climate action. As a GEO Fellow, Berg will join hundreds of scientists, peer-reviewers, and institutions who are contributing their knowledge and expertise.



Vijay Limaye

Alumni and faculty partner on work to improve teaching of climate change and health

A team of Nelson Institute alumni and researchers are at the forefront of efforts aimed at making climate change personal through a focus on public health. These new studies, which include two papers published in *Health Affairs*, aim to jumpstart educational efforts around this topic while also encouraging a greater understanding of the economic costs of climate-related health problems.



Berg works on a temperature sensor that will help her measure how air temperatures differ from street to street and neighborhood to neighborhood. Photo: Elizabeth Berg.

UW-Madison engineering student finds purpose in multidisciplinary education, discovers passion for people, health, and the environment

Ana Diges, a senior majoring in materials science and engineering at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, is building a rich and purposeful education by pursuing multiple certificates and participating in a variety of educational programs. In addition to her rigorous engineering coursework, Diges is enrolled in the Nelson Institute's environmental studies certificate program, is a member of the Nelson Institute's Community and Environmental Scholars Program (CESP), serves as a project manager with Engineers With-out Borders, and is pursuing a certificate in global health.



Ana Diges



Looking to the stars, Nelson student dreams big while pursuing environmental studies and astrophysics majors

Maicen Stuart has always had a passion for the natural world. Growing up in Bountiful, Utah, a small city just north of Salt Lake City, Stuart spent much of his youth hiking and exploring the mountainous terrain. But Stuart's greatest passion for the environment stretches beyond the borders of Earth. Since he

was a young boy, he has had a deep curiosity and love for outer space. Now, as a senior at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Stuart is exploring these passions by pursuing a double major in environmental studies and astrophysics.

Nelson Institute students involved in FIG course "Listening to Land: Indigenous Education, Language, and Foodways"

This fall, the University of Wisconsin-Madison offered the First-Year Interest Group (FIG) "Listening to Land: Indigenous Education, Language, and Foodways" for the first time. This FIG links three courses, Educational Policy Studies 150, American Indian Studies 301, and Nelson Institute Environmental Studies 126, which was taught by Tim Lindstrom, a recent graduate of the Environment & Resources and certificate in Energy Analysis and Policy programs.

Like most FIGs, this course was limited to 20 students, with 15 forming this particular cohort. Throughout the

course, students met virtually with one outdoor, socially-distanced session per week. During this session the students roasted Oneida white corn, learned how to dance on parched wild rice, toured campus-area effigy mounds, braided corn husks, and more.



Instructor Dan Cornelius pours out hot, freshly parched wild rice to be danced on with a pair of new moccasins. Students were invited to experience "jigging rice"—the process of dancing on parched rice to remove the hulls, part of the agricultural workshop for the First-Year Interest Group "Listening to Land: Indigenous Education, Language, and Foodways." Photo: Catherine Reiland/UW-Madison

NELSON INSTITUTE AND RAINFOREST TRUST PARTNER ON CONSERVATION ESSENTIALS COURSE



Photo: Courtesy of Felix Cybulla



Photo: contributed



Photo: Courtesy of Felix Cybulla



Photo: Courtesy of Felix Cybulla

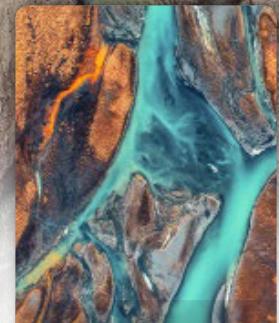


Photo: contributed

Last summer the Nelson Institute launched Conservation Essentials, a one-of-a-kind online course in conservation management. A collaboration with specialists from Foundations of Success (FOS), the Conservation Measures Partnership (CMP), and the Conserva-

tion Coaches Network (CCNet), the 12-week course welcomes graduate students, professionals working in the conservation field, or anyone in need of training in conservation project management. In addition to the general course, the program also offers private instruc-

tion for non-profits. As a part of this private programming, Nelson Institute and the Rainforest Trust partnered to train 10 Rainforest Trust Fellows.

Bring the Outdoors In: Nature Storytelling for Community Building

Join the Nelson Institute for a unique virtual storytelling experience that will showcase the diverse, but essential role nature plays in everyone's life. Led by Nelson Institute partnership liaison and freelance journalist James Edward Mills and University of Wisconsin-Madison Department of English associate lecturer and Nelson Institute Center for Culture, History, and Environment (CHE) affiliate Noreen McAuliffe, these storytelling workshops will help participants to develop a narrative that highlights the ways each individual has connected to the natural world during the past year. Participants will practice descriptive and narrative writing skills that can be used to build a memoir, an essay, or a script for a video that will

help to identify the places and experiences that are cherished within our community.

This workshop is open to everyone and will be a safe space to share a broad range of experiences with the outdoors. Participants will be able to work through online, on-demand lessons at their own pace. These lessons will be followed by a live Zoom workshop session that will be offered twice in February. Participants need attend only one of the sessions. During the workshop session, participants will have an opportunity to share their stories and receive feedback. Those interested in sharing their stories more widely outside the session will have an

opportunity to submit stories for consideration for an upcoming social media storytelling day hosted by the Nelson Institute on its social media platforms.

Online on-demand content will be available in early February

- Live Zoom workshops:
- Thursday, February 11, 6-8 p.m. CST (limited to 25 participants)

Register in advance for this session

- Tuesday, February 16, 6-8 p.m. CST (limited to 25 participants)

Register in advance for this session

For more information or to register, visit nelson.wisc.edu/events

The University of Wisconsin-Madison's Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies presents Earth Day 2021: Nature at Work: Inspiring Just Responses for an Unruly World

Thursday, April 22- Friday, April 23, 2021

8:30 a.m. CDT on Thursday, April 22 – 12:00 p.m. CDT on Friday, April 23

While nature has always been an uncontrollable force of both beauty and devastation, human impact on the ecosystem has made nature increasingly unpredictable. An unruly climate marked by extreme weather events is leading to challenges such as biodiver-

sity decline and water scarcity while also placing a significant, and unjust burden on the most vulnerable populations. During this year's Earth Day learning event we will discuss environmental justice and the ways in which our climate challenges are impacting health,

education, the economy, and the overall wellbeing of people around the world. We will explore nature's incredible power and how increased efforts to respect it will lead to social justice and mitigate some of our greatest climate related challenges.

EARTH DAY 2021



CHE spring colloquia

The Center for Culture, History, and Environment (CHE) is at the forefront of some of the most exciting environmental humanities and social science scholarship focusing on the entangled histories of nature and culture. CHE Associates seek to understand how knowledge, beliefs, political economy, and culture have shaped, and been shaped by, the environment. CHE invites you to join them for the spring 2021 colloquia series on Wednesdays from noon-1 p.m. CST.

February 24, Environmental Research in Tribal Communities, Grace Bulltail

April 14, Mercury Rising: Conflict Metals, Alchemy, and Planetary Health, Ruth Goldstein

April 21, The Ethics and Politics of Attachment in Central Himalayan Cow-Protection Politics, Radhika Govindrajan

For more information or to register, visit che.nelson.wisc.edu/events

Weston Series

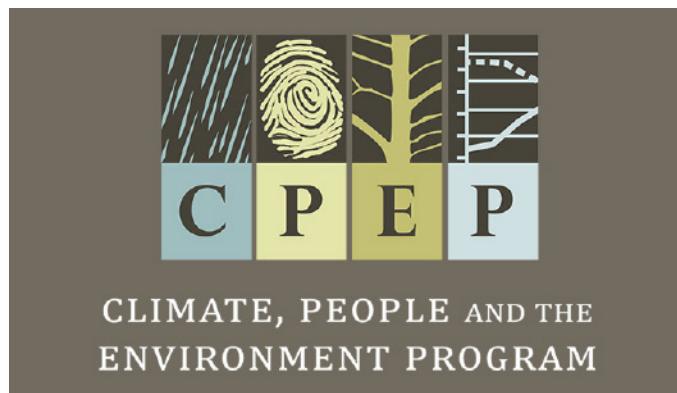
The Weston Roundtable Series is designed to promote a robust understanding of sustainability science, engineering, and policy through weekly lectures co-sponsored by the Center for Sustainability and the Global Environment (SAGE), the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, and the Office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



CPEP Series

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.



Join us in celebrating the Nelson Institute year-round by purchasing branded merchandise, shirts, sweatshirts, jackets, bags, and more.



SUSTAINABLE SUCCESS: The Future of Plastic

Thursday, March 11, 2021
5:30 - 6:30 p.m. CST

The Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies, the Grainger Center for Supply Chain Management, and the Weston Roundtable invite you to explore the future of plastic with engineers and business leaders who are at the forefront of recycling science. Currently, recycling is viewed by many as expensive and difficult with experts estimating that only 9 percent of plastic has been recycled since the 1950s. Today, new technology and an improved understanding of plastic chemistry is helping to make recycling and upcycling easier and less expensive. Join us as leading experts discuss the improved recycling methods and circular initiatives that will allow more plastic to be reused and recycled. Registration available in late February. Visit nelson.wisc.edu/events



Contact us: communications@nelson.wisc.edu