THE COMMONS

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

Registration now open for Earth Day 2021

Join the University of Wisconsin–Madison's Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies for a virtual celebration of Earth Day 8:30 a.m. on Thursday, April 22 to noon on 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 climate, biodiversity decline, and water scarcity are placing a significant and unjust burden on the most vulnerable populations. Register today

Energy Analysis and Policy program celebrates its 40th anniversary and looks to the future

For more than four decades, the Nelson Institute's Energy Analysis and Policy (EAP) program has been a leader in energy education, offering students in almost any graduate program on campus the opportunity to link big-picture energy issues with their graduate training. Supported by the Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies and the Wisconsin Energy Institute (WEI), EAP is the only energy-related graduate certificate and PhD minor at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. Energy issues affect our environment, policy, economy, and daily lives, and EAP captures this breadth.

"This is one of the oldest programs in the country and our alumni have emerged as leaders in government, non-profits, industry, and have pursued a wide range of careers," said EAP Engagement Lead **Tracey Holloway**, Gaylord Nelson Distinguished professor with the Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies and the Department of Atmospheric and Oceanic Sciences. "When

people think about graduate-level energy training, we want Wisconsin to be the first name that comes to mind."

The growing community of EAP students – now a record 50 enrolled – spans more than 15 graduate programs, from policy to engineering. The program offers scholarships, professional skill-building, and networking, in addition to interdisciplinary classes taught by its world-class faculty.

"As with the genesis of many programs and departments in the university's long history, the EAP program arose from faculty research," said retired UW-Madison professor and Nelson Institute affiliate, **Wes Foell** who helped to lay the groundwork for the development of the EAP program.

"The program included faculty and students from engineering, business, economics, geoscience, environmental studies, urban and regional planning, and political science."


EAP faculty, students, and alumni celebrate the connectedness of the program on a recent annual networking trip.

Foell shared that when the EAP certificate was officially launched in 1980, the original plan was to have a 40-credit program. Over time, the program evolved into its current form: a 13-credit certificate that can be paired with nearly any graduate program on campus.

Today, EAP offers an interdisciplinary curriculum that prepares students for energy-related careers in industry, government, consulting and non-profits by providing real-life experience in designing, conducting, and communicating analysis. Through EAP, students gain an understanding of "languages" beyond their primary major, such as engineering majors learning a bit of policy lingo and vice versa.

To bring more awareness to EAP, Holloway and EAP Program Chair **Rob Anex**, professor of Biological Systems Engineering, have plans to increase partnerships as well as increase student engagement.

"Moving into the next 40 years, our goal is to grow the program to tackle the enormous global energy transition underway," said Holloway. "One of the things that makes EAP unique is that it can be added to nearly any graduate program on campus. We really want to build a generation of energy leaders out of Wisconsin that reflect the diversity of skills and expertise needed to support the future of energy at the state, national, and global scale."

To support these efforts, EAP has been growing a network of advisors, supporters, and leaders in energy-related fields. **Jeff Rudd**, a Nelson Institute PhD alumnus and Board of Visitors member emeritus, has worked closely with the EAP faculty over the past few years of program growth.

"The faculty are exceptional when it comes to teaching," said Rudd. "They are experts in their field and are world renowned. They also understand the ramifications of regulations and they convey this to their students. To be able to teach across those boundaries is remarkable."

Rudd shared that he and his wife, **Jeanne Bissell**, established an endowed EAP Professorship in large part because of the excellent work he has seen from the faculty.

One way in which the faculty teach this intersection of policy and science is through the EAP Capstone course, where students work in teams to tackle energy analysis needs of clients in industry, government, and non-profit organizations. Holloway says that "many students have cited this immersive experience as one of the most valuable aspects of the EAP program, and it's just one of the ways we're putting a lot of emphasis on the student experience. We've changed the prerequisites, we've changed the credits, we've introduced a new professional seminar, and added a new annual trip funded by donor support. We're really working to make EAP a signature program of the University that stands out on a national and international scale."

Foell, who helped found EAP, continues to advise and support the program: "Having interacted with EAP students for several years, I am extremely impressed by their diversity, skills, and enthusiasm. The same goes for the EAP faculty with their diverse and unique research capabilities. In collaboration with the broader Madison campus, they have an opportunity to play an increasingly important and visible role in addressing the world's energy and climate challenges. Our university's faculty and academic resources are second to none in their potential to do this."

Here's to even greater success in the next 40 years – happy birthday, EAP!

UniverCity Year program to partner with four counties and villages

The Nelson Institute is a proud partner of the University of Wisconsin-Madison program, UniverCity Year which will be expanding its impact across the state by partnering with four communities at the same time: Marathon County, Milwaukee County, Racine County, and the Village of Waunakee. Launched in 2016 with the Wisconsin Idea in mind, this three-year program facilitates engagement between the UW–Madison learning community and localities, ultimately bringing faculty, students, and community members together to address some of the greatest challenges facing Wisconsin's local governments.

Now in its sixth year, UniverCity Year has engaged with thousands of students and faculty members on hundreds of projects in fourteen counties and villages across the state, including Adams County who recently shared their positive experience with Madison area media. In each partnership, the community is at the heart of the UniverCity Year program ultimately selecting which challenges should be addressed and what projects would be most impactful. Each of the four municipalities have identified challenges or projects to address during this partnership that range from evidence-based decision-making and economic improvements to flooding mitigation and racial equality.

"Given what has happened over the last year, we weren't really sure where local governments were in their thinking about doing UniverCity Year. To our surprise, they seemed hungry to tackle issues that will help them build back stronger after the pandemic," said **Gavin Luter**, Managing Director of the UniverCity Alliance which oversees the UniverCity Year program. "Our four communities represent urban and rural communities and they are tackling a range of issues. One common theme across the four communities is diversity, equity, and inclusion. It was refreshing to see an openness to be thinking about how welcoming our state is to people of all backgrounds. This cohort for UniverCity Year promises to be a great one!"

Pictured above: Channel 3000 media coverage of UCY and Adams County partnership.

In an effort to help each community reach its goals, UniverCity Year staff match each project to interested faculty members who then incorporate it into their coursework or research. UCY staff also facilitate interactions between the community and students, and allocate funds for classes to work with communities and conduct research.

> "We believe the Wisconsin Idea extends beyond just UW-Madison and is about how all universities and colleges are helping address community-defined issues."

Additionally, UniverCity Year is actively seeking other higher education partners in nearby areas of the state to explore collaborations. This year, UCY reached out to UW-Parkside and UW-Stevens Point at Marathon County to discuss projects that align with faculty interests.

"We believe the Wisconsin Idea extends beyond just UW-Madison and is about how all universities and colleges are helping address community-defined issues," Luter said. "That's why we seek partnerships with these other higher education partners. In the past, we have worked with UW-Milwaukee, Marquette University, and UW-River Falls to complete projects. We want this collaborative tradition to continue."

While additional partnerships and collaborations are still in the works, the four partnering communities are excited to begin working on towards their goals in 2021. Racine County Executive **Jonathan Delagrave** is particularly excited to connect with faculty, staff, and students working with the UniverCity Year as the county considers new diversity and inclusion efforts.

"Racine County is committed to addressing racial disparities in our community, and we are so grateful for the support of the University of Wisconsin's UniverCity program to help us do that," said Delagrave. "The work ahead of us is full of challenges, but also tremendous opportunities. With the resources, expertise, tools and research of the UniverCity program, I am confident this partnership will help build a stronger, more resilient Racine County."

Likewise, the Village of Waunakee will be partnering with UniverCity Year to reevaluate policies and procedures and

better understand how those impact diversity and equity.

"All of our seven projects have, in some aspect, a related focus to diversity, equity, and inclusion," said **Todd Schmidt**, the Village Administrator and Economic Development Director for the Village of Waunakee. "Just thinking about some of the projects, we are looking forward to recognizing the Native Nations components of our history and heritage. We are also looking forward to doing a deep-dive into the city's policies so as to better show concern for and give attention to populations that have been historically underserved or underrepresented."

Marathon County Administrator **Lance Leonhard** echoed that sentiment, noting his enthusiasm for delving deeper into projects and gaining new perspectives on challenges.

"In an environment with constantly tightening budgets, local governments are always looking for partnerships to help us develop strategies to accomplish our goals," said Leonhard. "We are excited to be part of the UniverCity program, as it is an opportunity for us to address needs across a wide range of subject areas."

To ensure that communities reach their goals and feel fully supported, students and faculty present their recommendations to the county or village for consideration. UniverCity Year staff will then continue to aid the local government in evaluating the feasibility of student research, implementing projects, and reporting on outcomes.

"UniverCity Year has developed a pretty positive reputation and we've been watching and have seen success and how pleased the communities are," said Schmidt. "I would certainly encourage other communities to give it a strong look."

The program is also currently recruiting faculty to be a part of its community projects.


John Kutzbach

CCR loses longtime professor and director

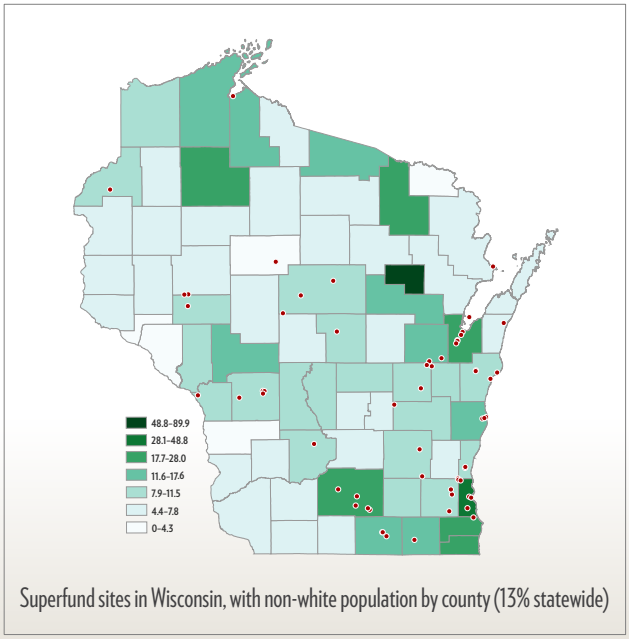
John Elmer Kutzbach, a longtime professor of Atmospheric and Oceanic Sciences and the Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies and Director of the Center for Climatic Research (1970-2002) passed away on Friday, Jan. 29, 2021, after a long illness.

Kutzbach pioneered the use of climate models to investigate the causes and effects of large-scale changes in past climates and helped validate the use of climate models in predicting climate change.

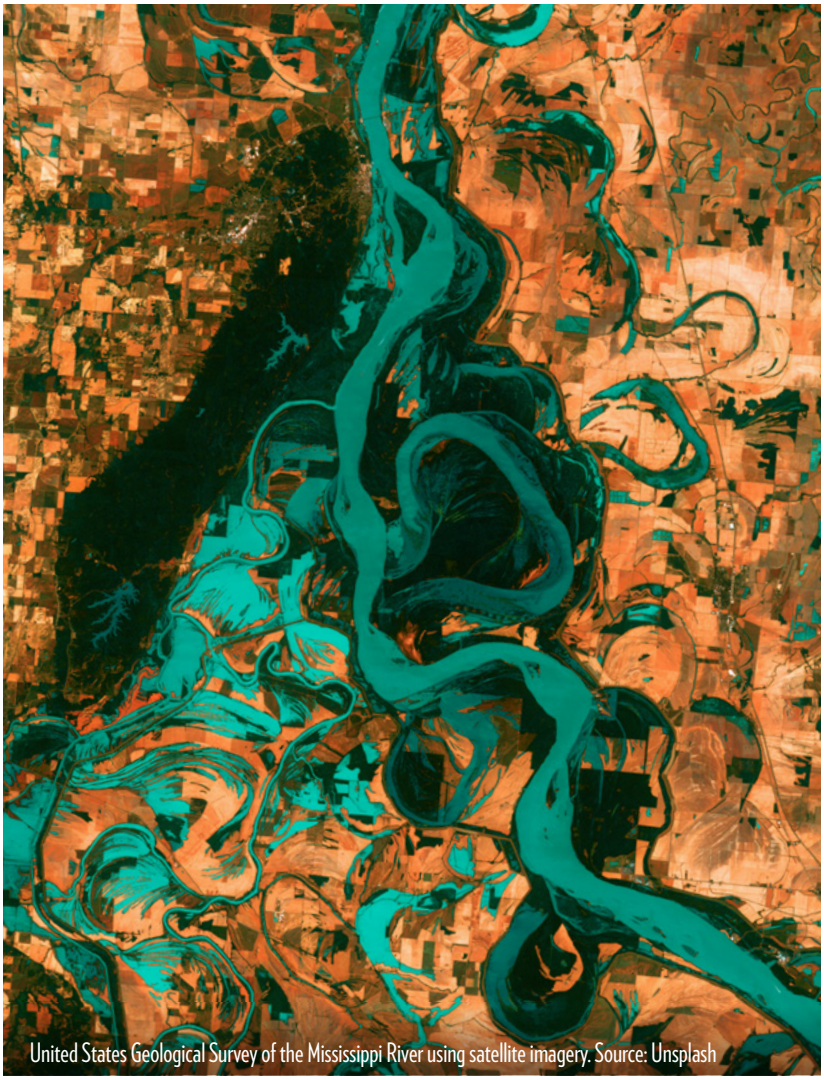
The Nelson Institute community wishes to extend our sincere condolences to the Kutzbach family. Read more.

Environmental justice is focus for latest Nelson Issue Brief

The Nelson Institute Issue Brief summarizes and conveys up-to-date scholarship from across the UW-Madison campus on key issues of environmental concern. The latest edition of the Nelson Issue Brief focuses on environmental justice. In particular, researchers share insight into the differential impacts of air pollution, the justice impacts that stem from addressing climate change, and the impacts of mercury across the landscape.
Read more.



Superfund sites in Wisconsin, with non-white population by county (13% statewide)



United States Geological Survey of the Mississippi River using satellite imagery. Source: Unsplash

FEWscapes to expand horizons for food, energy, water, and ecosystem security

FEWscapes is a research and engagement project to advance knowledge and support decision-making for food, energy, water, and ecosystem security in the Upper Mississippi River Basin. It is led by a diverse team of researchers and extension specialists from University of Wisconsin-Madison, including several Nelson Institute faculty, and funded by the National Science Foundation. The project combines ecosystem and economic modeling, policy and social research, and co-learning with stakeholders to discover new insights that can inform decisions for a desirable future with resilient food, energy, water, and natural systems. Learn more about FEWscapes on the project's new website and read this blog post on reasons to get curious with them over the next few years.

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Nelson-affiliated faculty include lead principal investigator **Chris Kucharik** (agronomy) and **Steven Loheide** (civil and environmental engineering), who are both involved in the project's modeling component. **Adena Rissman** of forest and wildlife ecology is leading the policy and social research. Nelson alumni **Rebecca Power** (E&R MS '17) and **Jenny Seifert** (E&R MS '11) of Extension's Natural Resources Institute are leading the project's stakeholder engagement.

Learn more about FEWscapes on the project's new website and read this blog post on reasons to get curious with them over the next few years.

Photo credit: Water Sustainability and Climate Project at UW-Madison.

Adrian Treves named Vilas Associate


Adrian Treves

Nelson Institute professor and founder of the Carnivore Coexistence Lab **Adrian Treves** has been named a Vilas Associate by the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Graduate Education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The Vilas Associate Competition "recognizes new and on-going research of the highest quality and significance" and awards recipients salary support and research funding over two fiscal years.

Treves will receive support for his research titled, "Non-lethal predator control evaluated with gold-standard experiments" which has two main goals. First, Treves hopes to use the funding to launch a field experiment on a non-lethal method of protecting livestock and wolves.

"If we complete the proposed randomized, controlled experiment, it will add to four similar experiments my lab has already completed," said Treves, who shared that he and his graduate students have already completed work in Wisconsin around the Bad River Ojibwe reservation, in Chile, and in Canada. Based on these experiments, Treves says he will be able to "offer a varied toolkit for almost any setting where domestic animals share land with top predators, such as wolves, grizzly bears, big cats, and the like."

In addition to the experiments, Treves also plans to use the funding to conduct outreach and academic engagement through a series of integrated workshops. The first workshop is set for August 2021 and will introduce land owners to the strengths and weaknesses of various non-lethal methods as well as knowledge of predators. In particular, Treves plans to host these workshops based out of Germany, where he plans to do much of this work.

"I plan to use the Vilas funding to travel to Germany in the summer of 2021 and again in mid-2022, when I hope to live there for a few months during my sabbatical. I plan to collaborate with the federal state of Lower Saxony on their expanding program of wolf-livestock coexistence," Treves said. "This is also a chance for me to visit my mother's birthplace in Hamburg and the relatives I still have there. Additionally, I will have an opportunity to reconnect with colleagues in France and Slovenia. So, I want to thank the Vilas trustees and my colleagues who reviewed my proposal."


Joshua Calhoun

In addition, Nelson affiliate and English Department professor **Joshua Calhoun** has also been named a Vilas Associate. Read more.

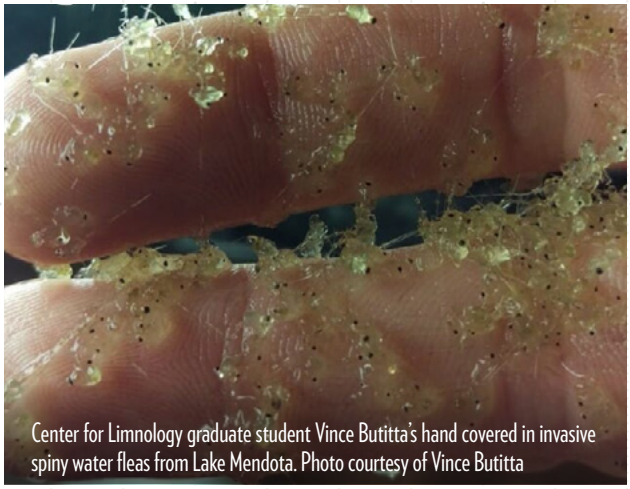

Caroline Gottschalk Druschke

Druschke is 2021 teaching award recipient

Nelson Institute faculty and associate professor of English, **Caroline Gottschalk Druschke** is one of only thirteen faculty to receive a 2021 Distinguished Teaching Award. Specifically, she received the Community-Based Learning Teaching Award for her partnership with the Driftless Writing Center on the "Stories from the Flood" project, a model of community-based learning. A virtual recognition event will take place April 6 at 5 p.m. Read more.

Nelson affiliate finds that invasive species often start as "sleeper populations"

Nelson Institute affiliate and director of the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Center for Limnology, **Jake Vander Zanden** is the co-author of a new study published in the journal *BioScience* which found that many invasive species often initially go undetected in environments due to low population levels before eventually becoming a clear problem years or decades later. This new research into "sleeper populations" is causing scientists to revisit the assumption that invasive species arrive and rapidly take over.



Center for Limnology graduate student Vince Butitta's hand covered in invasive spiny water fleas from Lake Mendota. Photo courtesy of Vince Butitta

Vander Zanden shared that while current efforts are focused on stopping the spread of nonnative species to new habitats, "it's crucial that we also better understand what makes a species invasive in the first place. This means not just identifying species with a proclivity for overrunning ecosystems, but identifying the characteristics of an ecosystem that may set the stage for an invasion. Nonnative species can occur as small, self-sustaining populations "smoldering like embers" in a new habitat. Many will continue on with that modest life history, never having the negative ecological impacts that attract the invasive label. But, sometimes, an environmental trigger gets switched and the embers of these sleeper populations are fanned into a five-alarm fire." Read more.

Students collect data and water samples from Lake Mendota during an early morning outing in 2016 for a limnology experiment. Limnology researchers discovered the spiny water flea in Lake Mendota in 2009. Photo: Jeff Miller


Monica White

White is 2020-21 Outstanding Women of Color recipient

Congratulations to Nelson Institute and Community and Environmental Sociology associate professor, **Monica White** who was recently named a University of Wisconsin-Madison Outstanding Women of Color honoree.

White received this honor in recognition of her teaching, outreach, and personal efforts to expand conversations about the Black Freedom Movement, agriculture, community power, and racial justice. In fact, her book *Freedom Farmers: Agricultural Resistance and the Black Freedom Movement*, which focuses on these topics, has won the 2019 Eduardo Bonilla-Silva Outstanding Book Award from the Division of Race and Ethnic Minorities Section of the Society for the Study of Social Problems, and the 2020 Association for the Study of Food and Society First Book Award.

White is also working on a new book, *We Stayed: Agriculture and Activism of Black Families Who Kept the Land* also explores these topics and is centered on **George H. Paris**, the first Black USDA loan officer who lived in Tuskegee, Alabama.

The award was presented during a virtual event on March 3, 2021 and can be viewed here (White is honored around 45 minutes into the program). Read more.

CCR is lead on new faculty hires for polar research

Several departments at the University of Wisconsin—Madison, including the Nelson Institute Center for Climatic Research, are collaborating to hire three new faculty members who will focus on research and outreach related to the Emerging Polar Regions. While the faculty will work on a wide range of projects related to the changes occurring around the Earth's polar regions, UW-Madison will specifically be seeking a Polar Climate Modeler, a Glaciology/Ice Sheet Modeler, and a Polar/Arctic Ecosystems and Ecological Modeler. Nelson Institute Center for Climatic Research **Dan Vimont** shared that CCR is thrilled to be a lead on this cluster hire.

Nelson Institute researcher invited speaker for Arboretum Luncheon-Lecture series

In February, Nelson Institute postdoctoral research associate in Ecological Studies, **Cooper Rosin** shared his insight into wild meat hunting and poaching for elephant ivory during the Friends of the Arboretum Luncheon-Lectures Series. His talk titled, "Tropical Forests and Elephants: Hunting, Poaching, and Conservation" featured information that Rosin gathered as a part of his dissertation and doctorate work at the Duke University Nicholas School of the Environment.

Prior to the event Rosin shared, "I'm going to talk generally about tropical forests and the consequences of bush meat and poaching for secondary parts as it pertains to elephants." Adding, "I'll talk about the population level consequences for elephants as well as the ecological consequences for the forest more broadly because the elephants are considered ecological engineers. They really do a lot for their ecosystem and when elephants are removed or the population decreases, there are a lot of changes to the forest. I'll also touch on some of the politics around conservation and the status of protection."

While the talk focused largely on Rosin's dissertation work on hunting and logging in the tropical forests of Gabon, Central Africa, Rosin was also able to connect his previous research with his current Nelson Institute research that centers around biodiversity, natural history, and conservation.

Rosin is the University of Wisconsin-Madison Cottam-Loucks Postdoctoral Research Associate in Ecological


Cooper Rosin

Studies. This is a three-year postdoctoral appointment that has the potential to be extended. In this role, Rosin works with Nelson Institute colleagues including Nelson Institute Center for Sustainability and Global Environment (SAGE) assistant professor **Zuzana Burivalova** and Nelson Institute professor, **Paul Zedler** on a variety of research relating to the consequences of human activities in prairies and tropical forests.

"A lot more of my research is focused around here [Wisconsin] with Paul Zedler's interest in prairies and restoration ecology," Rosin said. "I'm also working with Zuzana who shares similar interests with me regarding tropical forests, so we are working on a bird conservation project. In particular, the effect of logging on birds."

Rosin is also bringing his research into the classroom. He is working with the Center for Ecology and the Environment on launching a new doctoral degree program and leads several classes on a variety of ecological topics.

While much of his work at Nelson was not addressed during the Arboretum Luncheon, Rosin has integrated a lot of this tropical forest and conservation research into his teaching. "I've taught a graduate seminar, a summer class for undergraduates called Ecology and the Global Environment, and this past fall, along with Paul Zedler, I taught a capstone course focused on prairie restoration," Rosin said.


Juan Antonio Torres

Nelson Institute undergrad explores environmentalism through art

Growing up in California, Nelson Institute graduating senior **Juan Antonio Torres** experienced first-hand the devastating effects of droughts and forest fires, causing him to think critically about conservation efforts and the environment.

He combined his interest for the natural world with his talent for art at the University of Wisconsin – Madison by double majoring in environmental studies and art.

In addition to academics, Torres is working to implement environmentalism into several aspects of his daily life and is teaching others about the human impact on the environment through his artwork.

With a focus on printmaking, Torres quickly learned that the art industry can be very wasteful due to improper disposal of chemicals or using products and materials that require nonrenewable resources or excess amounts of plastic.

In his environmental studies class, People, Land and Food: Comparative Study of Agricultural Systems, Torres had the opportunity to address this problem by creating a sustainable plan for art studios as part of a class project.

He researched the impacts that art studios had on the environment and created an outline to make them more sustainable, including a list of environmentally friendly products to use, how to properly dispose of chemicals, and eco-friendly replacements for art supplies and materials.

Torres admits that some concepts of environmental studies can be difficult, but he says he enjoys the challenge of spreading awareness through art.

"It can be hard to talk about these things, but a drawing or a painting can be a nice way to break the ice and moving forward that's something I'm going to keep working on," Torres said.

His artwork consists of cartoon-style pieces that give his audience a different way to understand complex environmental issues and fosters space to start a conversation.

impacted whole species and plants and what that means for us today. It's like we almost forget so much of what the past has to teach us, and there's a wealth of knowledge there," he says.

He credits the Nelson Institute with expanding his understanding of environmentalism through a global lens.

"I didn't realize how drastically we were negatively impacting the Earth as humans, and for how long we've been doing it. Nelson Institute helped me gain that knowledge," he said.

Most recently, in course titled Global Environmental History taught by Professor Alexander Statman, Torres completed a paper assessing the impact of European writings in Mesoamerica, and how historical language translations and words affect how modern society understands and perceives the natural world.

He explains that the environmental studies major with Nelson Institute is for everyone.

"It's really important for any person from any major to learn about environmental issues because it's really impactful," he says.

Two of Torres' pieces include "A Trip to New York" (left) and "The Observer" (right), screen-printed on a 4' x 4' wood panel.

In the future, Torres hopes to open his own studio focusing on sustainable practices and spreading environmental messages with the public through his artwork.

Torres also draws on past historical events to deepen his understanding of the environment and find connections to his own identity.

"I come from a Latino background, and I've been learning about colonialism in South America and how that

"There are times where it gets heavy, sometimes you find yourself thinking 'I don't know what we can do about this', but part of that is learning what you can do every day, step by step."

See more of Torres' work on his website or visit his Instagram profile.

Riley Palkert

Interior architecture student focuses education on culture, design, and sustainability

When **Riley Palkert** came to the University of Wisconsin–Madison in 2017, she was confident that she wanted to pursue a major in interior architecture. Her mom was an interior designer, and she was attracted to the field's use of both creative and analytical thinking. But throughout her college education, Palkert has also developed a strong passion for sustainability.

After taking an environmental studies course her freshman year, Palkert said she became awakened to the vast importance of sustainability. The course covered a range of sustainability topics, including land use, waste, and industry impacts. It was this course that motivated Palkert to dive deeper into this field, and ultimately, to pursue a sustainability certificate from the Nelson Institute in addition to her interior architecture major.

But studying sustainability was not something Palkert anticipated when first arriving at UW–Madison. She said she was only briefly introduced to sustainability topics in high school, and while they interested her, she had no idea sustainability would become such a central focus of her academic career — and potentially, the focus of her professional career as well.

"It was really eye-opening when I came to college and took some of these [sustainability] classes," said Palkert. "I would love to [work in] sustainable architecture… That is the motivation behind my certificate."


Palkert visiting the Summer Palace in Beijing while studying abroad in China. Photo courtesy of Riley Palkert

Palkert said she decided to pursue a sustainability certificate after learning that architecture and the built environment has the largest environmental impact of any industry. This realization was disturbing for Palkert, so much so that she even considered giving up architecture altogether.

"I was really upset by this and actually considered changing my major," said Palkert. "But I soon realized this also meant that implementing sustainable building strategies would have an equally large impact on lessening environmental degradation and climate change."

Palkert said her sustainability certificate has given her the opportunity to explore how design can be used to address environmental challenges, such as reducing carbon emissions, but also social challenges, such as reducing housing inequities and building social cohesion. In her own words, "design and architecture can really bring a community together" — something that she had the opportunity to experience firsthand during a three-week study abroad trip to China.

In a small group of only 15 students, about half of which were interior architecture majors, Palkert toured through Shanghai, Taizhou, and Beijing, which she said provided a unique cultural experience.

"It was eye-opening to see how different it was compared to western culture," Palkert said. "I find it so valuable to gain other perspectives and see things differently — how other people might see them. Whether it's literally across the world or right next to you. I think that's important."

Palkert said that wellbeing and spirituality was a central focus of the Chinese culture she experienced. From the food they ate and their pastime activities, to the design of the buildings and layout of the cities, the trip expanded her understanding of community living and prompted her to think more deeply about how architecture could be used to progress social sustainability goals.

But Palkert's cultural exploration didn't stop at China. During her 2020 spring semester, Palkert studied abroad in Copenhagen, Denmark, a city known for its energy-efficient infrastructure and progressive green policies.

Palkert described Copenhagen as a "design hub" for sustainable architecture, with extraordinary buildings and ahead-of-the-curve environmental policy. Some of the most stand-out features included a building with a ski hill on top (just one of the city's many innovative uses of rooftop space), an adaptive reuse project that transformed existing silos into office space, biking culture and infrastructure that was integral to the city, and policy aimed at reducing light pollution.

While Palkert unfortunately had to leave the program early due to the COVID-19 pandemic, she said that the trip had a vast impact on how she viewed the world, especially when paired with her studies in China.

"It was cool to compare [Copenhagen] to China, and both of those to here," said Palkert. "You can see [how they differ] through the culture and also right away through the architecture."

In addition to her studying abroad experiences, Palkert said the classes she took through the Nelson Institute have served as a great introduction to many sustainability topics, which will serve her well in her future plans to pursue a master's degree in architecture and eventually, explore a career in sustainable architecture.

Palkert especially enjoyed *Environmental Studies 126: Principles of Environmental Science*. The course was instructed by Tim Lindstrom, a recent graduate of the Nelson Institute's Environment & Resources and certificate in Energy Analysis and Policy programs. By examining campus programs related to energy, food, and waste, the course teaches the underlying principles of environmental science. It challenges students to ponder questions about the air they breathe, the energy they consume, the food they eat, the goods they purchase, and the waste they create — all with the goal of helping them care for themselves and all other occupants of the planet.

An adaptive reuse project in Copenhagen that transformed existing silos into office space. Photo courtesy of Riley Palkert

While many students choose to take *Environmental Studies 126* at the beginning of their college careers, Palkert said the course is valuable for all students, regardless of their year or academic background. She was a senior when she took the class in fall 2020, and said the course ended up being "really helpful" by providing her with a broad overview of sustainability topics — something she had not received in her more specified sustainability courses.

Additionally, Palkert said the class was directed by a great teaching team, which consisted of Lindstrom along with two teaching assistants.

"They were super helpful and there for you if you needed them," said Palkert. "I just felt really comfortable asking them questions and asking them for help, which I think is really important."

Palkert will graduate with her bachelor's degree this spring, at which point she plans to take a gap year before applying to graduate schools. She has her eyes set on master's programs in New York and Seattle, both far away from her hometown of Maple Grove, Minnesota.

Until then, Palkert will finish off her final semester in Madison, where she looks forward to spending time on the UW–Madison campus, taking one more set of classes, and completing the volunteering requirement for her sustainability certificate.

In addition to 12 credits of coursework, the Nelson Institute's sustainability certificate program requires that students complete a sustainability-related community service project, giving them the unique opportunity to work in an applied, real-world setting. For Palkert, this will be the final step in completing the certificate program. She has secured a volunteering position with Slow Food UW, a student organization that seeks to provide quality food at an affordable price for all.

Working at Slow Food is an opportunity for Palkert to put what she has learned in the classroom to practice. Her coursework has progressed her understanding of the world's sustainability challenges, and this semester she looks forward to developing the skills to address these challenges in a meaningful way.

To conclude, Palkert reflected upon her education with gratitude and satisfaction. When asked to offer a bit of advice to current and future students, she jumped at the opportunity to recommend the sustainability certificate.

"The sustainability certificate works well with any major," said Palkert. "People are realizing that it's important and a lot of companies are pushing for that... It can be applied to so many different things."

Show your Badger pride by participating in the Spring 2021 Day of the Badger!

This 1848-minute experience (a nod to the year that our university was founded) will be is UW-Madison's second annual university-wide day of giving, providing an opportunity for all who love UW-Madison to give to their passion, show their support, and stay connected to the global community of Badger alumni and friends. Starting around 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday, April 6 and concluding at 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, April 7, Badgers everywhere will unite in an effort to bring awareness to the university's achievements and raise the critical funds needed to help UW-Madison remain a world-class educational institution.

Here's what you can do to participate:

Wear red (or your favorite Nelson Institute gear) - easy for EVERYONE to do!

Connect with Nelson alumni, friends, and supporters on social media at *#DayoftheBadger*, *#NelsonAlum*, & *#IamNelson* (share those selfies!)

Make an online gift in support of the Nelson Institute ($5 minimum, though gifts in any amount are needed and appreciated!)

Our singular goal is PARTICIPATION!
Please join us in any way that you can!

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. To learn more about all of the great academic programs, research centers, and public programs we offer, please visit: nelson.wisc.edu/support.

Gifts in any amount are needed and appreciated!

DAY OF THE BADGER
is coming back on
APRIL 6 & 7!

DAY OF THE BADGER

Alumna and author Heather Shumaker shares advice with professional students

After more than twenty years of experience in land conservation and a career that spans many disciplines, Nelson Institute alumna Heather Shumaker has gained a unique perspective on environmental challenges. It's a perspective that she shares through her books on environmental topics as well as through speaking engagements and presentations much like the one she gave to Nelson Institute professional graduate students in January.


Heather Shumaker

"There is a place for you, whatever your talents are. You don't have to be a scientist, you don't have to be a teacher, no matter your talents the environment needs you and you'll find a spot that fits you just right," Shumaker said.

Shumaker, who began her career in land conservation and transitioned to writing lives by this advice and shared her story with Nelson students in an effort to inspire them to connect with conservation through whatever talents they possess.

> **"I felt when I landed my first job after graduate school that I had to use everything I learned at the Nelson Institute right away."**

Shumaker shared that her academic journey began at Swarthmore College where she focused on writing, sociology, and anthropology, but she had a passion for the environment and knew she wanted to attend graduate school in the future. The University of Wisconsin-Madison's Nelson Institute Land Resources Master's program was at the top of her list, but she wanted to gain some experience before applying.

"At the time, I knew I wanted to get my hands dirty and try out some jobs in the environmental movement before going to graduate school," Shumaker said.

And get her hands dirty she did, joining a team of waste management technicians as the first recycling crew in the South Pole. While Shumaker enjoyed the experience, she knew she was ready to go back to graduate school and decided to send her Nelson Institute application directly from Antarctica.

"I knew when I went to Antarctica that Madison was my top choice and I knew it would be difficult to be accepted so I brought the application with me and postmarked it from Antarctica because I thought they [Nelson Institute] would at least be bound to open the envelope even if they didn't let me into the program," Shumaker said. "That strategy seemed to work because when I arrived in Madison to begin classes Nelson Institute staff immediately recognized me as the person from Antarctica."

During Shumaker's time with the Nelson Institute she focused her research on land protection strategies with the goal of aiding the Nature Conservancy of Wisconsin with its land conservation projects.

"I wanted my thesis to be relevant to the real-world so I designed something that would be relevant to the Nature Conservancy Wisconsin," Shumaker said. "So I focused my work on the Baraboo Hills to look at land development and land protection strategies to help prevent forest fragmentation."

While Shumaker was passionate about this work she also missed writing, so to put herself through school she began writing scripts for Earth Watch Radio, which was a partnership between Sea Grant and the Nelson Institute.

"That was pure joy," Shumaker said. "I did that for two years when I was a student and I think in some ways it helped me to get the ability to translate complex scientific ideas for a general audience."

After graduating from the Nelson Institute, Shumaker began working for a variety of conservation organizations.

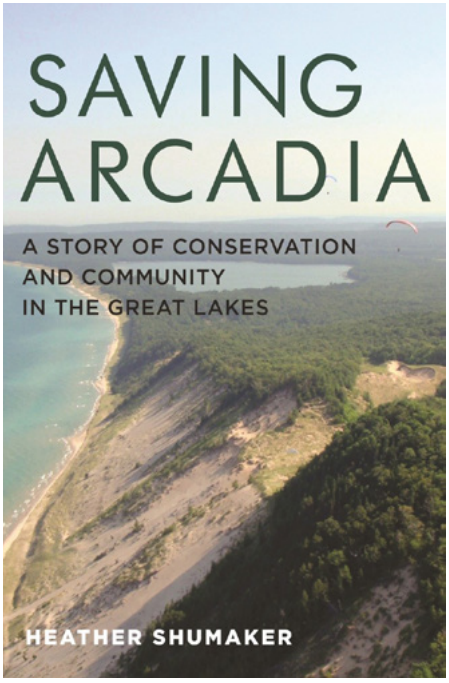
"I felt when I landed my first job after graduate school that I had to use everything I learned at the Nelson Institute right away," Shumaker said. "I took a wide range of classes and it all came into play. Bringing my Nelson Institute background with me helped us to tackle huge projects beyond our scope."

While Shumaker worked for several notable organizations, she spent nearly a decade working with the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy before determining that the desire to write was too strong to deny.

"I've wanted to be an author since I was four so I was always looking for a way to get writing into whatever I did," Shumak-

er said. "I've always adored writing, but felt a sense that the environmental issues were just so pressing that I shouldn't indulge in writing. I felt I needed to do something more, but I couldn't deny the call to write so after graduating from Nelson Institute I worked about ten years in land conservation before I figured it was a good time to try out the writing thing and one of my first projects was about land conservation so it all connected."

In fact, that writing project became *Saving Arcadia*, a nonfiction book about Great Lakes land conservation that focuses on the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy where Shumaker worked for many years. The book, which follows Michigan residents and the conservancy working together to conserve sand dunes from a powerful corporation won the Michigan Notable Book Award and the Next Generation Indie Book - Environment category.



While the book has been successful in a number of ways, Shumaker is pleased to know that the book has encouraged others to become more passionate about conservation. In fact, after the book was published, Shumaker received letters from people around the world who were inspired to become involved in land conservation. In particular, one gentleman's letter stood out.

"He bought a copy of my book and sent me a poem about how inspired he was reading it and then sent a check for $50,000 to the land trust mentioned in my book," Shumaker said. "We've had other people send checks as well and these gestures are very, very meaningful because you're never truly done saving land. It happens through the hearts of people and legal means. It's an ongoing process of relationships."

After sharing her story, Shumaker encouraged Nelson students to continue doing the good work while remaining positive.

"Find the good news and keep your spirits up because if you go into the environmental field you already know how important it is" Shumaker said. "All human and non-human species' lives are at stake so if you're going into the field you know that, but the doom and gloom can get really heavy. So, reminding yourself that there have been tremendous successes can be essential to keep you going."

We invite you to stay connected by updating your contact information by joining Badger Bridge or making simple updates here: uwalumni.com/services/update-info

Nelson Institute alums virtually reconnect

Peter Boger (E&R PhD '15), **Nina Trautmann Chaopricha** (E&R PhD '13), **Natalie Koffarnus** (ES BA '13) and **Emily Reynolds**, assistant director of alumni relations at the Nelson Institute co-hosted a fun night of virtual networking with over 40 alumni on Tuesday, March 2.

The event provided an opportunity for Nelson Institute alumni to reconnect with former classmates and make new connections. The virtual format allowed for alumni from all over the country to join and share fond memories such as canoeing to class, cultivating garden plots in Eagle Heights, and lunches in the Science Hall library.

After several rounds of speed networking to allow attendees to meet each other, Nelson Institute faculty and staff including **Jim Miller**, graduate advisor, **Becky Ryan**, undergraduate program coordinator, **Rob Beattie**, faculty associate, **Barbara Borns**, academic program advisor emerita, and **Nathan Schulfer**, director of International and Professional Programs participated in small group conversations to reconnect and discuss topics important to Nelson Institute alumni.

If you haven't already, we invite you to join the Linkedin Nelson Institute Alumni and Friends group to connect, and watch your email from more opportunities to virtually connect!

Inaugural equinox storytelling summit

Join the Nelson Institute Center for Culture, History, and Environment (CHE) and Upham Woods Outdoor Learning Center virtually, on Saturday, March 20 at 1 p.m. for an afternoon of storytelling and sharing centered on moments of observation found in Wisconsin's nature.

This year's summit will begin with a presentation from conservation biologist, environmental historian, and writer **Curt Meine**. Then, we will hear from you! You can come just as a listener or submit your own story to share.

Anyone is welcome to share a story.
If you would like to participate, all you need to do is:

Pick a place.
Make observations.
Tell your story.
Let us know.

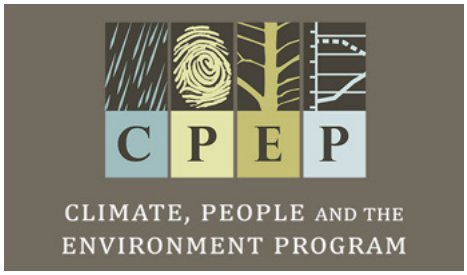
From the submissions we receive, we will ask some of you to share with attendees. Learn more about the summit and how to participate here.

CEE symposium keynote speaker is UW alumna

The Nelson Institute Center for Ecology and Environment will host its 2021 Spring Symposium on April 27-28. The keynote speaker will be **Dr. Elena Bennett**, a research chair in Sustainability Science at McGill University in Quebec. Bennett is a University of Wisconsin-Madison and Nelson Institute alumna having graduated in with a MS in Land Resources in 1999 and a PhD in Limnology and Marine Sciences in 2002. The event will also feature graduate student speakers who will present on a wide variety of research.

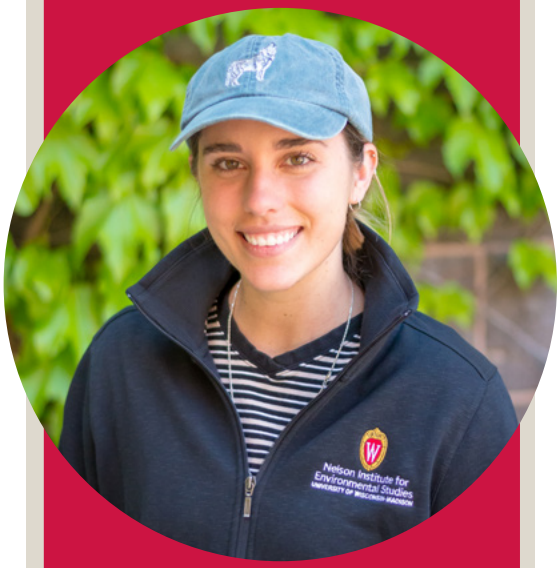
Weston series

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 here.



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 here.



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