September 2021

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

ALUMNI AWARD WINNERS 2021

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Doctoral 2021 Alumni Award Winners Announced

By Bekah McBride

Whether it is advancing environmental education, championing sustainability and resilience, advocating for communities, or working to achieve greater energy efficiencies, Nelson Institute alumni are at the forefront of important efforts around the world. Such impactful work is deserving of recognition, which is why the Nelson Institute is proud to honor outstanding alumni through the annual Rising Star and Distinguished Alumni Awards.

Recognizing alumni whose work truly embodies the community-based philosophy that is cultivated within the Nelson Institute, the 2021 Rising Star Alumni Award will be presented to three individuals who are making a significant difference in the world soon after graduation, while the Distinguished Alumni Award will be presented to one individual who has demonstrated considerable professional achievement and/or community service in the decades following their time as a student at Nelson Institute.

Read more about the 2021 recipients here. Also, we invite you to attend a virtual lunch conversation with Dean Paul Robbins and the 2021 Alumni Award recipients on Friday, September 17, 2021. Learn more on page 23.

2021 Rising Star Alumni Award recipients

Vijay S. Limaye, PhD
PhD Environment and Resources and Epidemiology (2015)

ALUMNI AWARDS 2021
RISING STAR ALUMNI AWARD

Making the climate crisis more tangible, relatable, and local is an urgent goal for Nelson Institute alumnus, Vijay Limaye. As a climate and health scientist at the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), Limaye utilizes his joint doctorate in Environment and Resources and Epidemiology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison to inform his efforts to quantify, communicate, and reduce the public health risks associated with climate change.

Limaye and Kim Knowlton of NRDC at a January 2020 public lecture on climate change and health in Brooklyn, New York. Photo credit: Leanne Naramore

In particular, Limaye conducts research on climate and health issues in the United States and India, and he works to improve climate change preparedness through evidence-based health and environmental policy. Communication is a large part of Limaye's job as he regularly works with the press to explain the complex health ramifications of fossil fuels and climate change, including growing risks from wildfires, extreme heat, and air pollution.

"At NRDC, I work closely with other scientists, policy experts, and lawyers to help to advance climate and health protections that can benefit people here and now while also safeguarding a livable future for all," Limaye said. "NRDC is a fast-paced, challenging, and invigorating place to work—and I am guided

Limaye speaks from Ahmedabad, India about the health dangers of air pollution on NRDC's social media channels in December 2018. Photo credit: Kriti Sehgal

in my work there by Dr. Kim Knowlton, a leader in the climate and health field and a truly phenomenal mentor."

While Limaye is thankful for the support of his current colleagues and mentors, he remains grateful for the experiences he gained and the people he met during his time as a Nelson Institute student.

"My experience in the Nelson Institute prepared me well for a career in scientific research and science-based environmental and public health advocacy. The academic training and independent research I pursued as a joint degree student allowed me to carve out expertise in an area that is becoming increasingly urgent—namely, the interconnections between fossil fuel energy sources, climate change, and public health," Limaye said. "The unique research projects I shaped in the Nelson Institute have helped to inform my understanding of the pressing public health challenges faced by communities here in the United States, but also in many areas around the world that are unprepared to deal with the significant health threats posed by a rapidly changing climate."

In particular, Limaye recalled his work on his dissertation as well as his efforts to establish weekly graduate student seminars to further facilitate the sharing and improvement of research. He said these experiences helped him to hone his communication skills and his ability to work with others.

"I got a lot of experience in working with different types of teams in the Nelson Institute and in the Department of Population Health Sciences, as both a team leader and team member, and I became much more comfortable receiving constructive criticism and feedback through my coursework and research experiences—something that has allowed me to mature and thrive as a scientist at NRDC. My passion for addressing linked environmental and public health challenges was nurtured in the Nelson Institute," said Limaye. "I was fortunate to complete my studies with enormously supportive and perceptive co-advisors Professors Jonathan Patz and Tracey Holloway, and our collaborative research effects on this topic were particularly rewarding and meaningful to me. Our work together reflects the Nelson Institute's interdisciplinary ethos, and I honed my skills in cross-discipline communication, analysis, and application through our NIH-funded work on the interconnections between climate change, heightened summertime energy demand for air conditioning, and downstream implications on extreme heat and air pollution risks."

Although Limaye works at the NRDC and is a former U.S. Environmental Protection Agency scientist, he continues to forge opportunities to work with Nelson Institute colleagues, having published the recent paper, "Developing a Definition of Climate and Health Literacy" with Nelson Institute alumna and University of Wisconsin-Madison post-doctoral researcher Valerie Stull, Nelson Institute affiliate and director of the Global Health Institute at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, Jonathan Patz, and Department of Family Medicine and Community Health at the University of Wisconsin–Madison researcher, Maggie Grabow. That study draws attention to the lack of teaching of climate change as a health problem in K-12 settings and suggests a new literacy framework that can better support students and educators as they explore the health ramifications of a changing climate.

Limaye also shared that he and NRDC colleagues published a study in 2019 in *GeoHealth* that estimated about 10 billion dollars in health-related costs from a small sample of climate-sensitive events across the U.S. in just one year—including a devastating heat wave across Wisconsin that killed 27 people and sent more than 1,600 to the emergency room for heat exhaustion.

"We hear a lot about how climate change harms property and infrastructure, and how much it is costing to repair and rebuild communities destroyed by disasters worsened by climate change. But we hear much less about the profound, and sometimes irreversible damage to human health inflicted by these events—including a significant financial burden for people to deal with health problems exacerbated by climate change," Limaye said. "As a result, we are, as a society, significantly underestimating both the costs of inaction on this global crisis as well as the major health and economic benefits of cutting fossil fuel pollution and investing in climate change adaptation in ways that ultimately prevent health harms and the costs that come with them. My work sought to answer the question of how much these climate-driven events cost us, as a society, in terms of emergency room visits, hospitalizations, lost work days, prescription medications, outpatient care, and premature deaths."

Limaye with NRDC colleagues, leaders from the Ahmedabad, India city government and collaborators at the Indian Institute of Public Health-Gandhinagar jointly launching a bilingual air quality and public health risk communication campaign (in Gujarati and English) in December 2018 as part of the city's Air Information and Response Plan. Photo credit: Kriti Sehgal

This research has been utilized on a national level, having been featured in the Wisconsin Governor's Task Force on Climate Change Report, a recent report from the U.S. Senate on Climate Change Risks, in Congressional testimony, and in a recent Washington Post Op-Ed.

"It is my hope that our policy-relevant scientific work on the interconnections between climate change, health risks, and health costs will jumpstart additional work to better understand this problem and address it comprehensively," Limaye said.

Additionally, Limaye is also helping to lead a new research project in India aimed at understanding linked climate-energy-air pollution-health issues in India. This project is poised to help identify the health benefits of climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts at the city level in India. That project is aimed at expanding the US-based investigation Limaye and team members conducted at UW-Madison to consider the unique environmental and health situation in a country at the forefront of unprecedented climate and public health challenges. Professor Patz is a technical advisor on the India work.

Limaye added, "I have family roots in both south-central Wisconsin and in western India, and I have been captivated by the challenge and promise of bridging those two distinct worlds and identifying common threads of humanity, struggle, and perseverance through my work with vulnerable communities in both countries." For Limaye, this is just the beginning. In fact, he says that receiving the Rising Star Alumni Award is an honor and something that motivates him to continue his work well into the future.

"I am proud of what I have accomplished so far, but in many ways, I feel like I'm just getting started: there is so much to do, on both the climate change mitigation and adaptation fronts, to better protect ourselves, our loved ones, and generations to come—and policy-relevant science can help to improve people's lives in that respect," said Limaye. "This recognition boosts my enthusiasm to continue to learn, grow, and help lift up future leaders on this front. I am particularly thankful to those who nominated me for this award, it is especially gratifying to be recognized by people for whom I have so much respect and admiration for."

And, his colleagues share that respect and support. As one nominator noted, "Vijay Limaye is, without a doubt, a rising star…he is a dedicated public servant. Nelson alumni are needed as pillars of reason in places where science is being silenced and profits are put before people. Vijay is working for a better tomorrow, and he has excelled at all he has done in the early stages of his career. I can't wait to see what he does next."

Overall, Limaye says he is grateful and humbled by this recognition and the support he has received from his family, friends, and colleagues who continue to lift him up personally and professionally.

"I am proud to have completed my academic training on this campus, and I feel privileged to have been able to merge my interests in environmental science, math, writing, and foreign language through my course of study on campus," Limaye said. "I strive to be a role-model for tomorrow's leaders who will need to help society to understand, cope with, and respond to unprecedented, converging environmental and public health threats."

Jessica M. Price, PhD
MS in Conservation Biology and Sustainable Development (2010)
PhD in Environment and Resources (2016)

As cities move to increase renewable energy usage and sustainability, Nelson Institute alumna and Rising Star Alumni Award winner Jessica Price is leading the way. From her work as renewable energy strategy lead for the Nature Conservancy in New York to her new role as the sustainability and resilience manager for the City of Madison, Price is using her Nelson Institute education and experience to bring an interdisciplinary, collaborative approach to sustainability.

Price and her colleagues plant trees at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge in New York as part of a collaborative ecological restoration project by The Nature Conservancy and the National Park Service. Price says that restoring the native plant communities helps create a more resilient Jamaica Bay. Photo credit: The Nature Conservancy

A graduate of the Nelson Institute Conservation Biology and Sustainable Development master's program (now Environmental Conservation) and the Environment and Resources doctoral program, Price is grateful for the experiences and skills she gained as a student. Among the many memories she has of her time at the Institute is her experience with the Certificate on Humans and the Global Environment (CHANGE) program. This National Science Foundation Integrative Graduate Education and Research Traineeship (IGERT) Fellowship allowed Price to combine social and natural sciences to better understand vulnerability and resiliency in communities facing environmental challenges. Led by Jonathan Patz, the director of the Global Health Institute at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the John P. Holton Chair of Health and the Environment with appointments in the Nelson Institute and the Department of Population Health Sciences, the project "Vulnerability and Sustainability in Coupled Human-Natural Systems: An Integrative Traineeship in Sustainability and the Global Environment" included work from over 25 staff and students as well as two co-principal investigators.

"One of the great things about the CHANGE program was that it brought together people and approaches from different departments," said Price. "We learned how environmental challenges can be, need to be, understood and addressed from multiple angles. It was a fantastic opportunity to begin practicing interdisciplinary research and problem solving. That was a transformative experience for me and something I still apply in my work. Even years later, I have friendships and collaborations with people I met through CHANGE."

Price shared that the collaboration and holistic thinking that she learned at the Nelson Institute helped her to coordinate one of her biggest projects post-graduation, the Long Island Solar Roadmap. This stakeholder driven initiative aimed to advance Long Island's transition to renewable energy by mapping low-impact sites for solar energy installations and identifying clear strategies for rapid, economical, and equitable deployment of solar technology in the region. Price led this collaborative effort by The Nature Conservancy and Defenders of Wildlife, with the support from a diverse consortium of regional partners. The project's final report and interactive web map were released in March 2021.

"One of the most rewarding aspects of the Roadmap was convening and collaborating with over 38 stakeholders representing diverse organizations and perspectives in the region. Bringing folks together to create a shared vision, resources, and solutions is such a powerful way to address challenges," Price said. "We took a science-based approach that included social science, spatial science, and methods of sincere stakeholder engagement. That is a skillset that was a part of my learning at the Nelson Institute that carries through in my work now."

Price noted that she was first introduced to spatial science, including environmental observation and informatics during her time with the Nelson Institute.

"The Nelson Institute is where I became a spatial thinker. I see an even greater focus on that now and that's fantastic," Price said, referencing the Nelson Institute Environmental Observation and Informatics (EOI) MS program.

In fact, Price has supported the EOI program and future spatial thinkers by serving as a mentor for students in the EOI program. Specifically, she mentored EOI student August Schultz during the hands-on professional project portion of the program. Schultz helped develop a model for the Long Island Solar Roadmap project that allowed the team to correctly interpret satellite data and create a novel land cover classification that was used to map low-impact sites for solar installations.

In addition to her work with The Nature Conservancy, Price is also a member of the North American Regional Association of the International Association for Landscape Ecology (IALE-North America. In 2021, she received the Distinguished Service Award for her exceptional contributions to IALE-North America "in terms of time, energy and dedication" and advancement of the IALE-North America mission.

This summer, Price began a new adventure, returning to Madison on August 9 to become the new sustainability and resilience manager for the City of Madison. In this role, Price leads climate, sustainability, and resilience work. While her work is just beginning, Price says she is happy to be back in Madison and thrilled to be working with a dedicated team.

"I'm excited to think about resiliency holistically," Price said of her new role. "I will be thinking about mitigation, adaptation, diversity, all of the components of resiliency. Being able to bring this together and work with this fantastic team, I'm a little star struck."

As Price returns to Madison, she is also excited to reconnect in-person with the Nelson Institute community.

"It's a great community and one of those places that felt like home right away," Price said of the Institute. "It's inspiring to see my fellow Nelson Institute alumni out in the world doing amazing work. So, to be recognized [as a Rising Star] and counted among them means a lot. To be a part of a community that goes above and beyond is really special, and I'm very happy to come back and connect with everyone."

Price presents at a roundtable focused on setting priorities for improving infrastructure in New York's Long Island region sponsored by Suffolk County Legislature's Presiding Officer. Price and her colleague Kevin McDonald (center) focus on the need for prioritizing infrastructure improvements that protect water quality, transition to clean energy, and improve the resilience of communities to the impacts of climate change. Photo credit Office of Suffolk County Legislator Rob Calarco

Linda Y. Vakunta, PhD, MA
PhD Environment and Resources (2015)

From the heartland of the United States to the heart of sub-Saharan Africa, Nelson Institute alumna Linda Vakunta is leading efforts to improve environmental education and prepare the next generation of leaders. A three time graduate of the University Wisconsin-Madison, Vakunta holds an undergraduate degree in Psychology, a MA in Rehabilitation Psychology, and a PhD in Environment and Resources from the Nelson Institute, which have propelled her to become a Rising Star Alumni Award winner just a few short years after graduation. In fact, she has already co-founded a non-profit in Sierra Leone, served as program director for an anti-trafficking organization, and is currently serving as Deputy Mayor for the City of Madison.

Throughout all of her roles, Vakunta says she remains thankful for her Nelson Institute experience and the lessons she learned about expansive thinking and interdisciplinary work.

"The one thing from Nelson that runs across all my career choices is the expansive thinking about what the environment encompasses and how that impacts quality of life," Vakunta said. "At the time when I was doing my doctoral studies, the majority of the world was still looking at the environment from a physical lens, but the Nelson Institute was changing the narrative in highlighting the people and social issues components."

For Vakunta, it is the people and the way that they interact with their environment that she finds most interesting. As a doctoral student with the Nelson Institute, Vakunta focused her dissertation on exploring the ways in which the environment impacted youth in Sierra Leone.

"My dissertation looked at young people's environmental perception in rural Sierra Leone, their future orientation and how education incorporated those to prepare them for the future," Vakunta said. "At the time, I had been working in Sierra Leone as an executive director of an NGO and was really concerned about the rural to urban migration happening in Sierra Leone and much of the world. I wanted to understand if young people really wanted to leave the rural environment for the urban environment and if that was the case, why? Furthermore, I wanted to understand if the education they were receiving was preparing them to succeed in whatever physical space they were in."

Ultimately, Vakunta discovered that many young people preferred not to move to urban areas because they liked the serene environment of the rural areas, but they felt compelled to move to urban areas for opportunities, especially educational opportunities.

Vakunta with Madison Mayor Satya Rhodes Conway. Photo credit: Linda Vakunta

"What I found is we need to align the education with the needs of the youth and how they want to see their future so they feel prepared and can be stewards of their place," Vakunta said.

During this time, Vakunta was also working to expand youth education and empower them through her role as executive director and co-founder of the non-profit Project 1808. This program was started by Vakunta and a fellow UW-Madison post-doctoral fellow Alhaji N'jai, as a way to "address the quality of education as a tool for sustainable community development." The project supports cohorts of students in primary and secondary schools throughout Sierra Leone. It also includes a student organization at UW-Madison.

"The professional accomplishment I am proudest of is my work with Project 1808," Vakunta said. "I was the executive director for ten years and I helped to recruit the first cohort, provided

Vakunta presenting Project 1808 work. Photo credit: Linda Vakunta

kids with guidance and resources that have propelled many to graduate high school and are currently pursuing post-secondary education. For me, that's a very notable accomplishment to have worked very hard to help those kids and grow the organization to a place where it could help more than 250 people. I'm proud of the ripple effect it will have in the region and Sierra Leone."

While Vakunta stepped down as executive director in 2019, she remains proud of the work which continues to promote education, sustainable development, health, environment, community outreach, science and leadership.

Since graduating from the Nelson Institute, Vakunta has also been involved with the Heartland Alliance International, Anti-Trafficking Program, which "works to advance human rights and champion human dignity by providing services and promoting solutions to achieve a more just global society." Specifically, Vakunta led project implementation in Nigeria, Swaziland, and Cameroon.

From 2018 to 2019, Vakunta joined Sustaining Natural Circles as a research consultant where she investigated the systemic cause of opioid disorders in Dane County. Throughout this work, Vakunta was reminded of the systems approach she learned while at the Nelson Institute. She discovered that the environment, whether it be physical or social, played a large role in opioid disorders.

"People's environment, what is available and not available in the environment, has a large impact on opioid use. For example, participants spoke about alcohol being sold on every corner of their neighborhood and how difficult that made recovery. The quality of housing was also important for their recovery," Vakunta shared. "My study at the Nelson Institute helped me understand that the environment is beyond physical and that systems approach and holistic thinking was very helpful in my work."

That is part of the reason that Vakunta is so honored to receive the Rising Star Alumni Award.

"This award to me is a win when we talk about expansive thinking in terms of sustainability issues," said Vakunta. "My committee and advisors saw that we can think about environment and sustainability issues in a holistic way. So, this award is a win for that movement and I know people see that everything is related and we have to talk across sectors to find solutions."

Today, Vakunta is continuing her interdisciplinary work, serving as the Deputy Mayor and focusing much of her efforts on ensuring equality in terms of housing and human services.

As one nominator said, "[Vakunta] is the very model of what servant leadership embodies, and she is already changing the world with the projects that she has initiated and led."

ALUMNI AWARDS 2021

DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD

Distinguished Alumni Award recipient

Dan W. York, PhD
MS and PhD Land Resources (now Environment and Resources), Energy Analysis and Policy (EAP) Certificate

With more than 30 years of experience researching, analyzing, and implementing energy efficiency policies and programs, Nelson Institute Distinguished Alumni Award winner Dan York has seen the industry rapidly change and grow. Through it all, he has been thankful for the interdisciplinary education he received at the Nelson Institute as it has prepared him to meet the challenges of an ever-changing field.

While York has spent the past two decades working with the American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy (ACEEE), York began his energy career as a graduate student at the Nelson Institute.

"I came to the Nelson Institute because I had an interest in energy policy," York said. "My interest in the area actually started while I was a student in high school and we had the first energy crisis. I connected the dots between energy use and the environmental problems we were seeing."

Having graduated from an undergraduate mechanical engineering program at the University of Minnesota, York was looking for a graduate program that would combine his technical expertise in engineering with his interest in energy and environmental studies.

"I found happily that UW-Madison had a program that was tailor-made to my interests and interdisciplinary approach to energy policy," York said of the Land Resources and Energy Analysis and Policy (EAP) Certificate within the Nelson Institute. "I was delighted with the choice to attend and it felt completely right."

As a graduate student, York focused on his certificate in EAP, which is an interdisciplinary program that provides students with knowledge of the scientific, technical, economic, political, and social factors that shape energy policy formulation and decision-making. Through this program, York had an opportunity to conduct hands-on international work with an organization that conducts policy-oriented research.

"One of my favorite experiences as a graduate student was getting involved in the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis," York said. "It's a research institute in Austria and I was involved in some energy and planning work with them so I got to go to their conference. It was great fun to interact with them."

With the successful completion of his MS York decided to continue on at the Nelson Institute and complete his PhD.

"Lots of great things that happened while I was pursuing a masters, and I was so close to a PhD so I decided to keep going. There is no specific EAP curriculum at the PhD level, but I extended it and it led to a life changing experience," shared York.

York hiking in Jotunheimen, Norway, during a 2017 trip to visit friends he made as a Fulbright Fellow. Photo credit: Dan York

The life changing opportunity came in the form of a Fulbright Fellowship, which York obtained after attending an international summer school at the University of Oslo. Through the connections he made at the summer school, York secured a six-month fellowship working at the University of Oslo's Centre

for Development and the Environment in Norway.

"It was outstanding," York said of the experience. "And, it was so much fun I wound up getting a job with a regulatory agency in Norway for another six months and that was the basis for my dissertation."

After completing his PhD at the Nelson Institute, York worked as a senior project manager at the Energy Center of Wisconsin (now Slipstream), where he helped to create the Midwest Energy Efficiency Alliance (MEEA). This organization is "a collaborative network advancing energy efficiency in the Midwest for sustainable economic development and environmental stewardship." And, although York moved on from Energy Center of Wisconsin, he remains proud of his work there and continues to be associated with MEEA. In fact, he is currently serving his third term on their board.

After working with the Energy Center for Wisconsin, York transitioned to a role as a senior research associate and director of utilities at ACEE.

"I had long been interested in ACEEE but they were based in Washington D.C. and we have strong roots in the Midwest, so the move to work in Washington D.C. never seemed possible," York shared. "Long story short, we knew some people who worked remotely for ACEEE and a position opened up so I jumped on it. I convinced them that I could stay in Madison and work for them and after 20 years, it seems to have worked out"

Gaylord Nelson and the York family during the York Park dedication ceremony: A representative from the WI DNR (fellow in ball cap), York's dad, Arlyn York, York's mom, LaVonne York, Gaylord Nelson, Jerome "Jerry" Wittstock (later mayor of Amery), Harvey Stower (Mayor of Amery at the time, speaking). Photo credit: Dan York

In current role as a senior fellow for utilities and local policy at ACEEE, York conducts research and writes, having authored more than 40 reports and white papers on energy as well as contributing to books. He also serves as a speaker at a variety of international conferences and has taught courses and conducts research in the U.S. and Europe; all in an effort to advance energy efficiency policies and programs.

As one nominator said, "He is internationally recognized for his work tracking and analyzing trends and emerging issues in utility-sector energy efficiency programs."

While York's career has required him to face a variety of challenges as the energy field changes, he remains passionate about his work and the inspiration that led him here.

"The clean energy world is really growing so fast right now, but it's fun to have witnessed this and been a part of it all," York said. "I'm forever proud to be a part of the Nelson Institute and EAP. There's clearly a great need for people working on environmental problems in a practical way and the students and faculty at the Nelson Institute are world class leaders."

It's because of the Nelson Institute's positive reputation and its connection to Nelson Institute namesake Gaylord Nelson that York said he is proud to have received the Distinguished Alumni Award.

"It's humbling and I'm very honored to have received this award," York said. "My hometown is Amery, Wisconsin which is a stone's throw from where Gaylord Nelson grew up. I had an uncle and a cousin of my Dad who grew up and attended school with Gaylord. Also, Gaylord has been a longtime personal hero for the environment and I did meet him a few times."

York shared that several years ago, some of his family land in Amery was selected to become a green space and because of its location and some connections within the town, Nelson was willing to attend the land dedication of York Park in Amery.

"It's a long way of saying that this Nelson Institute award means a lot," said York. "It has a special place in my memory as it's connected to Gaylord Nelson."

From the desk of Andrea Hicks

Director of Sustainability Education and Research, associate professor, Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Hanson Family Fellow in Sustainability, Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies

Andrea Hicks

The annual Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) conference, which is held each autumn, provides a forum to discuss and reflect on innovations in sustainability in higher education. Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic the conference will be held virtually this year, from October 12-14, 2021. UW–Madison is serving as a host institution, which not only highlights our campus commitment to sustainability, but also means that we can provide free registrations for any UW–Madison student, faculty, and staff with a wisc.edu email address. By making the conference available to the whole campus community, the Office of Sustainability hopes that more students will attend the conference and that faculty and teaching staff will consider incorporating the conference into fall courses. If you are interested in incorporating the conference into an upcoming course, I encourage you to contact me to discuss your plans (hicks5@wisc.edu).

Each year, students and staff at the Office of Sustainability, in collaboration with others across our campus, give talks and present posters on the sustainability work occurring here at UW–Madison. This year, members of the Office of Sustainability will be presenting on a number of topics at the AASHE conference. Presentations will include:

- ***Making "Cents" of Green Funds: How to Start One, Keep It Going, and Innovate***
- ***When Green Funds Collaborate with Service Learning Courses: Lessons from the Field***
- ***A Campus Sustainability Map Organized Around the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals***
- ***The Sustainability Advisory Council: Lessons Learned in Setting a Sustainability Strategy***
- ***How to Start a Homegrown STARS Support Group with Peer Institutions***

As you can see, we've been busy. We would like to invite everyone here at UW–Madison to see what we've been up to, as well as learn about sustainability work at other colleges and universities across North America.

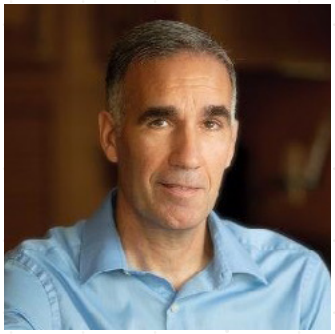
Giving presentations and attending conferences is also one of the professional development focus areas of our student internship program. When the ASHEE meeting is held in a face-to-face format, we encourage our student interns to submit abstracts to the meeting based on their internship experience. If their abstract is accepted, the Office of Sustainability provides funding for students to attend the conference as part of their internship experience. The newly created Middlecamp Student Travel Fellowship (named in honor of Dr. Cathy Middlecamp, the former Director of Education and Research at the Office of Sustainability, and a tireless advocate for student education) will help ensure that students are continually given this valuable opportunity. We are also seeking donations to fully fund the new fellowship, and to honor the lasting legacy of Dr. Middlecamp and her dedication to Campus as a Living Laboratory.

A monthly column from Andrea Hicks, Director of Sustainability Education and Research, associate professor, Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Hanson Family Fellow in Sustainability, Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies

HAQAST unveils video at NASA conference

On August 12, Nelson Institute professor and lead for the NASA Health and Air Quality Applied Sciences Team (HAQAST), Tracey Holloway shared her work at a NASA conference. Holloway began her talk with a short video that outlined the HAQAST team and its goals. HAQAST is made up of 14 lab groups and over 70 researchers across the U.S. The team uses NASA satellite data to improve understanding of air quality and public health. To learn more, we invite you to view the video.

Kucharik shares insight into the future impact of droughts



Chris Kucharik

As much of Wisconsin experiences abnormally dry conditions this year, Department of Agronomy Chair and Nelson Institute Center for Sustainability and the Global Environment (SAGE) affiliate, Chris Kucharik is sharing his expertise and perspective in the *Wisconsin Public Radio* and *Country Today* article, "Experts warn drought conditions sign of what's to come."

In the article, Kucharik shares what he has been hearing from farmers about the impact of the dry conditions as well as what science and economics tells us about a future with drier summers.

Patz discusses air quality and climate change on Wisconsin Public Radio

Jonathan Patz

On August 9, Nelson Institute professor and director of the Global Health Institute at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Jonathan Patz was featured in the story "Wildfires Degrading Air Quality in Wisconsin are Driven by Climate Change" on Wisconsin Public Radio.

The article explores the recent wildfires and their relation to climate change, as well as how climate change is impacting overall health. Patz, who has served as the lead author for the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, shared insight into the health impact of climate change, stating that "these extreme events of drought and heat waves are definitely linked to climate change."

Patz is also among a group of professionals who are urging the state to shift to a clean energy economy, which research suggests could save the state $21 billion each year in avoided health costs and prevent more than 1,900 deaths.

CCR leaders awarded Department of Energy funding to study connection between aerosols and historical climate variability

By Bekah McBride

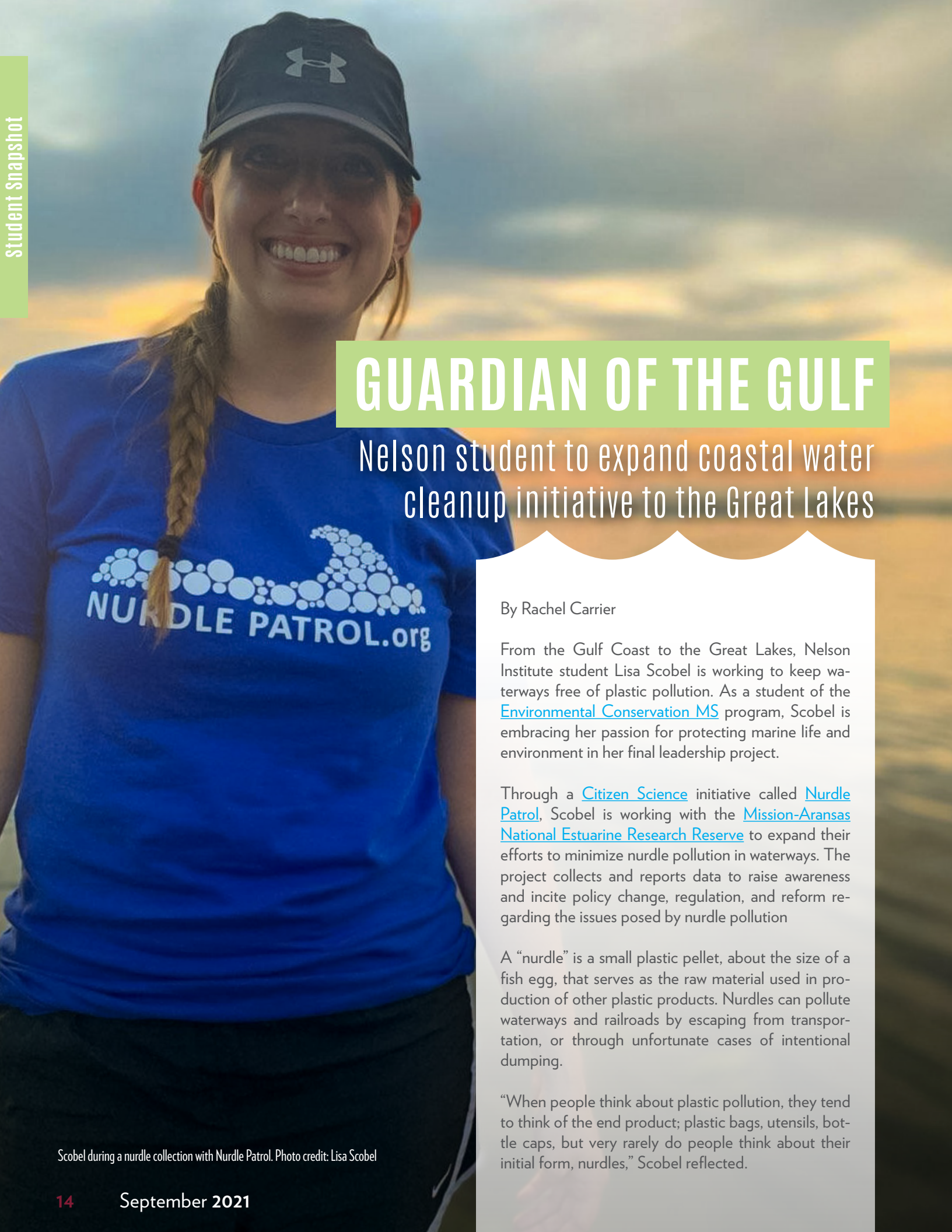
Leaders from the Nelson Institute Center for Climatic Research (CCR) will begin investigating the role of clouds and aerosols (small particles in the atmosphere, such as sulfate or dust) in historical climate variability thanks to support from the Department of Energy. While previous Earth System Models indicate that aerosols influence variations in surface temperature and precipitation processes, this research is the next step in enhancing predictive and process level understanding of how clouds and aerosols impact climate variability in the North Atlantic and the Pacific.

The study will be led by Daniel J. Vimont, CCR director and a professor of Atmospheric and Oceanic Sciences and Tristan L'Ecuyer, professor of Atmospheric and Oceanic Sciences and director of the Cooperative Institute for Meteorological Satellite Studies, with assistance from Salil Mahajan, a climate computational scientist with the Oak Ridge National Laboratory.

"This work will help us better understand the role of humans versus natural climatic variations in the historical evolution of our climate system," said Vimont. "This project brings together an awesome team of scientists from across campus and across the U.S.!"

Together, they've planned a set of modeling experiments, observational comparisons, and machine learning analyses, aimed at understanding how aerosols and clouds interact to affect our climate. The work stems from some preliminary findings that aerosol and cloud interactions have a much more pronounced effect during summer than winter. Vimont highlighted that "the importance of seasonality in the historical climate record is something that has been underappreciated, I think. And, it offers an opportunity for us to isolate specific processes that control the way clouds and aerosols affect our climate system."

"This project illustrates the strength afforded by UW having a world class climate center like CCR collocated with the birthplace of satellite meteorology, CIMSS," said L'Ecuyer. "It is this unique arrangement that fosters the sorts of interdisciplinary research required to answer challenging climate questions like those addressed in this project."



GUARDIAN OF THE GULF

Nelson student to expand coastal water cleanup initiative to the Great Lakes

By Rachel Carrier

From the Gulf Coast to the Great Lakes, Nelson Institute student Lisa Scobel is working to keep waterways free of plastic pollution. As a student of the Environmental Conservation MS program, Scobel is embracing her passion for protecting marine life and environment in her final leadership project.

Through a Citizen Science initiative called Nurdle Patrol, Scobel is working with the Mission-Aransas National Estuarine Research Reserve to expand their efforts to minimize nurdle pollution in waterways. The project collects and reports data to raise awareness and incite policy change, regulation, and reform regarding the issues posed by nurdle pollution

A "nurdle" is a small plastic pellet, about the size of a fish egg, that serves as the raw material used in production of other plastic products. Nurdles can pollute waterways and railroads by escaping from transportation, or through unfortunate cases of intentional dumping.

"When people think about plastic pollution, they tend to think of the end product; plastic bags, utensils, bottle caps, but very rarely do people think about their initial form, nurdles," Scobel reflected.

Scobel during a nurdle collection with Nurdle Patrol. Photo credit: Lisa Scobel

There are about two-hundred-fifty thousand tons of nurdle pollution that enter waterways each year. Due to their size, many marine animals confuse nurdles for food, harming their digestive tract. Similarly, nurdles easily absorb chemicals, which if consumed can bioaccumulate up the food chain to harm many other species.

Scobel views plastic pollution as one of the most pressing environmental issues we face today and is both fascinated by and passionate about tackling the problem.

Nurdles found and collected by Scobel. Photo credit: Lisa Scobel

"In the scheme of things, we haven't really been using plastic for that long and yet the environmental impact that it has is so devastating and huge, Scobel said. "I thought it would be really great to learn more about plastic pollution and how I can make a difference."

Nurdle Patrol is mainly located in southern coastal areas, but Scobel is working to bring the project to the Great Lakes region and the Mississippi River. Pollution data can be seen on Nurdle Patrol's map, a resource comprised of the data collected by citizen scientists around the country.

Scobel has worked in the field to collect data in addition to her endeavors of expanding the initiative. She hopes that Nurdle Patrol's work will make government officials aware of the issue and help devise a proper plan to remediate and prevent nurdle pollution.

Scobel has close proximity to the issue of plastic pollution, as she grew up on the Gulf Coast in New Orleans, La. She recalls visiting the beaches of Florida and Alabama as a child and feels a connection to keeping aquatic life and the environment as safe and clean as possible.

Scobel joined the Environmental Conservation program at Nelson to make a career pivot in the direction of her passion, marine and environmental conservation. Working in the Maritime industry, Scobel serves as a project coordinator for the American Bureau of Shipping Group (ABS Group). Her work is mainly administrative, focusing on business and proposal development.

Scobel has continued working for ABS Group while pursuing her Environmental Conservation degree. While she enjoys her current work, her passion for protecting wildlife and the environment was a driving force behind her career shift. Once the realization was made that she had room to make a pivot, she was eager to hit the ground running.

"I loved that Nelson offered the Environmental Conservation program as a 15-month expedited program so I could get out into the workforce even sooner," Scobel said.

Scobel obtained her undergraduate degree in Cultural Resource Management, which she explained has similar foundational ideas as environmental conservation but involves history and museums. This background helped her throughout the course of the program.

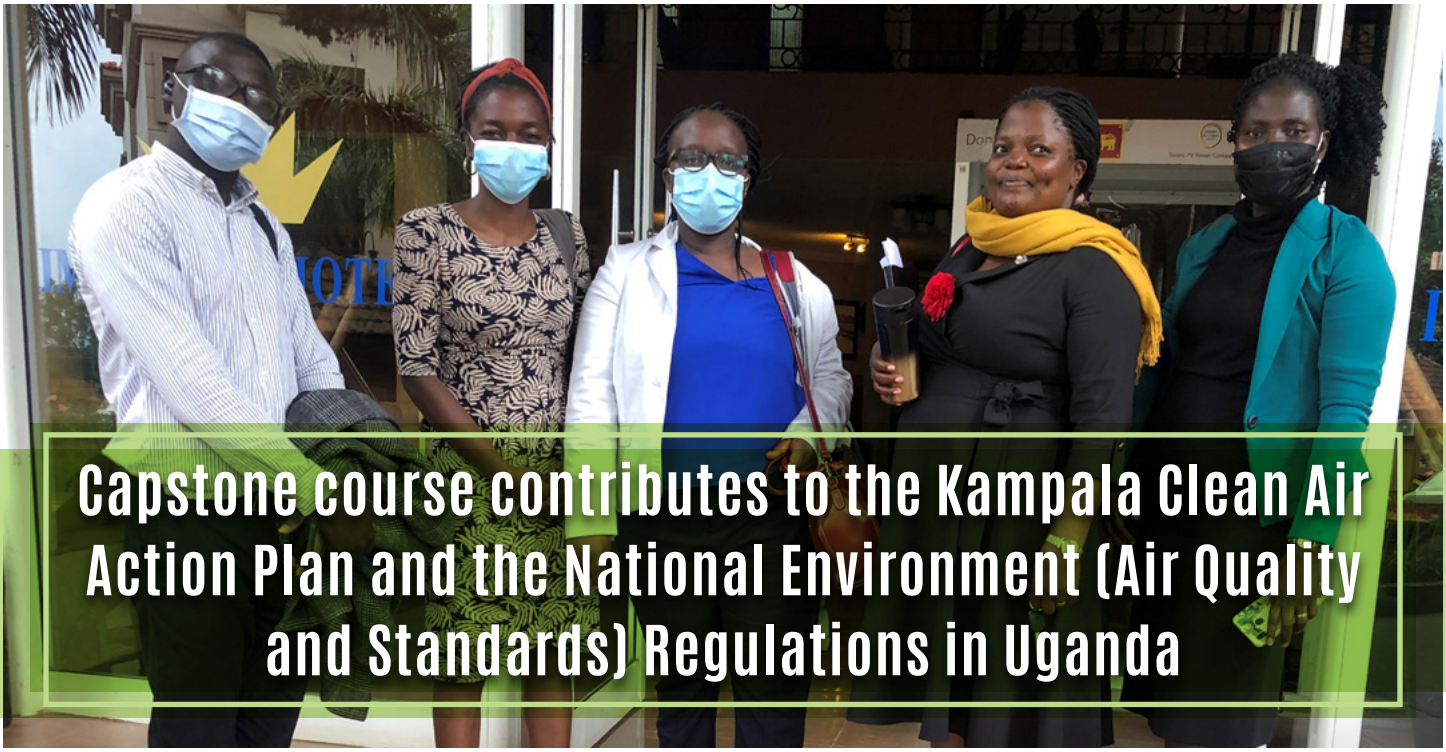
> ***"In the scheme of things, we haven't really been using plastic for that long and yet the environmental impact that it has is so devastating and huge."***
>
> – Lisa Scobel

"One of the great things about the Environmental Conservation program is that it focuses on lots of leadership and management skills that you can get from a variety of backgrounds, Scobel said. "But for someone like me who doesn't have the scientific educational background it's a great transition to be able to merge into the environmental workspace but still be able to use my prior professional skills."

Scobel has begun the process of seeking a new role that fulfills her passion of working in Environmental Conservation and can see herself doing similar work to that of Nurdle Patrol in the future.

You can help Nurdle Patrol's efforts by conducting your own nurdle survey, and viewing Nurdle Patrol's interactive data map.

Learn more about the Environmental Conservation MS Program and how you can support the program.



Capstone course contributes to the Kampala Clean Air Action Plan and the National Environment (Air Quality and Standards) Regulations in Uganda

From left to right: Deo Okur from airqo, Dorothy Lsoto, Jennifer (senior environmental officer), Monica (senior environmental officer) and Eunice (legal officer) from NEMA.

By Bekah McBride

A Nelson Institute student-led project investigating air quality in the capital city of Kampala, Uganda is receiving high-level national attention and is contributing to the first Kampala Clean Air Action Plan and the National Environment Air Quality Standards and Regulations.

This project is the result of the Nelson Institute spring 2021 capstone course, Air Quality and Equity in an African City. In line with the Wisconsin Idea, a guiding principle that suggests education should influence people's lives beyond the boundaries of the classroom, students in the capstone course partnered with leaders in the capital city of Uganda, Kampala, to move air quality policy forward. Throughout the course, students analyzed common sources of urban air pollution, examined the health and ecological impacts of these pollutants, and considered how these pollutants impact the most vulnerable communities in Kampala.

The course was developed and taught by Nelson Institute doctoral candidate, Dorothy Lsoto, and Nelson alumna and associate director for the University of Wisconsin-Madison African Studies Program, Aleia Ingulli McCord. Lsoto was the inaugural recipient of the Nelson Institute's Capstone TA competition.

"Dorothy's academic training and life experience prepared her perfectly for undertaking this important effort, and the outcomes of this course speak for themselves," said McCord. "The classroom became a space for practitioners, students, and scholars to investigate the root causes of pollution in Kampala, and the work that students produced is actually being used by stakeholders in Uganda."

Lsoto, whose hometown is Kampala, Uganda, is proud to be a part of this project which aligns well with her current research studying the relationships between air quality and health. Under the advisement of Nelson Institute professor and Global Health Institute director, Jonathan Patz, Lsoto is working towards her PhD in Environment and Resources, a degree which she hopes will help her to achieve her childhood goal of helping her community and family.

"As a young kid I grew up in the city of Kampala, but my grandparents were in the countryside with no electricity. They used firewood to cook and one day I visited my Grandma who was tearing up while she was making tea," shared Lsoto. "I remember asking my mom why Grandma was crying and I learned it was the smoke from her stove. Imagine a small kitchen with no windows with dark tar on the walls. As a kid that image stayed with me." This commitment to understanding the relationships between energy and health followed Lsoto through her years at Makerere University in Kampala, at the Center for Research in Energy and Energy Conservation, and then in her work with several renewable energy and cookstove start-ups in Kampala.

Lsoto began her graduate education at the Nelson Institute studying renewable energy in East Africa, for which she was

> ***"They love the interdisciplinary approach of the Nelson Institute... Many of the stakeholders are talking to me about how to adopt that interdisciplinary approach."***
>
> – Dorothy Lsoto

awarded the Energy Analysis and Policy (EAP) International Student Scholarship in 2018. Her work focused on biogas and other renewable sources that could assist those like her Grandma who were reliant on firewood. The work also supported women in the area who often spend many hours gathering firewood, limiting their ability to pursue other interests. Upon completion of her master's project, Lsoto remained interested in the pollution caused by energy sources such as firewood, so she decided to focus on air quality and its impact on health for her doctorate work.

"Unfortunately, I never got to help my grandma as she died of respiratory related illness. But, that's why I wanted my PhD to focus on health and air quality," said Lsoto.

All of Lsoto's personal research provided her with the perfect background to lead this class, which required her to coordinate communication between the students and leaders in Kampala. During the course, student groups worked with at least two stakeholders from both government and private institutions in Kampala to better understand the air quality challenges presented by various sectors such as transportation and industry. Likewise, Lsoto worked closely with the stakeholders to better understand their needs and how the student work could best support Kampala's air quality policy plans.

"These are not your everyday people," said Lsoto. "They work for some of the top organizations in Uganda, including the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA)." The relationships Lsoto and her students formed with leaders in government and the private sector, including with AirQo, a start-up based in Kampala that offers rapid, low-cost air quality monitoring, allowed her to continue to work in the air quality sector after the semester ended. "Because of this course, I was invited to be a part of the first Kampala Clean Air Action plan and the National Environment Air Quality Standards and Regulations formulation and review"

The reports that students in the class authored are now being used to inform the Kampala Clean Air Action Plan and the National Environment Air Quality Standards and Regulations.

"Dorothy's work demonstrates the transformative impact of an interdisciplinary education from the Nelson Institute," said McCord. "Her vision for a clean air future in Kampala is guided by the science of air pollution, principles of public health, the history of urbanization and legacies of colonialism, and a practical understanding of modern politics. Decision-makers in Kampala are taking notice."

Indeed, Lsoto shared that the community leaders continue to be impressed with the quality of the work the students submitted and the interdisciplinary approach used in the course and throughout Nelson Institute curriculum.

"They love the interdisciplinary approach of the Nelson Institute," Lsoto shared. "They had never seen this and were very surprised that the background of the students was so diverse. Many of the stakeholders are talking to me about how to adopt that interdisciplinary approach."

Lsoto views two air quality reference monitors owned by AirQo located at Makerere University weather station. The two reference monitors bring the total number of reference monitors to three in the country including the first one owned by and housed at the US embassy. The two reference monitors are used to calibrate the low-cost air quality monitors. Photo credit: Dorothy Lsoto

Lsoto will continue to work with stakeholders on the Kampala Clean Air Action Plan, which will become the framework for other regions in the country while she also provides input to the National Environment Air Quality Standards and Regulations set to come out later this year. While this is just one step forward in air quality policy, Lsoto is also one step closer to helping her community and honoring her goal of helping those like her grandma.

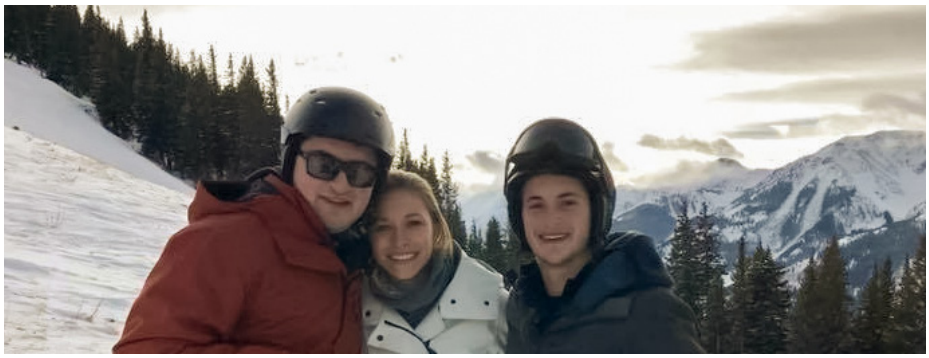
"It's been a good experience," Lsoto said. "I'm especially excited that this is the first extensive research done sector-by- sector on the air quality in Uganda."

Finding his passion and getting involved, ES major shares his undergraduate experience

By Anica Graney

Beginning college without knowing what to major in is a challenge many students face, including undergraduate Nelson Institute student, Isaac Eskind.

"Going into my junior year, I needed to make a decision on my major," said Eskind. "I wasn't sure if I wanted to go into economics or finance, but I knew I wanted to do environmental studies because the classes were thought-provoking and had engaging professors."



Isaac Eskind (right) with his siblings in Aspen, CO. Photo credit: Isaac Eskind

Originally from Nashville, Tenn., Eskind came to the University of Wisconsin-Madison in search of a major he was passionate about. After taking some classes and getting involved with events like Nelson Institute's Weston Roundtable series, Eskind landed on a double major in Finance and Environmental Studies.

Through the Weston Roundtable series, Eskind became introduced to Greg Nemet, Nelson Institute affiliate and Professor of Public Affairs. Nemet specializes in policy analysis, energy systems, and international environmental policy, subjects that Eskind was interested in learning more about. After reaching out to Nemet, Eskind began working on diffusion of climate policy and researching a policy mechanism intended to accelerate investments in renewable energy known as feed-in tariffs.

"[Nemet] started out by assigning papers and annual reports to read, just to get a background in what we were doing," said Eskind. "Then, Nemet and I designed an independent study for two semesters. First a study on feed-in tariffs then expanding the research by adding more types of policy. It was a great experience and I really enjoyed working with him."

Nemet shared a similar feeling to working with Eskind. "I was impressed by his commitment to learning more about climate policy and how public policy can enable some of the potential solutions," said Nemet. "He worked on building a novel dataset of when and where three types of climate policies were adopted: feed-in tariffs for renewable energy, carbon prices, and net-zero targets. He then analyzed them and found that policy adoption follows an S-curve shape familiar to those studying technology adoption. I look forward to seeing what Isaac does next."

Eskind explored ways to get involved outside of his classes and joined a student subcommittee for sustainability that focused on the different things the university could do to improve its sustainability.

"I pushed for sustainable athletics," said Eskind. "I thought zero trash at games, carbon-neutral athletics, or all stadiums are powered by renewable energy would all be impactful goals. I imagined that it would create a good image for our university and would catalyze other schools like us to follow suit."

Eskind also joined the University of Wisconsin Divestment Coalition, a state-wide organization that involves students from all UW System schools. "It's basically a large campaign to try and get the UW System divested from fossil fuels," said Eskind. "It has been a privilege to work alongside a lot of dedicated people."

During the summer of 2020, Eskind worked for an Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) research firm called Boundless Impact Investing where he researched, wrote, and

> ***"I am very thankful that I'm an environmental studies major. I felt that they really cared about me as a student and helped push me forward in my studies."***
>
> – Isaac Eskind

developed reports for investors on nuanced ESG investing areas such as LED lighting, desalination and more, with an emphasis on future private investment possibilities. Eskind also created environmental key performance indicators for 37 different impact investing areas, such as carbon-to-value, and water management technology during his time at Boundless Impact Investing.

This past summer, Eskind joined Next Rung Technology, a consulting firm in Boston, Mass. that focuses on guiding private companies as they commercialize emerging sustainable technologies, for an internship position.

"I work in the alternative food space to figure out how our clients can scale up their production in the most cost-effective way. This includes modeling the impacts of technical and business decisions." said Eskind. "I'm also doing research on fields that we may tap into. For example, I am gathering data and other information on the carbon to value space and the green hydrogen space. My hope is that getting an understanding of companies in this space could lead to successful partnerships down the road."

Eskind (left) while hiking with a friend in Big Bend National Park in Texas. Photo credit: Isaac Eskind

Eskind plans to graduate in December of 2021 and has an interest in working in the startup world for a company hoping to tackle climate change issues, or for an impact investing company, investing with an ESG purpose. "I believe in the power of business, I believe that it can create a lot of the change we seek," said Eskind.

"I am very thankful that I'm an environmental studies major," said Eskind. "I felt that they really cared about me as a student. I also liked the professors whom I have gotten to know, Jonathan Patz, Greg Nemet, and Tracey Holloway to name a few. Their insightfulness and passion are inspiring. The Nelson Institute does a great job of educating their students."

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!

Join us Friday, September 17 for the Nelson Institute's second annual Day of Giving! Participation is our singular goal– and there are 11,000+ of us in the Nelson Community. Gifts in any amount are needed and appreciated.

Nelson Institute announces the Sandi and Dan Heim Environmental Studies Scholarship

Dan and Sandi Heim in the front yard of their Arizona home with their dog Cassi. Photo credit: Dan and Sandi Heim

By Bekah McBride

The Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies is honored to announce the newly established Sandi and Dan Heim Environmental Studies Scholarship, an estate gift that will annually support one future undergraduate Environmental Studies student.

This scholarship is made possible by a generous gift from Sandi and Dan Heim, both of whom are graduates of University of Wisconsin System schools, Green Bay and Madison respectively. Sandi Heim, a graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Human Ecology, is particularly proud to support her alma mater and the interdisciplinary education that is at the core of the Nelson Institute mission.

"My degree at the UW was in home economics education and what drew me to that degree was the fact that it was the first interdisciplinary degree I was introduced to," Heim said. "I have a double-major in home economics education and science. That was the nature of that degree and it's very similar to the Nelson Institute in that you take all different disciplines and apply it to improving quality of life. I think that interdisciplinary education is what ensured my success."

In addition to supporting the interdisciplinary work at the Nelson Institute, Heim is also excited to be supporting students working on environmental challenges. Heim and her husband, Dan have long been supporters of environmental conservation efforts and actually moved from Wisconsin to Arizona to build a solar home.

"I taught for four years and that's where I met my husband," Heim shared. "I celebrated the first Earth Day back in 1970, but when I met Dan I got exposed to additional things. He had a real passion for solar and had this idea that he wanted to build a solar home, so we moved to Arizona."

After moving to Arizona to build their solar home, Heim started a new job in the insurance industry as her teaching license did not transfer. Although this career transition was a challenge at first, Heim quickly learned the ropes and became a leader

in the industry. She credits her education and experience at UW-Madison for her ability to change careers fairly seamlessly.

"The most life changing thing I ever did was come to Madison. My whole experience at UW of working with people from different fields was probably the best preparation for me to have success later in life." Heim said. "I was exposed to so much more diversity. I just embraced it all. And so, I think that is one of the best things that ever happened to me is learning that people are different, but it doesn't make someone different good or bad. It really paved the way for me to do great things."

Now, Heim is hoping to support others as they embark on their journey at UW-Madison.

"The reason I'm giving back is because my education did so much for me," Heim said. "I don't think I could have ever dreamed of the success that I've had, so I just really credit that opportunity that I had at UW. The way I look at it is, no one owes me anything, but everyone deserves an opportunity. I just wanted an opportunity and I want to give that opportunity to someone else who has a passion around making a difference."

Heim believes that the scholarship recipients will make a difference for the environment and use this opportunity to create a real change in the world.

"I donated to the Nelson Institute because they believe in everything I believe in," Heim said. "They've positioned themselves to actually make a change. The ideas only go so far, but these students will be able to execute the ideas. I have confidence in the Nelson Institute because of their past record, but also because of the approach they're taking. They bring all of these points of view together to create change for the environment."

Professorships, chairs, and faculty fellows named

The Nelson Institute is fortunate to have a number of professorships, chairs, and faculty fellowships that have been established via generous philanthropic gifts. We are pleased to announce that the following individuals will hold these honorary positions during the 2021/22 academic year:

New Named Professorships/Chairs

Monica White
Gaylord Nelson Distinguished Chair in Integrated Environmental Studies
Associate Professor of Environmental Justice, Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies and Department of Community and Environmental Sociology
Inaugural Director, Nelson Institute Office of Environmental Justice

Associate Professor White will hold the Gaylord Nelson Distinguished Chair from July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2025; she succeeds Professor Tracey Holloway in this capacity.

Continuing in their Professorship/Chair/Faculty Fellow roles

Anna Andrzejewski
Bradshaw Knight Professor of the Environmental Humanities
Professor, Department of Art History
Director, Nelson Institute Center for Culture, History and Environment

Andrea Hicks
Hanson Family Fellow in Sustainability
Associate Professor, Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering
Director of Sustainability Education and Research, Office of Sustainability

Jonathan Patz
John P. Holton Chair in Heath and the Environment
Professor, Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies & School of Medicine and Public Health
Director, Global Health Institute

Paul Robbins
Nelson-Hanson Chair in Environmental Studies
Professor, Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies & Department of Geography
Dean, Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies

Anita Thompson
Ken Potter Professor of Water Resources *(formerly known as the Nelson Institute Professorship in Water Resources)*
Professor, Department of Biological Systems Engineering
Program Chair, Nelson Institute Water Resources Management Program

Join us for a Rendezvous Virtual Lunch Event

Rendezvous 2021

Friday, September 17, 2021
Noon-1 p.m. CDT
We invite you to attend a virtual lunch conversation with Dean Paul Robbins and the 2021 Alumni Award recipients. Dean Robbins will share what's new at the Institute and then moderate a discussion with 2021 Alumni Award winners about their work in the areas of renewable energy, climate change and health, and city management.

Register to attend by Thursday, September 16.

Nelson alumni networking event. Photo credit: Ingrid Laas

Alumni volunteers needed for speed networking event

We are looking for alumni to join us for our annual speed networking event with students. This year's event will take place on Wednesday and Thursday, October 20 and 21 from 4-6 p.m. CT. If you are interested in participating in person or virtually, please email Emily Reynolds, assistant director, Community Engagement & Alumni Relations for more details.

Alumni Engagement SURVEY

We are very grateful to have such a vibrant and engaged alumni community. As we consider how to expand/enhance our post-COVID activities, please take a moment to help us plan by responding to this short survey!

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

Voices of National Leadership in Anti-Racism in the Outdoors

This event is presented in partnership by the University of Wisconsin-Madison Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies, the University of Connecticut College of Agriculture, Health and Nature Resources - Department of Extension, the Cornell School of Integrative Plant Science, and The Joy Trip Project. Supported by Schlecht Family Foundation.

The discussion will be moderated by James Edward Mills, community partnership liaison at the Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies and founder of The Joy Trip Project.

Featuring speakers:

- Christopher Kilgour, founder of Color in The Outdoors
- Claudia Pineda Tibbs (they/them), advisory board, Latino Outdoors; Sustainability Manager; Monterey Bay Aquarium
- Corina Newsome, Community Engagement Manager at Georgia Audubon Society

Also, be sure to check out the Earth Day 2021 session Equitable Access to the Outdoors to learn more about equity in the outdoors prior to the Everyone's Earth discussion on September 30.

Nelson faculty, affiliates, and staff contribute expertise to upcoming climate forum

A number of Nelson Institute faculty will be participating in the upcoming La Follette Forum on climate policy. The participants will include forum leaders professor Greg Nemet and Nelson Institute Center for Sustainability and the Global Environment (SAGE) member, assistant professor Morgan Edwards. Nelson faculty member Dan Vimont, who serves as the director of the Nelson Institute Center for Climatic Research and a professor of Atmospheric and Oceanic Sciences as well as James Edward Mills, the Nelson Institute community partnership liaison and founder of The Joy Trip Project, will also be speaking during the forum.

Katharine Wilkinson, co-founder of The All We Can Save Project, will give the opening keynote address during the La Follette School's second annual policy forum supported by the Kohl Initiative. The daylong climate policy conference Wednesday, October 6 is free, although online registration is required.

Researchers, policymakers, and community leaders are invited to the La Follette Forum: Climate Policy at UW–Madison's Union South. Participants may register for on-site, virtual, and hybrid options.

Wilkinson is an author, teacher, co-founder of The All We Can Save Project, and co-host of the podcast A Matter of Degrees. Her books on climate include All We Can Save, The Drawdown Review, Drawdown, and Between God & Green. In 2019, Time magazine named her one of the 15 Women Leading the Fight Against Climate Change.

A former Rhodes Scholar, Wilkinson has been passionate about protecting the planet since she attended the Outdoor Academy 20 years ago as a high school student in North Carolina. One of her guiding principles is the need to shift the climate-change discourse to "be more courageous and more emotionally intelligent," she says, and Drawdown is "about moving through what is hard and continuing to rise to the challenge."

The climate policy forum will feature six breakout sessions, and in-person participants will have several networking opportunities, including an evening reception.

"We have an exciting agenda, top-notch panelists, and high expectations for engaging conversations about innovative solutions to one of our most challenging policy issues," said Nemet.

Vimont will participate in the Climate Science, Risk & Resilience session and Mills will serve as moderator for the Climate Communication and Youth Mobilization session.

Participants may watch the presentations in real-time or online after the conference. Breakout sessions will focus on:

- Climate Science, Risk and Resilience
- Climate Communication and Youth Mobilization
- Agriculture and Negative Emissions
- Utilities, Regulation, and Electricity
- National and International Climate Policy
- State and Local Climate Policy

Panelists will include:

- Lieutenant Gov. Mandela Barnes
- Kathy Blumenfeld, Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions secretary
- Scott Coenen, Executive Director, Wisconsin Conservative Energy Forum
- Kathleen Falk, Former Dane County Executive
- Former U.S. Sen. Russ Feingold
- James Edward Mills, journalist
- Randy Romanski (MPA '98), Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection secretary
- Erick Shambarger (MPA '02), City of Milwaukee director of sustainability

The Kohl Initiative was created with a $10 million gift from former U.S. Sen. Herb Kohl in 2019. It focuses on three La Follette School priorities: to expand its public outreach mission, to advance the training of future public leaders, and to support influential research by faculty and students.

Oct. 14

JORDAHL PUBLIC LANDS LECTURE

Thursday, October 14, 2021
6:30-7:30 p.m. CDT
Rebuilding Yesterday: The Power of Untold Stories, A conversation with Shelton Johnson, Park Ranger, U.S. National Park Service, Yosemite National Park
Moderator: James Edward Mills, Community Partnership Liaison, Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies; Founder, The Joy Trip Project

Fall 2021 CHE Environmental Colloquia

The Center for Culture, History, and Environment (CHE) invites you to attend the Fall 2021 CHE Environmental Colloquia series on Wednesdays from noon-1 p.m. (CDT). Mark your calendar for these events:

Becoming-Feral: A Postmodern 'Book of Beasts' Investigating the Shifting Categories of Wild/Feral/Domestic
A presentation with the editors
Wednesday, October 13, 2021
Register Today

Place Writing - Narrative as Meaning, Relations, and Ecology
James T. Spartz
Wednesday, October 27, 2021
Register Today

Icy Matters: Race, Indigeneity, and Coloniality in Ice-Geographies
Jen Rose Smith
Wednesday, November 3, 2021
Register Today

Values, Beliefs, and Identities: What Shapes Attitudes Toward Genetically Modified Crops in Mexico?
A presentation by the CHE research working group "Survey of Attitudes Toward GMOs and Agriculture in Mexico," which is led by David Greenwood-Sanchez and includes group members Bradford Barham, Claudia Irene Calderon, and Anika Rice
Wednesday, November 17, 2021 Register Today

All 2021 Earth Day videos are now available

Coastal Engineering Outreach Specialist, Wisconsin Sea Grant, Adam Bechle presents during Resilience in the Great Lakes Region breakout panel. Photo credit: Adam Bechle

Did you miss a session during the 2021 Earth Day learning event or are you looking to watch a session again?

The Nelson Institute invites you to view all of our 2021 Earth Day videos. We also invite you to explore the Nelson Institute's program archives and learn more about how you can support future Earth Day 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. Mark your calendar for these events:

Thursday, September 23
Donald Wuebbles, Harry E. Preble Professor of Atmospheric Sciences, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
In-person, Location: TBD

Thursday, September 30
Peter Frumhoff, Director of Science and Policy, Union of Concerned Scientists Virtual, RSVP link will be available here

Past lecture recordings are available for viewing.

CPEP
CLIMATE, PEOPLE AND THE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM

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. Past lecture recording are available for viewing.

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

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