



Graduate Associate Positions Available: The Environmental and Social Sustainability Lab

The [Environmental and Social Sustainability Lab](#) in the School of Environment and Natural Resources at The Ohio State University is seeking high-quality MS and PhD applicants to begin graduate studies during the 2025-2026 academic year. Our curriculum includes foundational training in relevant theoretical areas (e.g., sociology, psychology, political science, communication, human geography) and related research methods and statistics. Our students and faculty engage in research within the U.S. as well as international settings with emphasis spanning both theoretical advancement and application. Our recent graduates have been offered positions in academic and applied settings (e.g., government agencies, nongovernmental organizations).

Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion: Ohio State values diversity in people and ideas. We're an inclusive, supportive community where you can comfortably join in or confidently stand out. Please join us!

Several graduate student positions may be available in Environmental Social Sciences within the topic areas below. **The potential for funding varies by project / associated faculty member.** You are strongly encouraged to learn more by visiting our website and individual faculty webpages and then directly contacting faculty before applying to the Graduate School.

1. **Rural and agricultural transitions:** Projects examine the interactions between economic restructuring, local and federal policy, individual land use/management decisions, and physical landscape outcomes. Examples include:
 - a) Examining how farmers adapt to changing climate, economic and policy conditions, and the impact of those changes on both crop/livestock production and ecosystem services (biodiversity, water quality, etc.), with a focus on identifying farming systems that maximize sustainability and resilience in Ohio and Great Lakes region. *Faculty advisors:* [Dr. Douglas Jackson-Smith](#).
 - b) Examining the development of rural identity, the influence of rural identity on decisions (e.g., support for environmental policies, adoption of conservation behaviors, land use decision-making etc.) and the evolution of this identity within areas of social and environmental change. *Faculty advisors:* [Dr. Jeffrey Jacquet](#)
 - c) Examining the impacts of more engaged and participatory approaches to agricultural research on farmer adoption of conservation/climate-smart practices and agri-environmental outcomes: *Faculty advisor:* [Dr. Douglas Jackson-Smith](#).
2. **Social and Economic Well Being in Agriculture:** Projects explore the social sustainability of farmers, farm families, farm businesses and rural communities.
 - a) Examining farm stress, farm entry/intergenerational transitions, community and economic development through food and agriculture, and access to childcare and health care by rural and farming populations. *Faculty advisors:* [Dr. Douglas Jackson-Smith](#) or [Dr. Shoshanah Inwood](#).
 - b) Examining social and economic dimensions of integrated crop-livestock farms and agroecological management systems, and their impacts on the resilience of farming and food systems. *Faculty advisor:* [Dr. Douglas Jackson-Smith](#).
 - c) Examining food systems resilience in disasters, disruptions and emergencies. *Faculty Advisor:* [Dr. Shoshanah Inwood](#).



3. **Psychology of sustainable consumption:** Projects investigate the roles of identity, social influence, and cognitive biases in sustainable behavior with special emphasis on interventions. Examples include:
 - a) How do members of a household [discuss and negotiate](#) large purchase decisions, such as solar panels? *Faculty advisor:* [Dr. Nicole Sintov](#).
 - b) Examine influences of [identity and individual differences](#) on transportation behavior (e.g., [electric car adoption](#)). *Faculty advisor:* [Dr. Nicole Sintov](#).
 - c) Examine (mis)perceptions of environmental impacts of products and packages to [eliminate end-of-life plastics](#)). *Faculty advisor:* [Dr. Nicole Sintov](#).

4. **Collaborative and adaptive governance in environmental policy:** Projects study how policy stakeholders (governmental and non-governmental actors) engage in collaborative behavior to tackle environmental problems that result from excessive, improper, or controversial use of common-pool resources. Examples include:
 - a) Examining the creation and evolution of institutions designed to protect water access and quality in freshwater bodies in the U.S., South America, and East Africa. *Faculty advisors:* [Dr. Ramiro Berardo](#) or [Dr. Matt Hamilton](#).
 - b) Evaluating how environmental policy is designed and implemented in the U.S., from passage of bills into law in congress to rule design by federal and state environmental agencies, regarding topics such as climate change and water quality protection. *Faculty advisor:* [Dr. Ramiro Berardo](#).
 - c) Studying how social and cognitive processes shape local environmental decision-making, through analysis of community-level wildfire risk planning processes. *Faculty advisor:* [Dr. Matt Hamilton](#).
 - d) Understanding how policy actors create and sustain collaborative processes in complex governance systems with multiple decision-making forums to prevent the unsustainable use of natural resources. *Faculty advisor:* [Dr. Ramiro Berardo](#).
 - e) Understanding how social processes, local advocacy groups and landowners can influence the siting and development of renewable or non-renewable energy resources. *Faculty advisor:* [Dr. Jeffrey Jacquet](#)
 - f) Understanding how the energy transition away from fossil fuels and towards renewable energy can impact communities and residents in rural and urban areas. *Faculty advisor:* [Dr. Jeffrey Jacquet](#)

5. **Human-wildlife interactions:** Projects examine the socio-psychological factors (e.g., values, wildlife value orientations) that influence human thought about wildlife and/or wildlife conservation and management decisions. *Faculty advisors:* [Dr. Alia Dietsch](#)

6. **Public lands and visitor use management:** Projects support decision-making related to management of visitors on public lands (e.g., national wildlife refuges, parks, or forests; state or local metro parks), including a nation-wide assessment of visitors to National Wildlife Refuges funded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to understand visitor satisfaction with current refuge offerings and predict future recreation demand given changing social-ecological conditions (go.osu.edu/NVSresults). *Faculty advisor:* [Dr. Alia Dietsch](#).

7. **Social and environmental inequality:** Projects investigate how social processes create and sustain environmental inequalities (e.g., by race and class), and/or how unequal exposures



to natural resources are linked to various disparities (e.g., health outcomes, careers). *Possible faculty advisors:* [Dr. Alia Dietsch](#) or [Dr. Jeffrey Jacquet](#). Example projects include:

- a) Exploring how recreational access differs by race and class, and what that access (or lack thereof) means for the future of the environment and natural resource profession. *Faculty advisor:* [Dr. Alia Dietsch](#).
 - b) Investigating social and environmental inequalities in or relating to the criminal justice system. *Faculty advisor:* [Dr. Alia Dietsch](#).
 - c) Understanding how electric vehicle adoption and the electrification of transportation infrastructure may impact social and economic inequality. *Faculty advisor:* [Dr. Jeffrey Jacquet](#)
 - d) Women account for <30% of EV adopters. What contributes to this gender gap? How can we close it? *Faculty advisor:* [Dr. Nicole Sintov](#).
8. **Nature and Sustainability for Individual, Family, and Community Well-being.** Projects explore the relationship between human well-being, environmental and community change, and the built and natural environment in both urban and rural contexts in the U.S. and internationally. There is a focus on experiences and impacts across the lifespan, particularly from early childhood through young adulthood. *Faculty advisor:* [Dr. Kristi Lekies](#) or [Dr. Jeff Sharp](#).
9. **Environmental education:** Environmental education: Projects explore questions of environmental interest development across formal-informal-home learning experiences, environmental identity development throughout the lifespan, and human-more-than-human relations in urban settings. This includes work with urban educators to co-design meaningful watershed educational experiences (MWEEs), build a community of practice, and explore design-based research questions about how environmental identity develops through Great Lakes literacy and local environmental action. *Faculty advisor:* [Dr. Marijke Hecht](#).
10. **Economics of natural resources management and policy:** Projects in this area include analysis of stakeholder behavior, political economy of environmental policy, and natural resources sector modeling. *Faculty advisor:* [Dr. Sayeed Mahmood](#). Example projects include:
- a) Econometric models of woodland owner decision making behavior.
 - b) Analyzing the adoption and implementation of major environmental policies from a political economy/public choice perspective.
 - c) Analyzing structural characteristics of the forest products sector.
 - d) Analyzing natural resource dependence of communities, states, and nations.

Qualifications: Applicants should have a record of academic excellence (preferred GPA of 3.56). Strong oral and written communication skills are required. *Preferred, but not required qualifications include:* demonstrated coursework in social science theories, and/or research and writing experience using quantitative (e.g., survey/experimental design, multivariate statistics) and/or qualitative (e.g., interviews, focus groups, and analysis) methodologies.

Support: Qualified students will be considered for college and university fellowships, research associateships, and/or teaching associateships. Positions include a stipend of \$30K+ per year plus tuition payment and health benefits.



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL,
AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

School of Environment and Natural Resources

210 Kottman Hall, 2021 Coffey Rd.
Columbus, OH 43210

To Apply: Prospective applicants are encouraged to reach out to individual faculty before applying. You may submit an online application to Environment and Natural Resources at gp.admissions.osu.edu, including a statement of purpose (with a description of interest areas and relevant faculty), CV, and email addresses for 3 references. Send transcripts to Ohio State. To receive full consideration for **potential** funding, all materials must be received no later than December 1, 2024. For full details on application requirements, see senr.osu.edu/graduate/admissions.