

Summer 2023 Sustainability Scholars Program Internship Opportunity

The UBC Sustainability Initiative (USI) is pleased to offer current UBC graduate students the opportunity to work on funded sustainability internship projects. Successful candidates work under the mentorship of a partner organization, and are immersed in real world learning where they can apply their research skills and contribute to advancing sustainability across the region.

- Visit the [Sustainability Scholars Program website](#) to learn [how the program works](#) and to [apply](#).
- Be sure to review the application guide on the Apply page to confirm your eligibility before applying.

Applications close at midnight on Sunday January 29, 2023.

> This is a Fraser Estuary Research Collaborative Project <

The [Fraser Estuary Research Collaborative](#) (FERC) is focussed on advancing efforts to protect the Fraser River estuary in collaboration with key NGO and Indigenous partners. If you are interested in producing new knowledge and supporting Fraser estuary protection through scientific, technical, governance and policy innovations, the following project might be for you. Read on for more details.

Research project title: Conservation messaging best practices to advance urban bird habitat protection in the Fraser estuary

Background:

Messages around environmental degradation can lead to people being disengaged from the issue at a time when motivation, engagement, and positive action are required. Strategic messages may be one part of the solution for improved habitat and biodiversity protection.

Strategic messages have been an integral part of behavioural change campaigns for many years in health, such as anti-smoking and wearing seat belts, and in many environmental sectors such as recycling, energy use and water use. However, studies that examine communications about biodiversity protection and protection of habitat have not been as common until the past few years. Now there is a growing body of literature in this field,¹ which suggests that conservation scientists are not effectively drawing from the long-standing expertise of disciplines with well-established messaging techniques.

Similarly, environmental NGOs are often trying to communicate the value of their work for a variety of purposes: to enlist more people in conservation work, to talk to elected officials to change policies to

¹ For example: Kidd, Lindall R., et al. "Messaging matters: A systematic review of the conservation messaging literature." *Biological Conservation* 236 (2019): 92-99.

improve habitat protection, to inform journalists, and to inspire a different way of being in a relationship with nature.

Purpose of the Project:

The purpose of this project is to tap into the lessons learned from biodiversity conservation messaging to understand some of the common ingredients that are required for success from a communications and engagement perspective. Specifically, we want to learn more about the successful strategies employed by other groups in this field, particularly on positive communications directed toward biodiversity conservation in very urbanized areas that are biologically valuable. Successful conservation strategies to protect urban bird habitats are well known, (see, for example, resources from Birds Canada and Nature Canada) but communications materials about those strategies are less readily available. An emphasis on reaching people's emotions (hearts and minds) through positive communications is growing with initiatives like Conservation Optimism and Happy Climate, and can inform the literature review.

Scope of Work:

- Best practices review of academic literature to identify the state of knowledge on biodiversity conservation messaging from a variety of fields such as psychology, conservation science, and marketing
- Scan of academic, NGO and government reports related to biodiversity conservation for the Fraser estuary to assess how conservation messaging is being addressed relative to the best practices identified in the previous literature review.
- Review of communication strategies used by NGOs and local governments in the Fraser estuary and the San Francisco Estuary (another heavily urbanized biologically critical estuary).
 - This may include 3 to 5 interviews to collect information about the strategies that were most successful, and lessons learned from unsuccessful strategies.
- Desktop research and interviews with NGO staff in Richmond and 2 to 3 other key jurisdictions in the Lower Mainland to understand their communication strategies for estuary protection.
 - We are interested in messaging directed to the local publics living close to the estuary. The Scholar and mentor will work together to prioritise the list of audiences for the messaging depending on the relative amount of information available.

Deliverables

- A literature review on the state of knowledge on biodiversity conservation messaging for biodiversity protection
- A final report containing a summary of the work completed including:
 - a comparison of communications strategies that have been employed on estuary and urban bird habitat protection for the public, including messaging, framing and nomenclature
 - a comparison of communications using crisis and deficit language vs positive communication to reach hearts and minds.
 - Recommendations on approaches and communication messages applicable to conserving bird habitat in the urban spaces of the Fraser Estuary for NGOs working with local residents
 - A short case study on communication strategies used in 1 jurisdiction including strategies and approaches that were successful and those that were unsuccessful
- A final report for the online public-facing [Scholars Project Library](#).

SUSTAINABILITY SCHOLARS PROGRAM

Time Commitment

- This project will take 260 hours to complete: 250 hours to be allocated to the research, and 10 hours to be allocated to participating in meetings and collaboration opportunities with the rest of the FERC cohort
- This project must be completed between May 1 to August 15, 2023
- The Scholars is to complete their hours between 9 am and 5 pm, Monday to Friday, approximately 17 to 20 hours per week.
- The Scholar must live in the lower mainland in order to be available to attend FERC meetings and events in person.

Required/preferred Skills and Background

- Excellent research and writing skills
- Demonstrated interest in sustainability
- Strong analytical skills
- Ability to work independently
- Deadline oriented
- Research experience or an interest in conservation communications and/or biodiversity and habitat protection are assets
- Comfortable interacting with strangers to conduct public/in person surveys

Applications close **midnight Sunday January 29, 2023**

Apply here: [Click here to apply](#)

Contact Karen Taylor at sustainability.scholars@ubc.ca if you have questions

Useful Resources

We are holding a special **resume preparation workshop for prospective Scholars** on January 23, 2023. [Click here for details and to register.](#)

Below are some links to useful resources to help you with your resume and cover letter (there are many more online). Some of these resources also provide information on preparing for your interview.

<https://students.ubc.ca/career/career-resources/resumes-cover-letters-curricula-vitae>

<https://www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/graduate-pathways-success>

<https://www.grad.ubc.ca/cover-letter-cv-resume-templates-ubc-career-services>