Funded graduate student opportunity in outdoor recreation and trail use and monitoring

We seek a prospective student interested in pursuing a graduate degree in partnership with an interdisciplinary project focused on outdoor recreation and trail use and monitoring. This assistantship is available through the Department of Natural Resources & the Environment at University of Connecticut. Start date is January 2024. A Master of Science student is preferred, but PhD students will be considered.

This project is part of the larger long-term collaborative UConn Connecticut Trails Program (https://cttrails.uconn.edu/), led by the Center for Land Use Education and Research (CLEAR), UConn Extension, and the Department of Natural Resources & the Environment (NRE). Project team leadership includes Anita Morzillo (NRE), Emily Wilson (CLEAR), Michael Puglisi (Department of Nutritional Sciences), and Aaron Budris (Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments), in partnership with the Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection and many other Extension educators and trail-related organizations.

Work for this assistantship will involve comparing novel methodology to better estimate and understand ongoing trail use dynamics, management planning for abrupt changes in trail use such as during the Covid-19 pandemic, and enhancing equitable access to outdoor recreation resources. Results will contribute to development of a state-level protocol for improving long-term evaluation of trail use and methods for data collection. There is some flexibility in the thesis or dissertation topic emphasis, to be determined based on the interests of the selected applicant. Some outdoor fieldwork may be included but not guaranteed.

Applicants should have: 1) a background in natural resources, outdoor recreation, database management, geographic information systems, statistics, and/or landscape ecology, 2) interest in applied research focused on integration of trail use data and community planning, and 3) the ability to work both independently and as part of a research team. The student will be expected to present research results at professional conferences, publish research results in peer-reviewed scientific outlets, and pursue extramural funding to supplement their assistantship, as appropriate. A working knowledge of or work-related experience with visitor use estimation, statistics, and/or GIS and any related programming languages (e.g., Python, R) is preferred but not essential.

Interested students are asked to send the following materials directly to me (Anita Morzillo; anita.morzillo@uconn.edu) as a single *.pdf document: 1) a cover letter describing their professional background, relevant research experience and interests, career goals, and reasons for seeking a Master's or Doctoral degree, 2) names and contact information for three references, 3) a current curriculum vitae, and 4) copies of transcripts, and 5) GRE scores (if available).

Unofficial copies of transcripts are sufficient for initial contact. GRE scores are not required for program admission, but helpful for overall application evaluation. Potential students must have received a GPA equivalent to a 3.0/4.0 in the last 90 term (or 60 semester) hours of their Bachelor's degree program. Do not submit materials to the NRE department or UConn Graduate School at this time.

Application review will begin 18 September 2023, and continue until a candidate is selected.

Further information about the UConn Department of Natural Resources and the Environment may be found at https://nre.uconn.edu/

Further information about the Center for Land Use Education and Research may be found at https://clear.uconn.edu/