

# NRT Conservation Science Newsletter



Fall 2023

## Going Strong

Greetings esteemed colleagues! We have had a strong start to this sixth and final year of our program, and again, much has happened since our last newsletter. We celebrated the ongoing connections among faculty, partners, and trainees at our program's recent annual retreat. It was wonderful to see many of you in person! Over the summer, trainees engaged in important research and internship projects with partners throughout the state. Five trainees have completed their thesis/dissertation defenses during the past few months, and several more are preparing to do so soon. Please join us once again in congratulating and cheering on our fantastic trainees!

As we enter the final stage of our program, we continue to work collaboratively toward our goal of advancing conservation solutions that will ultimately lead to enhanced resilience of socio-ecological systems and stronger capacity to respond to changes. We are also finding ways to ensure the sustainability of key elements of our program to help us continue building relationships and forging ahead on research while learning from one another. Many thanks to all of you for your ongoing support and participation in our program. We hope that 2023 ends on a high note for you all, and we look forward to continuing our work together in the new year!

*~~ Dr. Sandra De Urioste-Stone,  
Program Leader*

## Congratulations!

Congratulations to the trainees who have recently completed their thesis/dissertation defenses:

- 🍂 Abigail Bennett, MS Ecology & Environmental Science
- 🍂 Alyssa Soucy, PhD Ecology & Environmental Science
- 🍂 Brennan Lauer, MA Communications & Journalism
- 🍂 Megan Leach, MS Wildlife Ecology
- 🍂 Peter Breigenzer, MS Forest Resources

These outstanding individuals will now join our growing list of NRT Conservation Science alumni, and we look forward to hearing about their future endeavors!

# Annual Retreat

In September, over 30 people gathered at UMaine's Buchanan Alumni House for our program's fifth annual retreat. The day was filled with discussion, networking, and all around celebration of our program and its people. We extend a special thank you to our retreat planning committee: program coordinator Emily Uhrig, faculty members Jessica Jansujwicz, Linda Silka, Parinaz Rahimzadeh, and trainees Allison Foster and Christy Carovillano.

## Engaging Presentations & Discussions

After beginning the day with program updates, presentations by conservation partners and others set the stage for lively small group discussions. Dan Kusnierz (Penobscot Nation) and trainee Allison Foster shared their perspectives on collaborative work to kick off a session on crossing boundaries, while presentations by Christine Feurt (Wells Reserve), Andy Whitman (Manomet), and Jennifer Dann (Orono Land Trust) provided a foundation for conversations on conservation challenges. Later, faculty members Sandra De Urioste-Stone and Jessica Jansujwicz as well as NRT alum Abigail Bennett shared insights into the program to catalyze discussions about program sustainability.



Visit <https://umaine.edu/conservationscience/> to learn more about our program.



## Panel on Communication & Engagement



After lunch, presentations by Rex Turner (Maine Bureau of Parks & Lands), Deborah McKew and Eleanor Eckel (Biodiversity Research Institute), and Kristen Grant and Keri Kaczor (Maine Sea Grant) focused on communication and engagement. They were then joined by trainees Peter Breigenzer, Gabrielle Venne, and Holland Haverkamp in a panel discussion led by Linda Silka.

## Poster Session



The day ended on a high note with a poster session showcasing trainees' internship projects.

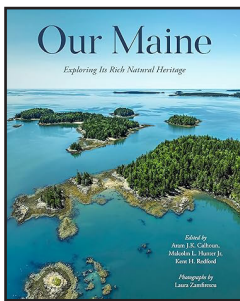


## National NRT Meeting

Our program was well represented at this year's national meeting of NRT programs held in Tempe, Arizona, in October. In addition to several of us attending virtually, faculty member Linda Silka and trainees Gabrielle Venne and Allison Foster attended in person. Both trainees presented posters. There were many interesting presentations and excellent conversations about all things NRT, including program sustainability, collaboration, and promoting diversity.



Left to right: Gabrielle Venne, Linda Silka, Allison Foster. Back: Mario Tiesl, leader for UMaine's OneHealth NRT.



## New Publications

A new book edited by NRT faculty Aram Calhoun and Mitchell Center faculty fellow Mac Hunter is now available in bookstores. The volume, *Our Maine*, aims to inspire appreciation for Maine's natural heritage via writings collected from a diverse array of Mainers.

NRT alum Alyssa Soucy, faculty members Sandra De Urioste-Stone, Parinaz Rahimzadeh-Bajgiran, and Jessica Jansujwicz, and collaborators have coauthored a study focused on understanding how conservation and stewardship practitioners experience, acknowledge, and make sense of conservation decision-making in Maine. Read their publication in PLOS Sustainability and Transformation here: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pstr.0000087>



## Successful Proposals

Faculty member Jay Wason, trainee Peter Breigenzer, and US Forest Service collaborators were awarded funds by the Joint Fire Science Program to study links between forest microclimate and fire behavior.

A collaborative project between the Penobscot Nation and trainees (Allison Foster, Carrie Loomis, Christy Carovillano, Gabrielle Venne, Holland Haverkamp, Rachel Hale) was funded by the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund. The project involves water quality monitoring and education related to public health and Wabanaki sustenance fishing practices.

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