

NRT Conservation Science Newsletter



Spring/Summer 2023

Another Year Closes

Greetings esteemed colleagues! It is hard to believe another academic year has already come to a close, and much has happened since our last newsletter. We have welcomed a new affiliate faculty member and a new conservation partner. Our cohort 4 trainees successfully wrapped up their first year and are conducting important research throughout the state. Collaborations among faculty, partners, and trainees remain strong, with new projects and collaborative proposals in development. Two trainees completed their thesis/dissertation defenses during spring, and several more are preparing to do so soon. We hope you can join us in congratulating and cheering on our fantastic trainees!

Moving into our program's final year, we continue working 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 look forward to continuing to build relationships and forging ahead on research while learning from one another. We are excited to watch as more trainees transition into the workforce and become the next generation of conservation professionals.

Many thanks to all of you for your ongoing support and participation in our program. It is truly an honor and a privilege to collaborate and learn from each of you. Have a wonderful summer! Looking forward to another exciting year of working together!

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

Congratulations!



Congratulations to the trainees who completed their thesis/dissertation in spring semester:

- Gabrielle Hillyer, PhD Ecology & Environmental Science
- Gabriella Gurney, MA Communications & Journalism

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

We also offer congratulations to NRT faculty Dr. Parinaz Rahimzadeh-Bajgiran (School of Forest Resources) for her promotion to Associate Professor with tenure and Dr. Tora Johnson (Environmental & Biological Sciences, UMaine Machias) for her promotion to Professor.

Engaging Experiences

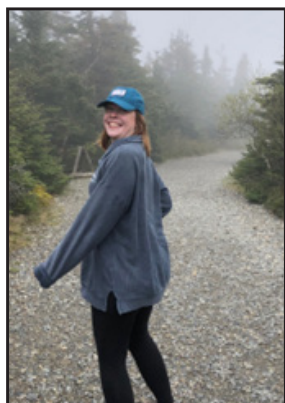
It's Internship Season

The 2023 internship season is well underway. Trainees are working with partner organizations on a variety of projects throughout the state. This year's topic areas include climate-smart forestry, science communication, bear-human conflict, and coastal community resilience, with partners including Maine Bureau of Parks & Lands, Maine Dept. of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife, Maine Sea Grant, and the Biodiversity Research Institute.



Future Sustainability Leaders

In keeping with our program's close ties to UMaine's [Mitchell Center for Sustainability Solutions](#), a number of NRT personnel are involved in the Center's 2023 Future Sustainability Leaders (FSL) program. Now in its second year, the FSL program supports summer internships and hosts professional development activities. NRT faculty Dr. Jessica Jansujwicz is the program's coordinator, and six NRT faculty/staff are co-mentoring FSL interns. Recent NRT graduate Dr. Gabrielle Hillyer was a guest speaker for the program and shared her perspective on interdisciplinary, stakeholder-engaged research.



This year's FSL interns include NRT trainees Carrie Loomis (MA, Communications & Journalism; photo at left) and Gab Venne (MS, Forest Resources; photo at right), who are working with the Maine Dept. of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife and the Bureau of Parks & Lands, respectively.



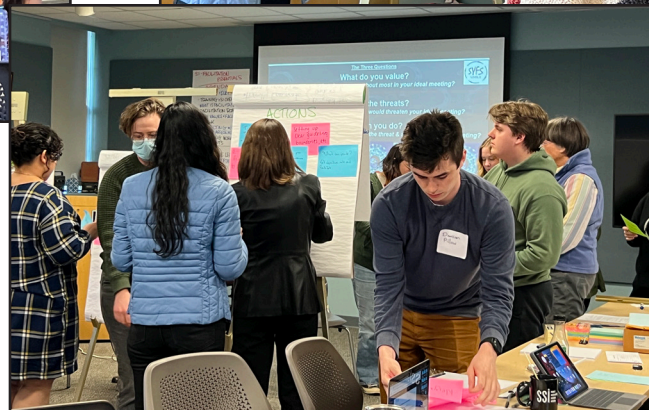
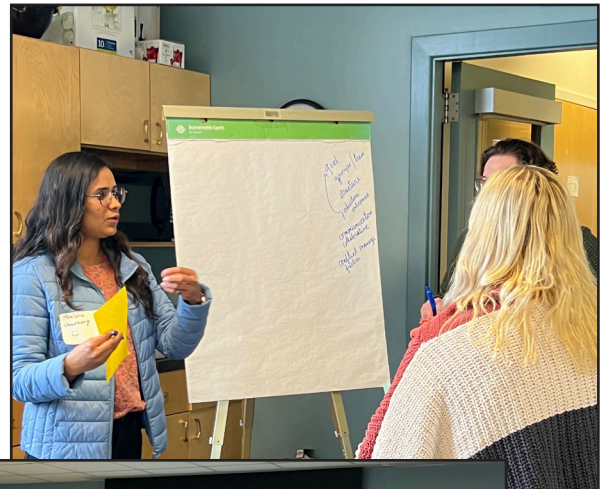
The FSL “kick-off” week in early May included interactive professional development activities that brought together undergraduate and graduate students as well as postdocs from multiple departments.



NRT program coordinator Dr. Emily Uhrig hosted a science communication workshop focused on overcoming jargon and translating technical content for broader non-specialist audiences.



Kristen Grant (Maine Sea Grant), Annie Stupik (NRT trainee, Maine Sea Grant intern), and Dr. Jansujwicz hosted workshops on facilitation, covering best practices for engaging group participants in both in-person and virtual settings.



Transdisciplinary Research

Spring brought another engaging edition of the Transdisciplinary Research Seminar taught by Dr. Jansujwicz. The course, a core requirement of the NRT program, helps students develop skills for conducting collaborative research.

During the course, students from communications, forestry, ecology, and anthropology stepped outside their disciplinary boundaries and worked together on crafting a grant proposal. Inspired by conversations with guest speakers Angie Reed and Jan Paul (Penobscot Nation Water Resources Program), students began working collaboratively with the Penobscot Nation to develop a proposal focused on mercury monitoring to inform fish consumption advisories and water quality. The project also involves outreach/education about Wabanaki nations.

The collaboration is ongoing and has moved beyond the confines of the official course period. The team is planning to submit their proposal to the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund grant program in the fall.

“We all agreed we wanted it to be focused on something actionable and beneficial to the community.”
--Students' perspective



Welcoming New Faces to Our Program

In March, Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve joined us as a conservation partner. In addition to managing over 2,000 acres of wetlands, forests, dunes, and grassland, the reserve offers programming in coastal research and monitoring, environmental learning, and natural resource management. Find out more at www.wellsreserve.org/



At the end of 2022, Dr. Tora Johnson joined us as a new affiliate faculty member. Dr. Johnson is a professor of GIS and environmental studies at UMaine Machias and the director of the GIS Laboratory and Service Center.



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

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