

Opportunity Title: USDA Forest Service Qualitative Research on Public Lands Management, Communities, and Markets Fellowship

Opportunity Reference Code: USDA-FS-SRS-2024-0201

Organization U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)

Reference Code USDA-FS-SRS-2024-0201

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A complete application package consists of:

- An application
- Transcript(s) – For this opportunity, an unofficial transcript or copy of the student academic records printed by the applicant or by academic advisors from internal institution systems may be submitted. Selected candidate must provide proof of completion of the degree before the appointment can start. Click [Here](#) for detailed information about acceptable transcripts.
- A current resume/CV
- Two educational or professional recommendations. At least one recommendation must be submitted in order for the mentor to view your application.

All documents must be in English or include an official English translation.

Application Deadline 7/7/2024 3:00:00 PM Eastern Time Zone

Description *Applications will be reviewed on a rolling-basis.

USDA Forest Service Office/Lab and Location: A fellowship opportunity is available with the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service (FS) within the Forest Service Southern Research Station (SRS) located in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina.

At the heart of the USDA Forest Service's mission is their purpose. Everything they do is intended to help sustain forests and grasslands for present and future generations. Why? Because their stewardship work supports nature in sustaining life. This is the purpose that drives the agency's mission and motivates their work across the agency. It's been there from the agency's very beginning, and it still drives them. To advance the mission and serve their purpose, the USDA Forest Service balances the short and long-term needs of people and nature by: working in collaboration with communities and our partners; providing access to resources and experiences that promote economic, ecological, and social vitality; connecting people to the land and one another; and delivering world-class science, technology and land management.

Research Project: The USDA Forest Service, Southern Research Station (SRS) is seeking a scholar wishing to practice and refine their research skills through two related research projects focusing on land management, policy, and economics within the National Forest System. One project focuses on the institutional, policy, and business environment of timber sales and other fuel treatments on National Forests, and the second focuses on policy and economics of mature and old-growth forest management in and around National Forests. The scholar will be mentored by scientists in the SRS Forest Economics and Policy research unit and will interact with staff in the National Forest System. The mission of the Forest



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Economics and Policy unit is to advance understanding of the relationship between natural and human-caused disturbances and economic values; to examine how public and private forestland management is affected by government policies and private sector institutions; and to characterize domestic and international supply and demand for forest products.

This first research project will explore needs, current tools, innovations, and successes of NFS managers involved in fuel treatment and timber sales. Hazardous fuel conditions arise when decades of fire suppression allow for dense growth of forest stands. This has occurred on large areas of National Forest System (NFS) lands, particularly in the U.S. West. When combined with persistent drought, these areas become ripe for intense wildfires, threatening ecosystems and human settlements. Approaches to mitigate this situation include various methods of thinning forest stands to reduce woody material. Although these trees can generally be removed if the NFS is willing to pay for it (subject to constraints of the logging industry and other service providers), financial resources are finite. Therefore, combining fuel treatment with timber sales offerings provide wildfire mitigation at no cost or even generate income for other forest stand improvements. Unfortunately, sales offerings often face significant market and policy challenges. Fuel treatment often involves removing the smallest trees, which are less valuable for timber production and generally only utilized by specific, limited industries. This project builds on past research identifying challenges to timber sales (Frey, Wilkens, and Bruck 2023, 2024; Bruck and Frey 2023) and aims to inform and provide guidance to overcome these barriers.

The second research project will situate National Forests within the conservation landscape and identify barriers and opportunities for increasing landscape scale and cross-jurisdictional alignment of ecosystem restoration priorities, particularly focused on protecting and recruiting old-growth forest conditions. This will be a collaborative and interdisciplinary project, drawing from forestry, conservation biology, community and regional planning, policy, and economics.

The ORISE participant will participate in the following research activities, with guidance and collaboration from SRS scientists and NFS staff:

- Review, code, and synthesize existing documents and data.
- Identify a set of NFS units (Forests or Districts) for case studies.
- Develop case study protocol, including informed consent protocol.
- Pilot case study protocol.
- Compile and review relevant documents for case studies.
- Conduct in-person case studies.
- Code case study interviews and documents for key themes.
- Generate cross-case synthesis.
- Create a toolkit for NFS managers and planners.
- Other activities as agreed consistent with the professional development of the participant.

Learning Objectives: Learning experience benefits for the selected

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scholar include:

- Deepen knowledge of forests and forestry in the United States.
- Learn about policy affecting public forest management in the U.S.
- Understand institutional, policy, and business environment of public forests, and opportunities and barriers to forest management.
- Extend practical experience of qualitative research methods.
- Practice scientific communication and writing skills.
- Practice critical thinking.
- Collaborate with a team of established scientists.

Mentor: The mentor for this opportunity is Anna Overby (anna.overby@usda.gov). If you have questions about the nature of the research, please contact the mentor.

Anticipated Appointment Start Date: July 15, 2024. Start date is flexible and will depend on a variety of factors.

Appointment Length: The appointment will initially be for three years but may be extended upon recommendation of USDA Forest Service and is contingent on the availability of funds.

Level of Participation: The appointment is full time.

Participant Stipend: The participant will receive a monthly stipend commensurate with educational level and experience.

Citizenship Requirements: This opportunity is available to U.S. citizens, Lawful Permanent Residents (LPR), and foreign nationals. Non-U.S. citizen applicants should refer to the [Guidelines for Non-U.S. Citizens Details page](#) of the program website for information about the valid immigration statuses that are acceptable for program participation.



ORISE Information: This program, administered by ORAU through its contract with the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) to manage the Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education (ORISE), was established through an interagency agreement between DOE and USDA Forest Service. Participants do not become employees of USDA, USDA Forest Service, DOE or the program administrator, and there are no employment-related benefits. Proof of health insurance is required for participation in this program. Health insurance can be obtained through ORISE.

Questions: Please visit our [Program Website](#). After reading, if you have additional questions about the application process please email ORISE.USFS.SRS@orau.org and include the reference code for this opportunity.

Qualifications The qualified candidate should be currently pursuing or have received a master's or doctoral degree in the one of the relevant fields, with preference towards postdoctoral applicants. Degree must have been received within the past five years or anticipated to be received by 12/31/2024.

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- Eligibility Requirements**
- **Degree:** Master's Degree or Doctoral Degree received within the last 60 months or anticipated to be received by 12/31/2024 11:59:00 PM.
 - **Discipline(s):**
 - **Environmental and Marine Sciences** ([6](#) )
 - **Social and Behavioral Sciences** ([8](#) )