



2026 National Wildlife Federation Graduate Student Research Fellowship Request for Applications

Topic: NWF EcoLeader Online Community Research

Location: Remote, any U.S. location

Background: In the spring of 2014, the National Wildlife Federation launched the EcoLeaders Program and online community to serve as a project-based leadership and career development program for high school and college students and early career professionals designed to help emerging environmental leaders turn their passion into a profession. EcoLeaders provides participants with opportunities to learn about a variety of environmental topics, pursue project-based leadership certifications, and connect with members across the country. The EcoLeaders Career Center facilitates the development of personalized sustainability career plans, learning about trends and opportunities in green careers, connecting with employers, and sharpening job skills.

Goals of the Fellowship:

The EcoLeaders Community has recently completed a series of site enhancements designed to improve user experience and platform functionality, informed by feedback from community members and former research fellows. Building on this foundation, the fellowship will focus on the critical examination, refinement, and expansion of the community's resource content to ensure it reflects current research, emerging trends, and evolving member needs.

Research Goals:

- Conduct a systematic review of the existing 13 EcoTopic pages within the EcoLeaders Online Community (<https://www.nwfecoleaders.org/explore-ecotopics>)
 - Architecture and Buildings
 - Business and Purchasing
 - Climate Adaptation and Mitigation
 - Consumption and Waste
 - Sustainable Energy
 - Education and Awareness
 - Environmental and Community Justice
 - Food and Agriculture
 - Governance and Policy
 - Habitat and Wildlife
 - Outdoor Recreation
 - Transportation
 - Water Resources
- Conduct research across the 13 EcoTopic areas to inform the development of updated, evidence-based content
- Identify gaps, opportunities, and relevant emerging areas of interest, and develop new research-informed resources to enhance the breadth and depth of available content

Qualifications:

- Strong research skills
- Strong written and oral communication skills
- Strong organizational skills and attention to detail
- An entrepreneurial spirit, initiative and energy
- The ability to use initiative and work autonomously in addition to team working skills

Fellowship Program Requirements:

- Participate in a Fellowship kick-off call - date TBD.
- Create project plan for a 4-6 month Fellowship term based on agreed upon Fellowship goal.
- Participate in periodic phone check-ins with NWF staff and Fellow cohort about project status and responsibilities.
- Submit biweekly project updates throughout the Fellowship detailing the progress you have made and plans for the duration of your Fellowship.
- Develop a summary report of findings and programmatic recommendations

NWF Values:

Your actions are expected to reflect the staff values of the National Wildlife Federation: collaboration, mindfulness, empowerment, inclusivity, and mission focus. Your competencies should include:

- Being motivated by values of equity and responsibility to all individuals.
- Consistently bringing a high level of empathy and social skills to work and interpersonal interactions.
- Actively seeks feedback, direction, and guidance from all team members and keeps staff informed of decisions that impact them.
- Passion for and commitment to NWF's mission of uniting all Americans to ensure wildlife and people thrive in a rapidly changing world.

Applicants are invited to learn more about National Wildlife Federation's required equity competencies at <https://www.nwf.org/About-Us/Careers>.

Perks and Privileges:

- \$4,750 stipend
- Professional development resources, assistance, and networking
- Possibility of academic credit for successful completion of the project, as an independent study or integration of fellowship project into course curricula

Eligibility: Graduate students from any college or university within the U.S. are eligible to apply and if awarded the Fellow must submit a W-9 and provide proof of valid work authorization to receive stipend payment. Applications are invited from students in all disciplines and are not limited to environmental studies majors. Current and former employees of National Wildlife Federation and former NWF Campus Ecology Fellows are ineligible to apply. Former NWF interns are eligible to apply following one year from their final work date. The name on the application must be limited to **one individual** and the Fellowship reporting, training, or other requirements cannot be transferred to or shared with another student. Additional involvement should be noted in the proposal. The applicant must be enrolled in school through the duration of the 4-month grant period.

Grant Terms:

The Fellowship is for a term of 4-6 months, depending on Fellow's schedule. The fellow will begin in May of 2026, with the specific date TBD. Fellows spend various amounts of time on their projects each week. The average amount of time spent is 10 hours weekly or 40 hours monthly. The time invested by each student is typically considerable, but it is also flexible to account for schoolwork and other commitments and the working style of each Fellow.

Stipend:

Fellows will receive a stipend for their work. Any Fellowship-related expenses accrued during the Fellowship period should be covered by the stipend.

Payments are dispersed in two installments: First installment of grant awards are made within two weeks of awarding the fellowship and finalizing fellowship agreement. The second installment will be made by August 31, 2026. Grant funds will be distributed to the student directly (with submission of a W-9). Grant funds may be taxable; consult your tax advisor for U.S. Internal Revenue Service reporting requirements.

How to Apply:

1. Carefully review the information provided in this document.
2. Complete and [submit the application form](#) for the 2026 NWF EcoLeader Graduate Student Fellowship:
3. Submit an electronic letter of recommendation from your identified Advisor via PDF attachment either in your application or emailed directly to Fellows@nwf.org. If sending via email, please make sure your name is in the subject line of the email.

All applicants must identify and work with an Advisor for the duration of the grant period. An advisor is a member of the staff, faculty, or administration on your campus who is willing to serve in an advisory capacity for the duration of the grant period. The advisor should be from the department on campus this is most closely related to your fellowship and can validate that the project is one that is supported by the department and/or campus.

Please secure an electronic copy of a letter of recommendation from the Advisor explaining the qualifications of the applicant and his or her role in advising the student and submit the letter as a PDF attachment to the application or sent via email to Fellows@nwf.org with the applicant's name in the subject line.

The deadline to submit applications is April 5, 2026 by 11:59pm PT.

Applications are reviewed by a committee to determine which meet the selection criteria. All applicants will be notified of their status within one month of their application deadline.

Applications will be evaluated based on the following:

- Demonstrated research skills and experience
- Interest in environmental topics and subject matter, specifically related to youth leadership
- Demonstrated interest in, and experience working with, diverse constituencies
- Initiative to overcome barriers and seek alternative avenues when necessary
- Commitment to advancing environmental initiatives on academic, personal, and professional levels
- Desire to remain an active member in NWF after the conclusion of the Fellowship

