

Statewide forestry consortium launches graduate-student fellowship program at UF

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GAINESVILLE, Fla. --- To help promote diversity in the forestry professions, a statewide consortium has launched a fellowship and mentoring program for graduate students in the University of Florida's School of Forest Resources and Conservation.

The Cooperative for Conserved Forest Ecosystems: Outreach and Research, or CFEOR, established the program to encourage students from traditionally under-represented groups to pursue a master's or doctoral degree in the discipline of conservation and renewable natural resources.

In the past, forestry professions in the United States have had low numbers of women, African-Americans, Hispanic Americans, Native Alaskans, Native Americans and Pacific Islanders. Today, professional organizations and institutions such as UF are taking steps to attract these groups to forestry – the CFEOR program is one more step.

"It only makes sense to reach out, so that this profession – which is charged with serving the public and managing public resources – reflects the diversity of that public," said Taylor Stein, a CFEOR director and an associate professor with UF's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences.

Funded by \$360,000 in grants from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, UF's College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, and the UF forestry school, the program is soliciting applications from interested parties. Two master's degree fellowships and two doctoral fellowships are available.

The students will be paired with faculty mentors and will pursue a curriculum aimed at preparing them for leadership positions in forest resources or land management, Stein said.

The curriculum will place special emphasis on adaptive management, an approach to forestry that involves using currently available information to guide management decisions, then reviewing the results and using that information to help make future decisions.

The idea behind the fellowship program is to provide students with an interdisciplinary education that combines field research with practical application, said Charlie Houder, chairman of the CFEOR steering committee and deputy executive director of the Suwannee River Water Management District.

Formed in 2006, CFEOR is a 13-agency consortium of public and private forest landowners and managers, government agencies, nongovernment organizations and UF faculty and students. It conducts forestry research, education and outreach to help conserve and manage Florida's forests.

Parties interested in applying for the fellowships should contact Melissa Kreye at 352-846-0546 or [mkreye@ufl.edu](mailto:mkreye@ufl.edu).