PhD or MS Research Assistantship – Social-Ecological Systems

**Project Title:** Identifying ecological and social resilience in fire-prone landscapes


**Position:** The UM College of Forestry and Conservation in Missoula, MT, is seeking applicants for a two-year Research Assistantship focused on understanding social and ecological resilience to wildfires in the Northern Rockies and Pacific Northwest. The assistantship provides an 11-month/yr. stipend and covers graduate school tuition and health insurance. The successful applicant will help conduct a mixed-methods, human dimensions study in communities in the Northern Rockies and Pacific Northwest using qualitative interviews and quantitative survey analysis to understand social resilience to wildfires in fire-prone landscapes. Primary research duties will focus on the human dimensions aspects of this project, but the successful applicant will work as part of an interdisciplinary team funded by the Joint Fire Science Program, including social scientists and ecologists from the University of Montana, Montana State University, and U.S. Forest Service’s Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute. The student will work within the College of Forestry and Conservation’s Human Dimensions Lab and could pursue a graduate degree through Resource Conservation (MS), Forest and Conservation Sciences (PhD), or Systems Ecology (MS or PhD).

**Project description:** Land managers in the western US are faced with the daunting challenge of managing wildland fire in an increasingly fire-prone world. The challenges presented by climate change overlay significant complexity of increasing population densities on private land in the wildland-urban interface and the increasing use and value of public lands for tourism and recreation. A principal goal of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy (Cohesive Strategy) is to, “restore and maintain resilient landscapes,” which must be considered from both ecological and human perspectives. While the concept of ecological resilience is relatively well understood, definitions of social resilience are poorly developed, and we know little about how management actions could support coupled ecological and social resilience. Through two workshops and a mixed-methods study of recently fire-affected communities, we seek a refined definition of resilience compatible with the Cohesive Strategy’s goals of promoting fire-adapted communities and restoring and maintaining landscapes resilient to fire.

**Qualifications:** Applicants should have a BS (or MS for PhD applicants) in a natural-resource or social-science related field, and a strong interest in the human dimensions and ecology of wildland fire. Applicants must have well-developed communication, writing, and quantitative skills, a strong work ethic, and a desire to work with researchers, community members, and fire managers. We prefer applicants have a 3.0 overall undergraduate GPA or 3.5 overall graduate GPA; GRE scores for verbal, quantitative, and analytical at or above the 60th percentile; and previous social science research experience.

**Application Information:** Applicants should send a single PDF with the following to Dr. Elizabeth Covelli Metcalf (elizabeth.metcalf@umontana.edu): (1) a cover letter that includes a well-articulated statement of research interests and goals, previous social science research and/or relevant experiences, (2) a resume (including GPA), (3) unofficial transcripts and GRE scores (including percentiles), and (4) contact information for three references. The selected candidate will apply to the University of Montana for admission. Graduate degree program requirements can be found at [http://www.cfc.umt.edu/grad/](http://www.cfc.umt.edu/grad/) and [http://www.umt.edu/grad/Apply/](http://www.umt.edu/grad/Apply/).