The Quinney College of Natural Resources welcomed back students, faculty, and staff during our opening social on September 1. Natural Resources clubs, research labs, and student governmental associations spent the warm afternoon reuniting with old friends and recruiting new members. The Highline Drifters serenaded the group with their blend of rock-a-billy and bluegrass. A good time was had by all.

We were glad to see the number of QCNR majors exceed 500 students again after small declines in enrollment during the previous year. Our efforts to increase face-to-face instruction and hands-on learning experiences provide students with much needed skills as they prepare for positions with natural resource agencies, non-governmental organizations, and universities. Our placement of graduates remains high with over 85% of graduates finding positions in the field of their choice.

In this report we highlight the accomplishments of our students, staff and faculty. After the most unusual year in my academic career, I am ready to resume our efforts to educate the next generation of environmental leaders, researchers, and advocates for the planet. The global challenges have never been greater but I remain confident that the ingenuity of today’s youth can meet these challenges and provide solutions for a better future.

Chris Luecke
The funds for our college remained solid during the 2021 Fiscal Year. The total budget for the Quinney College exceeded $17M for the first time since 2013. Expenditures on research activities dominated total spending with over $10M. Our E&G budget was reduced by $170,000 last year because of legislative budget cuts. The generosity of donors exceeded these cuts and allowed us to enhance programs in academics, research, and extension.

Our college is somewhat of an enigma when trying to summarize overall productivity. We represent about 5% of the University’s academic budget, but only provide about 2.5% of the student credit hours delivered to students. The research productivity of our faculty remains very high with grant dollars exceeding, one-sixth of the university total.

We achieve excellence in research and graduate education. We strive to become better and more influential in the education of undergraduates and future professionals in natural resources.

Research Funding

The Quinney College of Natural Resources is focused on research and graduate education. External funding remains extremely important in our ability to impact the world around us. The chart below shows a diverse set of agencies, states, and foundations that provided over $10M in research funding this past year. It’s a testament to our faculty’s hard work and ability that we saw an increase in funding during this very odd year of shutdowns, zoom, and forced isolation. Our faculty continue to deepen our knowledge of ecosystems and to influence the national policies that dictate the management of our natural resources.
On May 6, QCNR was thrilled to celebrate the 2021 graduating class with an in-person ceremony. Despite the hardships of the pandemic, the graduating class showed incredible resiliency and proved to be the largest recent group of undergraduate students to graduate in QCNR’s history. One-hundred and thirty-five students were awarded undergraduate degrees in fall 2020 and spring 2021. We are proud of this group of students and wish them the best as they enter rewarding careers in natural resources.

Undergraduate Highlight – Elyse Doty

Elyse graduated with a degree in Forest Ecology and Management and a minor in Geographic Information Science. During her undergraduate career, Elyse worked as a wildland firefighter serving out of Moab and other locations throughout the Intermountain West. In 2019, Elyse was awarded an URCO grant and worked with Dr. Larissa Yocom on a project examining whether aspen stands function as fire breaks. Elyse is continuing her career in wildland fire ecology working for the US Forest Service in Montana.

Undergraduate Highlight – Sally Perscio

Sally graduated with a degree in Environmental Studies with an Applied GIS Certificate. She now resides in Jacksonville, Florida working as an environmental scientist/GIS specialist at TetraTech. Much of her workday features ArcGIS work on wetland delineation and field work looking for gopher tortoise burrows.
Summer Employment Program

Our summer employment program continues to grow. We have increased the number of partnerships with collaborating agencies, offering a wider variety of opportunities to students. In the summer of 2021, QCNR placed 30 students with 13 different agencies throughout the state. Our students are gaining valuable career building experience, and supporting our state, federal, and private agencies in accomplishing critical work in natural resources.

Left: UDWR Wildlife Technician (Vernal) - Tristan Doyle. Top Right: UDWR Rare Insects - Sierra Ashton. Bottom Right: Timpanogos Cave National Monument Park Ranger - Mikenna DeBruin

QCNR Summer Employment Program

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Wildland Resources (WILD) is the largest Department in QCNR, with 283 current undergraduates in four majors, 78 current graduate students, and 32 faculty on three campuses. WILD faculty are national and international leaders in research, teaching, and extension related to terrestrial ecology, management, and restoration.

Focus on Arctic Research

In recent decades, the Arctic has warmed at approximately twice the rate the rest of the world, causing reduced snow cover, thawing permafrost, and other ecological changes. This situation presents an unparalleled opportunity to examine the impacts of climate change on ecological processes. Two of our WILD researchers have been especially involved in Arctic research, and this year we highlight their work.

Dr. Karen Beard has been studying changing Arctic systems for the past decade, supported primarily by the National Science Foundation. She and her graduate students recently completed a study linking changes in migratory goose arrival times with changes in carbon and nitrogen cycling. Dr. Beard and colleagues Drs. Trisha Atwood (WATS) and Bonnie Waring (Imperial College), graduate students, and post-docs, have recently been working to determine how Arctic goose herbivory impacts carbon cycling through belowground processes in Arctic wetlands.

Dr. Beard was recently awarded another NSF grant to work with her long-term collaborators Drs. Joshua Leffler (a USU alum, South Dakota State University) and Kathy Kelsey (University of Colorado at Denver) on how changes in sea level, warming temperatures, and goose distributions may impact long-term changes across the larger landscape.

Dr. Eric Gese studies carnivore ecology, behavior and management, with emphasis on predator-prey relationships, predator-predator interactions, and human-carnivore conflicts. Dr. Gese’s research examines how polar bears respond to climate change. These bears are adapting to climate change...
New Appointments

In January, Dr. Erica Stuber joined WILD as an Assistant Professor and Assistant Leader of the Utah Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit. As a landscape- and behavioral ecologist, Dr. Stuber is interested in studying everything from individual space use to population distributions. She earned her PhD in Organismal Biology at the Max Planck Institute for Ornithology in Germany, exploring the causes of within-species variation in behavior. More recently, Dr. Stuber worked at Yale University and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology developing new methods for understanding the spatial ecology of animals at landscape scales. She applies these methods to address questions of conservation and management concern. At USU, Dr. Stuber is a wonderful addition to our existing strength in quantitative ecology. She plans to investigate how spatial variation is linked to abundance and fitness within species, and how that might influence population dynamics.

COVID and Adaptive Teaching

COVID has made it a stressful year for both WILD students and instructors. WILD faculty have done a phenomenal job of adapting their teaching to online and socially distanced formats during the COVID pandemic. Travel restrictions in 2020 made it difficult to provide field trips and field-based internships for students. This summer, WILD received funding through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act to develop, teach, and provide student subsidies for a set of summer courses specifically emphasizing field experience. Dr. Eric LaMalfa organized a series of 8 summer practicums and short courses. In “Rangelands of the Colorado Plateau”, students examined range conditions, practiced plant ID, and learned about management strategies during a float trip down a segment of the Colorado River. Drs. Jessica Tegt and David Stoner, along with PhD student Stephanie Landry organized “Field Techniques for Wildlife Management”, where students learned about tracking, capture, and handling techniques, along with wildlife damage mitigation issues. Drs. Mark Chynoweth and Alan Blackstock (English Dept.) co-taught “Studies in the American West: Rivers in Western History, Literature, and the Environment”, where students learn about the literary and environmental history of western rivers. As part of the course, students experienced a 4-day expedition down the Gates of Lodore section of the Green River near Vernal, Utah. These courses were so popular among students that WILD is now exploring ways to make these a permanent part of the curriculum.
A New Department Head & Other Changes

The Department of Environment and Society (ENVS) welcomes new Department Head, Dr. Claudia Radel. Chris Lant, who has served the Department ably for the last seven years, moved out of this position and into a faculty role. During his term as Department Head, Lant continued his research on the food-water nexus in the United States, with funding from the National Science Foundation. He will now be able to expand this work and offer courses in natural resources and society, ecological economics, and environmental policy.

Dr. Claudia Radel, a faculty member and geographer in the Department since 2005, moves into the department head position after serving five years as the College’s Associate Dean. She becomes the second woman ever to serve as a department head in QCNR. Radel looks forward to shepherding the Department in a new strategic direction with a focus on communication, collaboration, transparency, and inclusion.

In other key departmental changes, Dr. Layne Coppack and Dr. Robert Schmidt retired. Shannon Belmont became Director of the Utah Geospatial Consortium. Unfortunately, Dr. Zachary Miller left to pursue a career with the National Park Service. The Department also experienced loss: Emeriti faculty Dr. Nat Frazer and Dr. Charles Romesburg passed away.

Faculty Accomplishments in 2020 and 2021

The ENVS Faculty as a whole had another strong year working with students, forwarding understanding in environmental and natural resources social sciences, and being recognized for their contributions. Dr. Joseph Tainter’s work on societal collapse was highlighted in The New York Times Magazine (https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/04/magazine/societal-collapse.html). Dr. Mark Brunson won the prestigious Outstanding Achievement in Research Award from the Society for Range Management as a pioneer in bringing social science concepts to the field, and Chris Lant was awarded a Career Achievement Award by the American Association of Geographers’ Water Resources Specialty Group. Under Dr. Jordan Smith’s leadership, the Institute for Outdoor Recreation and Tourism continued to grow with new staff and launched the highly visible Gateway & Natural Amenity Region Initiative (www.usu.edu/gnar/). Dr. Peter Howe continued his research on climate risk behavior and perception, receiving two NSF-RAPID grants to investigate topics related to the pandemic.
Dr. Roslynn McCann has been partnering with the USDA, Extension, the Western Rural Development Center, and others to advance climate change Extension programming. In 2020, she led a team to assess barriers and opportunities for climate and extreme weather programming and launched a three-day climate change action forum for Extension professionals across the U.S. McCann is advancing climate change Extension programming through the NSF-funded project “Community Collaboration as a Culturally-Relevant Approach to Climate Change Programming and Mitigation” and is leading creation of Extension mission and objectives nationwide for Extension action and solution-building to address the climate crisis.

This past year was a banner year for Assistant Professor Dr. Stefani Crabtree. Crabtree’s lab examines the deep-time implications of humans in ecosystems, how we make them more robust and how we make them more fragile. Crabtree and PhD student Evan Holt wrote a piece for the National Parks Service examining the human place in food webs. Crabtree also led an international team examining migratory pathways into Australia around 70,000 years ago, Nature: Human Behaviour. [https://dx.doi.org/10.1038/s41562-021-01106-8](https://dx.doi.org/10.1038/s41562-021-01106-8) and received a large grant from the Australian government to look at connection across Australia. She also published results examining the difference between modern diets and ancient diets by comparing isotopes from hundreds of cultures (Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, forthcoming). The new text book Crabtree co-authored has been #1 on Amazon in Archaeology and in Science and Technology Teaching Materials (Agent-based Modeling for Archaeology: Simulating the Complexity of Societies).

A Welcome to New ENVS Faculty

Dr. Mariya Shcheglovitova and Dr. Gustavo Ovando-Montejo joined the faculty as Assistant Professors in Fall 2020. They rose to the challenge of their first year as faculty under COVID-19 and the associated realities of remote teaching, research, and departmental life. We look forward to more fully welcoming them into our community over the coming year.

Dr. Paul Rogers joined the Department as an Adjunct Associate Professor. Dr. Rogers is longtime Director of the Western Aspen Alliance (WAA; [https://western-aspen-alliance.org/](https://western-aspen-alliance.org/)). Rogers teaches Introduction to Environmental Science. He was featured in a video on the Pando clone for William Shatner’s “I Don’t Understand” [https://www.rt.com/shows/i-don-t-understand-with-william-shatner/](https://www.rt.com/shows/i-don-t-understand-with-william-shatner/).

We also welcome our newest faculty member, Dr. Courtney Flint, who joins us as a Full Professor. Dr. Flint is a Natural Resource Social Scientist focusing on the community and regional dimensions of natural resource issues and environmental change. Her current NSF-funded research focuses on watershed organizations, and riverine system resilience. She also leads the Utah Wellbeing Project ([https://extension.usu.edu/business-and-community/utah-wellbeing-project/](https://extension.usu.edu/business-and-community/utah-wellbeing-project/)). Courtney serves on a National Academy of Sciences committee on advancing Earth Systems Science and on the U.S. EPA Board of Scientific Counselors.
The Department of Watershed Sciences had a very productive year, building on our strengths and developing a new vision for how we can serve a broader range of students and enhance the impact of our research. The department is grateful for feedback from a newly formed External Advisory Board including Jodi Gardberg of the Utah Department of Environmental Quality, Drew Cushing of the Utah DNR Division of Wildlife Resources, Tyler Thompson of the Utah Watershed Restoration Initiative, Lynn de Freitas of Friends of the Great Salt Lake non-profit organization, Brandon Albrecht of BioWest, and David Epstein of SWCA Environmental Consultants.

Personnel Changes

Watershed Sciences had several big personnel changes this year. Most notably, Enid Kelley retired after 25 years of service to USU and the department. Daniel Carolan has been hired as the new department staff assistant and has been remarkably quick and efficient in coming up to speed on running the day-to-day operations for the department as well as leading the department’s social media and public relations activities. Faculty members Drs. Jiming Jin and Soren Brothers departed USU for Arizona State University and the Royal Ontario Museum, respectively. Their contributions will be missed and we wish them the best of luck in their future endeavors. Nancy Mesner retired in August 2021 (though she’s still teaching a Water Quality and Pollution course for us) and Dr. Jack Schmidt started a phased retirement that will conclude in June 2023. Watershed Sciences also had four (!) faculty members promoted this year, with Drs. Trisha Atwood, Edd Hammill, and Janice Brahney promoted from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor and Dr. Joe Wheaton promoted from Associate Professor to Full Professor. We have ongoing searches for two new faculty positions in Climate Data Analysis and Climate Resiliency and will advertise soon for a third faculty position in Fish Physiology.

Master of Ecological Restoration

Another major step forward for the department during this past year is the roll-out of our new Master of Ecological Restoration degree. This degree is a 1-year professional Master’s program that combines coursework, an internship, and design exercises to prepare students for careers as restoration practitioners. The program builds on the strength of our restoration-oriented faculty, complements our research-oriented MS degree, and fills a critical gap in workforce development.
Faculty and Student Highlights

Faculty and students had an exceptionally productive research year. A few highlights:

**Dr. Janice Brahney** revealed the magnitude of the global plastic pollution problem in several publications in *Science*, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* and the *New York Times* documenting just how pervasive our global plastic problem has become.

**Dr. Trisha Atwood** had a similarly productive year, with a first authored publication in *Science* showing that extinction threats among herbivores have been underappreciated.

**Dr. Jack Schmidt** has been working several decades to create the position he is now in, leading an effort meaningfully expand the conversation space about how the Colorado River should be managed. In 2020, Jack published five white papers that evaluate the range of water supply management approaches that meet water security and reliability needs of Colorado River water users, predicts the ecological outcomes of those approaches, and develops new tools and approaches by which the river-ecosystem outcomes of water-supply decisions can be considered. Jack also published a trilogy of papers on the Green River, including this paper with Alex Walker on the role of hydrology, native and non-native vegetation in channel narrowing, a paper with Dave Dean on how channel narrowing can’t necessarily be used to interpret sediment mass balance, and this paper with Paul Grams showing how water management has influenced channel dynamics. Jack also published several other papers including one summarizing more than a decade of sediment transport data collected in Grand Canyon.

**Dr. Karin Kettenring** published 6 peer reviewed papers and one book chapter in 2020, including this paper on ecological, genetic and evolutionary keys to seed-based restoration, which will be a foundational resource for wetland restoration practitioners and researchers for many years or decades.

**Dr. Sarah Null** released her *Decisions Downstream* science-art exhibit at the Natural History Museum of Utah. The exhibit is on display at the USU Merrill-Cazier Library, September 14th, 2021—December 8th, 2022. Sarah’s strong record of research on water issues in California recently resulted in her being named CalTrout Ecosystem Fellow for the *Public Policy Institute of California’s Water Policy Center*.

**Dr. Tim Walsworth** published 7 papers in 2020 including this paper on carp in *Utah Lake and it’s response to historic and possible future control efforts*.

**Dr. Phaedra Budy** published 8 papers in 2020, including one showing that invasive species suppression and efforts to mimic natural flow and thermal regimes may allow rapid and widespread native fish recovery.

**Dr. Joe Wheaton**'s book ‘Low Tech Process Based Restoration of Riverscapes’ has garnered a lot of attention and when covid wrecked his plans for workshops, he adapted and went online...over 1,100 conservationists from all 50 states and several other countries participated in one of his stream restoration workshops in summer 2020. Joe was also awarded the British Society for Geomorphology 2020 Gordon Warwick Award, which is among the most prestigious awards conferred in the field of geomorphology.
The Ecology Center

Dr. Nancy Huntly
Director

The Ecology Center has invested in increasing opportunities for Interdisciplinary Team Science and our ability to produce science that is relevant and accessible for use to solve real-world problems – science that is useful to and used by stakeholders. This year, we highlight new programs that provide training and experience in these areas.

Climate Adaptation Science (CAS)

We are in the final year of National Science Foundation funding for the new university-side interdisciplinary graduate specialization in climate adaptation science (CAS). The program, which enrolled students from 10 departments, includes all four QCNR departments. This program includes an internship for each student with an organization beyond academia (e.g., an agency, NGO, industry) and an interdisciplinary team research project. We describe several recent projects below. Check out the latest news and updates at our new website, usu.edu/ecology.

Several CAS teams published their research in 2020 and 2021. The lead authors of three of these papers told us about their experience with interdisciplinary team science - its challenges and its rewards.

**Brice et al. 2020** considered the impacts of climate change on multiple uses of BLM land in the Intermountain West and the extent to which climate change is considered in BLM management. Ecology graduate student Lainie Brice found this interdisciplinary science both challenging and empowering. From learning to coordinate and accommodate team-mates to engaging enthusiastically with unfamiliar disciplinary methods, she found the team’s research and communication of the results were made better by collaboration among disciplinary experts. The paper has been cited by the Congressional Research Service in a report on Climate Change Adaptation for the Department of the Interior, indicating its value in integrating scientific understanding of climate impacts on public lands into land management.

**Zimmer et al. 2020** synthesized 19 models of climate change impacts to vegetation on BLM lands in the Intermountain West to determine consistency across projections and implications for vegetation change and management. The team was able to demonstrate where there was spatial consensus across models, indicating where resources might be targeted for management purposes. Ecology graduate Scott Zimmer told us the broader implications of this study are two-fold: it supplies direct management implications for areas for which projected vegetation changes are robust; and, it illustrates the importance of comparing model results. Though all models are imperfect and
have biases, finding agreement between different models can help identify the most probable climate change impacts.

Morgan et al. 2021 explored how climate and water policy interact to influence water availability for a new agricultural crop, cannabis in northern California. Civil and Environmental Engineering grad Betsy Morgan did a CAS internship with the California Climate Hub, which focused on the roles and responsibilities of managing baseflow in Northern California and inspired this team project. Betsy told us that her collaborations in the CAS program made her a better communicator, someone who can understand and translate the different “languages” of different disciplines. Betsy believes the team’s approach for connecting climate, policy, and people’s perceptions can be used and in other contexts to inform policy to integrate new agricultural crops.

Southwest Climate Adaptation Science Center (SW CASC) Fellowships

USU and the Ecology Center joined the university consortium of the Southwest Climate Adaptation Science Center (SW CASC) in 2018. USU has a lead role in mentoring students who participate in the SW CASC’s Natural Resources Workforce Development (NRWD) Fellowship program, which gives graduate students opportunities for training and practice in developing use-inspired and actionable science to inform natural resource management decisions. USU ecologists Drs. Nancy Huntly and Michelle Baker are co-mentoring a cross-consortium cohort of eight graduate students each year. Each cohort of fellows addresses a priority scientific theme. So far, USU students Christina Morrisette (WATS), Jacob Stuivenvolt-Allen (PSC), and Will Munger (ENVS) have been SW CASC NRWD Fellows.

Data Science Training for Accessible and Reproducible Science

Recent Ecology graduate and current CAS Program Assistant Britta Schumacher led an effort to increase data-science technical capacity for our students. Britta developed and taught a series of coding workshops in R & Python for graduate students. This fall, the team of instructors and helpers, who are Ecology graduate students, will host 8 workshops:

| #1: Intro to R and RStudio | #2: Github, RStudio, & reproducible science | #3: The tidyverse() and data wrangling | #4: Data wrangling in using data table | #5: Data visualization with ggplot() | #6: Data visualization with baseR | #7: Intro to R spatial with sf() | #8: Intro to spatial data with Python |

All workshop materials will be available on github for students, faculty, staff, and non-academic data crunching enthusiasts to fork and use! We plan to make these and other future workshop topics permanent offerings, supported by Ecology graduate student coding experts.
For the third consecutive year, Utah State University alumni and friends elevated USU to new heights in fundraising. In FY21, alumni and friends generously donated a total of $46.8 million to benefit students and innovative research. The S.J. and Jessie E. Quinney College of Natural Resources is incredibly grateful for the support alumni and friends showed the College and University at large. Through the generosity of the Aggie Family, the QCNR received $1.4 million in philanthropic donations by 232 individuals, foundations, and corporations in FY21. The College is honored and grateful to deploy donor funds to support students, faculty, and the natural world.

As we move into FY22, we are excited to introduce our newly formed QCNR Advancement Board with 5 inaugural members: Daniel Lien ’78 (Chair), Aaron Poe ’98, Alan Carpenter ’86, Fee Busby ’77, and Rob Campbell ’97. The Board has been and will continue to be instrumental in building philanthropic support for the QCNR. The College is grateful to benefit from the time, energy, expertise this group offers.

**Featured New Endowments**

**The David F. and Martha H. Balph Research Endowment Fund**

The David F. and Martha H. Balph Research Endowment Fund in the Quinney College of Natural Resources has been established to perpetuate natural resources research, specifically ornithological research in the Intermountain West, in the College. While the Balph Research Endowment Fund supports many aspects of research, Martha Balph understands the challenges of obtaining research funding as junior faculty. As such, the appreciation of this endowment may be used to help junior faculty with start-up funds or exploratory research that may not be funded otherwise. The Balph’s have a strong legacy of teaching and research excellence in the QCNR. David and Martha developed a remarkable professional team. Martha (USU Biology PhD ’75) and David (USU Fisheries and Wildlife MS ’61, PhD ’64) paired their specialties and applied them to ornithological studies concerning avian social behaviors and feeding strategies. During their time together in the college, Martha and David collectively published over 55 academic papers and received the 1980 Teaching Excellence Award for the College of Natural Resources. The College is grateful and honored at the opportunity to support faculty and natural resources research through the David F. and Martha H. Balph Research Endowment Fund.

**The Chuck, Brady and Johnny Ebersole Memorial Endowed Scholarship**

The Chuck, Brady and Johnny Ebersole Memorial Endowed Scholarship honors the legacy of excellence, thoughtfulness, and joy Chuck, Brady and Johnny brought to USU. This scholarship fund will support a QCNR
Celebrating 200+ Quinney Scholars

The S.J. and Jessie E. Quinney Foundation and the Janet Quinney Lawson Foundation continue to be instrumental in the College’s success. Both foundations have profoundly impacted the College, University, and State through philanthropic support. In the 2020-2021 academic year, the College celebrated the incredible milestone of 200+ Quinney Scholars generously funded by the S.J. and Jessie E. Quinney Foundation. Scholars have gone on to become leaders in many National and State agencies and contribute their skill in 31 different states. Scholarships funded through these foundations have provided a footing for countless careers, opportunities, and accomplishments among our students. The College is incredibly honored and grateful to be a recipient of the Foundations’ support. The map below shows the current locations of past Quinney Scholars.
Quinney College of Natural Resources
5200 Old Main Hill
Logan, UT 84322-5200

Sept. 14 - Dec. 8: Decisions Downstream Exhibit
Oct. 15: Fall Break
Nov. 13: Logger’s Ball
Dec. 17: Last Day of Finals

www.qcnr.usu.edu