

## 2023-2024 Washington Sea Grant Keystone Fellowship Project Information

### Host office location and contact information:

Seattle Aquarium  
1483 Alaskan Way, Pier 59  
Seattle, WA 98101  
Phone: (206) 386-4300

### Name of Fellowship Supervisors:

Primary Supervisor: Riley Pollom, Species Recovery Program Manager

#### Additional mentors:

- Jasmine Williams, Connections Program Manager
- Erin Meyer, Vice President of Conservation Programs and Partnerships

### Project Overview

Twenty of the 54 extant species of abalone are threatened with extinction due to overfishing, habitat loss, climate change, and ocean acidification. Pinto Abalone (*Haliotis kamtschatkana*) are native to the Northeast Pacific and are listed as Endangered globally on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species and locally in Washington. It is the only abalone species native to Washington. Although the fishery in Washington has been closed since 1994, the species declined in abundance by 98% between 1992 and 2017 due to low densities that prevent successful recruitment. In 2019, pinto abalone were listed as endangered in Washington.

The [Seattle Aquarium joined](#) the Puget Sound Restoration Fund (PSRF), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), and others in an integrated and innovative conservation effort for pinto abalone. PSRF, NOAA and WDFW began this work over a decade before. In 2020-2021, the aquarium built a new abalone nursery, which has since been rebuilt inside the Aquarium's new Animal Care Center. With the aquarium's new nursery, the sheer number of individuals outplanted annually should double, accelerating recovery of this endangered species. Together with the Kenneth K. Chew Shellfish Hatchery in Manchester and the Port Townsend Marine Science Center, the team has [outplanted 45,000 individual abalone](#) around the San Juan Islands since its first release in 2009.

In line with the aquarium's core values, specifically *Inclusive community* and *Honoring place*, we recognize that partnering with Indigenous Peoples and the communities who live in the places where conservation efforts take place is a must. With support from our tribal engagement advisors at [Headwater People Consulting](#), we aim to invite conversations, learning, and explore opportunities to collaborate on pinto abalone recovery efforts. Through these engagement efforts we aim to inform the current and future pinto abalone recovery efforts in Washington and honor cultural connections, knowledge, and sacred places. With guidance from their mentors and in collaboration with project partners, the Keystone Fellow will have the opportunity to help shape, inform and implement this tribal and community engagement effort. As the conversations unfold, there may be opportunities for the Keystone Fellow to take the lead

on various aspects of this work—the Keystone Fellow’s mentors will work with the Fellow to help identify and embrace these opportunities as they arise.

The Keystone Fellow will have the opportunity to collaborate with the Community Engagement team, which will also give direct access to the [Connections Program](#) and the [Empathy Fellowship Program](#). The goal of the Seattle Aquarium Connections Program is to provide opportunities to experience the Aquarium to those in our community who might otherwise experience barriers to engaging with us. To support our mission, we strive to create authentic, mutually beneficial relationships that build trust between the Aquarium and our partner communities and provide quality, culturally relevant marine conservation educational experiences to all. Similar to the Washington Sea Grant Keystone Fellowship Program, the Empathy Fellowship Program is designed to create a pipeline into careers in aquariums, zoos and the conservation field for communities of color and other marginalized communities that bear the brunt of environmental harm and historically have not reaped the benefits of the solutions proposed.

Using evidence-based strategies of community engagement, we seek to use the relationships through the Connections Program to further deepen our outreach efforts to tribal communities in relation to the Pinto Abalone Recovery Project. The Keystone Fellow will have the opportunity to collaborate with the Community Engagement team throughout their work to develop and implement activities, expand their support system at the Aquarium and create opportunities for professional development with the cohort of Empathy Fellows.

### **About the Seattle Aquarium**

The Seattle Aquarium is a leading marine conservation organization with a global reputation and is the ninth-largest aquarium, by attendance, in the United States. We are a mission-driven conservation organization focused on *Inspiring Conservation of Our Marine Environment* and working to regenerate ocean health. We work among global leaders to advance animal well-being, marine and ecosystem science, public policy, field conservation, and education that benefits the ocean. We thoughtfully bring the ocean to life for the public with experiences that inspire awe, empathy, and conservation action. We present extraordinary habitats, marine life, and educational programs that engage and delight all members of our local and global communities. Our work is integral to a healthy future for marine life, people, and the planet. Our conservation programs focus on moving toward a future that embodies climate resilience, sustainable seas, and clean waters. We’re noted for our collaborative, communicative and team-oriented working environment. The Aquarium employs more than 200 full and part-time employees and supports over 700 volunteers.

Our S.A.L.I.S.H. values, developed in conjunction with our staff, include commitments to adopting and promoting Sustainable practices; creating Awe-inspiring experiences; constantly Learning and improving; fostering an Inclusive community; maintaining Scientific credibility through evidence-based practices; and Honoring our unique place by using our location and history as a lens for larger understanding. The aquarium’s Equity Team brings staff together to define, prioritize, and implement actions that foster a welcoming, inclusive and equitable culture that reflects the multiple dimensions of diversity within our community because inspiring conservation of our marine environment calls for the hearts, minds, and actions of all people.

The Conservation Programs and Partnerships team members serve on a variety of coalitions and committees including the Aquarium Conservation Partnership, various IUCN Specialist Groups, Orca Salmon Alliance, Northwest Straits Commission's Kelp Plan Coordination Advisory Committee, Puget Sound Environmental Caucus, *Pycnopodia* Recovery Working Group, Quiet Sound Advisory Committee, Salish Sea Institute Advisory Board, Washington Environmental Priorities Coalition, and WDFW Budget and Policy Advisory Group, among others. If the Keystone Fellow is interested, there may be opportunities to join meetings and collaborate with these coalitions as part of their work.

### **Mentorship, professional development and networking opportunities**

The Seattle Aquarium partners with hundreds of organizations and government agencies through the wide-ranging research, field conservation, policy and advocacy, and community, visitor and school engagement programs. The Keystone Fellow will have the opportunity to network with non-profits, government agencies, and elected officials through their work. They will also work across our interdisciplinary team at the aquarium to implement their work, including marketing and communications, public relations, and visitor, community and school engagement. The department in which the position sits—Conservation Programs and Partnerships—is itself interdisciplinary, spanning research, field conservation, public policy and advocacy, sustainability, and international relations. There will be no shortage of collaborative opportunities!

### **Keystone Alignment Statement**

We view diversity as a strength and recognize that we can only achieve our mission by including the skills and varied perspectives of all people. We understand that environmental burdens and benefits are not equitably distributed and that we have a responsibility to foster inclusive conversations about our marine environment. We strive to create a welcoming and equitable culture as we work together to fulfill the Seattle Aquarium's mission.

As mentioned above, the Aquarium's Equity Team brings staff together to define, prioritize, and implement actions that foster a welcoming, inclusive and equitable culture that reflects the multiple dimensions of diversity within our community because inspiring conservation of our marine environment calls for the hearts, minds, and actions of all people. They are also an integral part of the organization-wide team working to advance the actions outlined in the DEI Strategic Plan. As a step in the implementation process, the Aquarium hired a Senior Equity Initiatives Program Manager as a member of our People and Culture department, who is leading many aspects of implementing the DEI Strategic Plan and challenging and changing our processes related to recruitment, hiring, onboarding, training, and organizational culture. While the Keystone Fellow cannot join the Equity Team—we have a rigorous recruitment and review process for members—they may be able to support aspects of their work, observe a meeting, participate in Equity Team all staff socials, and support the work of our Senior Equity Initiatives Program Manager.

### **Honoring Place**

The Seattle Aquarium honors our location in the traditional and contemporary territories of the Coast Salish people, who have stewarded these lands and waters since time immemorial. Guided by our mission and values, the Aquarium is committed to developing a strong foundation for long-lasting and

mutually beneficial partnerships with Coast Salish and Urban Native peoples as well as other Indigenous communities so we can conserve the one world ocean. As an integral part of the intended focal project, the Keystone Fellow will help shape and implement a tribal and community engagement strategy for the Pinto Abalone Recovery Project, a collaborative effort to restore an endangered snail to Washington waters.

#### The Seattle Aquarium's commitment to anti-racism

The Seattle Aquarium respects and celebrates the vitality and strength of the ethnic and cultural diversity that thrives in our neighborhood and surrounding communities. We recognize that we can only achieve our mission of *Inspiring Conservation of Our Marine Environment* by including the skills and varied perspectives of our entire community. To include the entire community, we must be a welcoming and inclusive organization making the conscious decision to identify and challenge racism daily. This requires ongoing self-awareness and self-reflection as we move through our daily operations and plan for the future.

As an organization striving to be anti-racist, we are making ourselves more aware of how racism has affected the lived experience of Black and Indigenous people and People of Color and in what ways we are playing a role in those experiences. We know that racism is systemic and has been deeply ingrained in society throughout history. We understand that too many people knowingly and unknowingly participate in racism and perpetuate white-dominant norms. Using our sphere of influence, the Aquarium is actively opposing racism within our industry and communities of conservation by committing to the following:

- Facilitate mandatory in-house diversity, equity and inclusion workshops for all our staff;
- Address internalized racial and implicit biases;
- Commit to be a learning community that identifies, implements and adapts best practices on how to create a welcoming and inclusive space for Black, Indigenous and People of Color staff, volunteers and guests;
- Actively continue to evaluate and implement more inclusive hiring practices, as well as retention and promotion strategies, with the goal of our workforce representing the diverse community in which we are located; and
- Operate an institutionalized, sustainable Equity Team with the authority to guide and support the Aquarium in the application of time and resources to create an inclusive culture.

These commitments, while not an exclusive list, represent the Aquarium's commitment to continued diversity, equity and inclusion learning and practices. The Aquarium completed a DEI strategic plan in 2022 that guides our next steps as we continue to evaluate our organization through an anti-racist and inclusive lens.