

Advancing climate resilience, environmental justice, and sustainability to improve ocean health (Seattle, WA)

**Host and Mentor**

Seattle Aquarium – Department of Conservation Programs and Partnerships

- Nora Nickum, Ocean Policy Manager
- Erin Meyer, Director of Conservation Programs and Partnerships

**Host location:** 1483 Alaskan Way, Pier 59, Seattle, WA

**Overview**

Guided by our mission of *Inspiring Conservation of Our Marine Environment*, the Seattle Aquarium is a respected authority on the Salish Sea and the world's one ocean. Our passionate staff increases awareness and drives the change needed to conserve and protect our marine environment through a variety of channels, including a compelling exhibit experience and engaging events; research that advances understanding of ocean ecosystems and informs management decisions; work to develop and advance science-based ocean policy; conservation education programs for people of all ages and backgrounds; community outreach to underserved populations; and strong and consistent marketing efforts.

Proudly accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), we are the eighth-largest aquarium in the U.S. by attendance, welcoming over 850,000 people through our front doors each year—this provides a platform for engagement that is unique among conservation organizations. We are expanding our conservation efforts, including new research, policy, and sustainability work. As part of these efforts, we were actively involved in the Washington state legislative session for the first time in 2019 and plan to further increase our role in 2020, while also continuing to grow our federal policy work. Our overarching conservation priorities are climate resilience, sustainable seas and clean waters.

The 2019-2020 Fellow will have the opportunity to take the lead on advancing a discrete policy project focused on an emerging, urgent ocean conservation issue at the state or federal level. The Fellow will also conduct science-based policy research, collaborate with a broad network of partner organizations, and develop strategies for engaging our visitors and broader audiences to achieve positive conservation outcomes. The work accomplished during this fellowship will help the Seattle Aquarium realize our vision to emerge as a pro-active leader in conservation, both in the Pacific Northwest and beyond.

**Specific Tasks and Major Project Components**

- Lead a portfolio of policy issues (e.g., climate change and clean energy, environmental justice, and/or plastic pollution), to be identified by with the ocean policy manager and Fellow.
- Take the lead on advancing a multi-faceted policy project focused on an urgent ocean conservation issue, which will include developing an outreach and communications strategy for aquarium audiences (e.g., volunteers, public, website, social media) and evaluating the impact of our efforts.
- Research, track, analyze and report on environmental issues and proposed policies at all levels of government here in the United States and potentially also in Indonesia.

- Develop position papers grounded in literature reviews and scientific evidence to enable the Seattle Aquarium to take public positions on emerging policy issues.
- Work with the public relations and marketing teams to develop clear, compelling communication materials, including web content, fact sheets, and white papers, and support the creation of presentations and talking points on ocean policy issues and actions.
- Track the status of legislation during the 2020 Washington state legislative session and ongoing federal discussions and identify key opportunities to influence legislation.
- Take a leadership role in one or more of the Aquarium Conservation Partnership's federal policy priorities for 2020. This would involve collaborating with staff at other aquariums to develop a position paper, messaging and strategies for engagement, and leading related engagement efforts with the Seattle Aquarium's local audiences.
- Represent the Seattle Aquarium in Orca Salmon Alliance planning around the statewide Orca Action Month (June 2020). Support planning for Aquarium events such as Orca Awareness Weekend and World Ocean Weekend, including timely topics for civic action tables.
- Make at least one trip to Olympia to attend a policy committee hearing, give testimony, or meet with legislators.

### **Interagency and Private Sector Connections**

The projects listed above will give the Fellow the opportunity to work with the following groups, including through coalition meetings, regular phone calls and collaborations on specific projects:

- Non-governmental organizations, such as the 16 other members of the Orca Salmon Alliance (e.g., Washington Environmental Council, Defenders of Wildlife, Puget Soundkeeper) and organizations working on other intersecting issues (e.g., Surfrider, Zero Waste Washington);
- Other aquariums and zoos that are active in conservation policy, including Aquarium Conservation Partnership members across the country (e.g., Monterey Bay Aquarium, Shedd Aquarium, Wildlife Conservation Society);
- Government agencies and legislative staffers from local, state, and federal offices (e.g., Governor's Office, National Marine Fisheries Service, WA Department of Fish and Wildlife);
- Scientists with expertise in diverse marine issues, particularly those from WA academic institutions (e.g., University of Washington, Western Washington University);
- Departments across the Seattle Aquarium, from marketing to engagement to life sciences.