

The Nature Conservancy

2025 - 2026 Washington Sea Grant Hershman Fellowship Description

Host organization

The Nature Conservancy of Washington
74 Wall St., Seattle, WA
(206) 343-4344

Fellowship Location

The Nature Conservancy office in Seattle, WA with the option for some hybrid work

Mentor and co-mentor information

Molly Bogeberg (Mentor)

Marine Conservation Manager, TNC Washington
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Garrett Dalan (Co-mentor)

Washington Coast Community Relations Manager
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Other key staff:

Heather Cole (Tribal Partnership Program Director)
Tiffany Waters (Global Aquaculture Manager)

Project Title

Indigenous- led initiatives to increase access to fishing, harvesting, and/or aquaculture opportunities

Project Description

The Nature Conservancy's (TNC) mission is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends to help slow the rapid acceleration of climate change and biodiversity loss. [TNC in Washington](#) addresses these threats by advancing positive and equitable change through care and stewardship of land and water; through legislative and regulatory policy; advocating for equitable access to public funding; and by bringing together powerful and diverse partners, communities and decision-makers.

Across our work we are committed to diversity including the recognition that our conservation is best advanced by the leadership and contributions of people of diverse backgrounds, beliefs and cultures. We look to amplify and follow the leadership of Tribal Nations and Indigenous Peoples and [foster right relations](#). TNC Washington has a team focused on Supporting Indigenous Rights and Connections to Lands and Waters (SIRCLW) that works where invited, needed, and welcomed by Indigenous Peoples to build relationships, reacquire lands and tidelands, access lands and waters, restore lands and waters, and caretake lands and waters for seven generations.

TNC in Washington is also a part of a regionally focused TNC program called [The Emerald Edge](#). The Emerald Edge focuses on investing in Indigenous and local communities along the coastal temperate rainforest of North America as a conservation strategy.

As climate change impacts ocean conditions and ecosystems, coastal fishing, harvesting, and aquaculture communities along Washington and Emerald Edge coastlines are experiencing increasing uncertainty around the availability of marine resources. Working to build the capacity of communities to adapt to climate change will help build the resilience of coastal ecosystems, livelihoods, food security, and Indigenous cultural and spiritual ties to place.

The 2024-2025 Sea Grant Marc Hershman Marine Policy Fellow will work with TNC Washington's Marine Conservation Manager, the SIRCLW Strategy Team, and the Emerald Edge Program's Washington Coast Community Relations Manager to support Indigenous- led initiatives to increase access to fishing, harvesting, and/or aquaculture opportunities. The fellow will work on Washington specific projects and may also support coordination of TNC staff and projects across TNC's Emerald Edge Program.

Key Fellow responsibilities may include:

1. Participating in relationship-building and project identification with Indigenous communities and other partners in the Salish Sea and on the Coast, including traveling to communities when invited and listening to understand Indigenous perspectives and knowledge.
2. Conducting background research on fisheries and/or aquaculture markets, regulations, policies, and science.
3. Producing reports to share findings on research for both a technical and non-technical audiences.
4. Supporting TNC efforts to understand where we can have a value-add to the fisheries and aquaculture space in Washington and across the Emerald Edge with a focus on Indigenous led-efforts.

5. Working with TNC staff and partners to carry out projects.
6. Connecting with TNC staff along the West Coast (from California to Southeast Alaska) to share experiences and lessons learned.
7. Coordinating gatherings for marine-focused staff with the SIRCLW and/or Emerald Edge Program to work towards understanding of shared priorities and possible collaborative projects.
8. Supporting field based research and monitoring efforts
9. Creating outreach materials and contributing to TNC's Nature.org website.

Networking and Professional Development Opportunities

The Fellow will be fully integrated across all departments of the Washington Chapter and work in conjunction with the Emerald Edge Program.

The project listed above will give the Fellow the opportunity to expand their network by working with the following groups:

- Washington, Oregon, Alaska, and Emerald Edge operating units of the Conservancy, TNC's Global Aquaculture Program, and other non-governmental organizations;
- Industry groups and members representing the tribal and non-tribal fishing and aquaculture communities, other coastal and marine users.
- Tribal natural resource planning staff and governments;
- State and Federal agency staff;
- University of Washington and Washington Sea Grant.

WASHINGTON STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Honoring tribal sovereignty and elevating Indigenous Peoples' voices, choices, and actions is an essential part of creating equitable and lasting outcomes for people and nature.

As staff and trustees of the Washington Business Unit of The Nature Conservancy, we commit to practicing respect for people, communities, and cultures as we work to live our organization's values and make progress toward our mission. We especially acknowledge and appreciate the deeply rooted relationships Indigenous Peoples have had with the natural world since time immemorial and continue to sustain for future generations.

Our work as the Washington Business Unit of The Nature Conservancy has historically protected nature for nature's sake. We now recognize the well-being of nature and people should not be separated, and our work is centered on repairing the relationship between the natural world and people. The staff and trustees of the Washington Business Unit of The Nature Conservancy are committed to building and fostering partnerships with Indigenous communities that promote reconciliation and healing that is grounded in listening and understanding.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Creating a more equitable future requires acknowledging and addressing past and present harms. Since time immemorial, Indigenous Peoples have fostered a connection to land, air, water, and all living things. Colonization has constrained or severed Indigenous Peoples' relationship with, and access and use of, lands and waters. Western colonial contact imposed new systems that governed relationships between people, community, and the natural world. Colonization set in motion a vicious cycle of generational trauma that has led to a deterioration of cultural health, traditional governance, stewardship practices and ability to meet basic social needs. This has resulted in degraded natural systems and harmful impacts to Indigenous communities. Similar to other parts of North America, colonization and broken treaties in Washington forced Indigenous Peoples out of their ancestral lands, exposed them to disease, and subjected them to systematic racism that continues to disproportionately impact Indigenous Peoples to this day.

Washington State is home to many and diverse Indigenous communities, including 29 federally recognized Indian Tribes and a large population of Native American descendants. Indigenous Peoples play a vital role in stewardship and restoration of lands and waters, economic enterprises, and cultural revitalization efforts, to name just a few. The Washington Business Unit of The Nature Conservancy recognizes and honors tribal sovereignty, self-determination, and tribal rights - including treaty and inherent rights - and we stand with Indigenous Peoples as they protect and exercise their rights.

COMMITMENTS

Indigenous Peoples' cultural heritage, knowledge, goals, experiences, decision-making structures, and visions for the future are many and diverse. The staff and trustees of the Washington Business Unit of The Nature Conservancy are committed to respecting, promoting, and adhering to [TNC's Human Rights Guide](#). This includes, but is not limited to, applying the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adhering to the requirements of Free, Prior and Informed Consent, and aligning with TNC values.

The following practices will guide staff and trustees as we build relationships, learn, and engage with Indigenous Peoples:

- We honor Tribal sovereignty and commit to collaborating with sovereign Tribal governments.
- We commit to ensuring that conservation and community outcomes will be defined collectively and with deference and respect for the goals and objectives of Indigenous Peoples.

- We recognize and honor that Indigenous People speak for themselves. Working in partnership with Indigenous Peoples, we will elevate their messages and advance our shared goals.
- Trust-building and trustworthiness form the foundation of our work with Indigenous Peoples.
- We approach this work with persistence and patience, acknowledging the timelines required.
- The Washington Business Unit's strategies and major bodies of work aim to restore our shared reciprocal relationship with nature.

ACTIONS

By 2030, The Washington Chapter of The Nature Conservancy is ethically and effectively supporting and partnering with Indigenous Peoples to create a shared future of healthy lands, waters, and communities through the following actions:

1. Investing in Washington staff and trustee's competency and capacity to effectively partner with Indigenous Peoples.
2. Collaborating with Indigenous Peoples to support their voices, choices, and actions by honoring and lifting up their rights and leadership to improve natural resource policies.
3. Working in partnership with Indigenous Peoples on public lands and stewardship of TNC lands and, when invited, furthering their interests and rights to lands and waters.
4. Supporting the co-creation of new, more inclusive conservation, intergenerational learning, and conservation practices that honor Indigenous knowledge and worldviews.

As part of the Washington's Business Unit Strategic Framework (2023), there are multiple intersectional opportunities to operationalize the above actions. We have identified as a cross cutting priority, Foster Right Relations with Indigenous Peoples, to ensure all our conservation strategies incorporate the above actions. The Supporting Indigenous Rights and Connections to Land and Water strategy is a top priority to fulfilling our mission in the state and a key strategy to implement the above actions. In addition, several Organizational Excellence strategies identify how we can build an organizational culture that promotes on-going collaboration and learning inclusive of partnering with Indigenous Peoples.