

Paid Student/Recent Grad Summer Field Position Available in Colorado Studying Stand Dynamics and Carbon Storage in Aspen Exclosures

The Partnership in Forestry and Rangeland Research Program at the Yale School of the Environment (YSE) is seeking ~1-2 **students** (graduate or undergraduate) or **May 2025 graduates to join our field crew** during June 1-August 9, 2025.

This position fulfills the 'Summer Experience' (YSE006) requirement for YSE MEM students, pays ~\$12k for 10 weeks and provides housing at the site.

Description

We are continuing our collaboration with conservation land managers in South-central Colorado to ask important ecological questions about innovative management practices. We will collect field data during the summer of 2025 to contribute valuable insight into forest management strategies.



Specifically, we are seeking field crew members for summer 2025 to assist our team in collecting data to investigate the forest stand dynamics and carbon storage benefits of using large exclosures built from logging residue (slash) to protect regenerating aspen from browsing by elk and mule deer.

This topic is important because the decline of aspen in western forests has been a major concern over the past decades. Land managers in Colorado have introduced an innovative forestry practice that uses slash to create large exclosures (~8–30 acres) to reduce wildlife browsing to promote aspen regeneration. Managers hope that this practice could be used across the West after logging to encourage aspen recovery and store carbon. This study will provide the information needed to evaluate the efficacy of aspen exclosures.

Field crew members will communicate closely with the YSE team while conducting fieldwork at the ranch in the San Luis Valley in south-central Colorado. The YSE team includes Dr. Bill Lauenroth (faculty director), Michelle Downey (program director), Phoebe Ferguson (Postgrad associate), and two incoming Master of Environmental Science students. Phoebe will provide daily on-the-ground support during the summer.

The hired crew member may assist occasionally with a secondary project that is studying conifer spread into big sagebrush plant communities.

Duties

Field crew members will collect data and work closely with the YSE team to set-up field studies and implement data collection protocols. Field work will include navigating and hiking to plots, sampling soil and vegetation, and taking photos. Crew members will work full days in the field in a variety of conditions, often in high-elevation forested areas. Crew members will need to communicate well and often with the field team, the YSE team, and sometimes the ranch staff. At the end of the field season, students will have gained understanding and experience in:

- Field data collection
- Plant collection
- Monitoring vegetation response
- Identification of Rocky Mountain plants
- Using ESRI's ArcGIS Survey123 and Field Maps applications for data collection and navigation to sites
- Rocky Mountain West and private land management practices
- Teamwork and communication skills
- Working in a variety of field conditions

Field Site

The ranch is in the San Luis Valley in south-central Colorado, a remote, rural area that is 2.5 hours southwest of Colorado Springs and within 40 minutes of Alamosa, Colorado. The elevation ranges from 7,500-14,000 feet above sea level, and the valley floor receives an average annual precipitation of 7-10 inches.

Qualifications

- Familiarity with plant identification and vegetation sampling methods (preferred)
- Ability to work in the field safely (i.e., operating vehicles on rough dirt roads, working in the sun/rain/heat)
- Problem-solving skills
- Excellent communication skills
- Experience working as a team and desire to be a team player
- Valid US driver's license

General Student Expectations

- Commit 10 weeks of time during June 1-August 9, 2025, work 5-days/week and about 40 hours/week
- Conduct work professionally and timely with careful attention to detail
- Work closely and communicate often with YSE team
- Be an integral part of a field crew that works and lives together in south-central Colorado.

Compensation

- \$240 per day (\$1,200 per week) for up to 10 weeks. This amount covers travel to Colorado and includes a stipend.

- Shared housing close to the field site and transportation to and from field sites will be provided and paid for by the project.

How to Get More Information

Please direct questions to Michelle Downey (Michelle.Downey@yale.edu), Dr. Bill Lauenroth (William.Lauenroth@yale.edu), and Phoebe Ferguson (Phoebe.Ferguson@yale.edu)

We will host an information session on Wednesday, February 5, 2025, during 1-2 in Kroon 319.

How to Apply

Applications will be accepted on a *rolling basis*.

Please submit the following as 1 PDF to michelle.downey@yale.edu:

- Cover letter explaining your career aspiration and why you are interested in this position (1-page max.)
- Resume with 2 references and their contact information
- Unofficial transcripts (Yale and undergraduate)
- A document answering the following questions (max. of 300 words per question):
 1. Describe the specific skills and/or experience you would bring to this work and how you have demonstrated them in the past. Also, for skills, please state skill level (e.g., novice, some experience, extensive experience, expert).
 2. Tell us about your availability during June 1-August 10.