Introduction: The goal of this service learning practicum is for students to gain real-world experience in the practice of ecological restoration through direct engagement with local organizations and agencies. Students will design and implement aspects of a restoration, monitoring, or research plan as a service learning project for a community partner (private entity, nonprofit group, management agency or other sponsor). The scope of work for the practicum must be developed in collaboration with a potential sponsor (ideally this will be done as the final project for NRSM444 Ecological Restoration Capstone) and can include any aspect of restoration work or restoration-relevant research. The faculty mentor will provide advice on potential practicum projects, but final responsibility for collaborating with the community partner, and for establishing meeting times and locations, rests with the student. Students will only be able to register after faculty approval of the proposal. The practicum can be done in any semester and can continue for more than one semester. After completing all practicum credits, students are expected to enroll in NRSM494 Seminar in Ecological Restoration in which they will revise their practicum report and reflect on their practicum experience and findings.

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Credits: Variable; minimum of 3 and maximum of 6.

Course meeting time: Groups will meet bi-weekly with the course instructor (times TBD).

Prerequisites for enrollment: Enrollment in this course requires senior standing in the Ecological Restoration major and formal consent of instructor. Prior to enrollment, students MUST have:

1) completed NRSM265 Elements of Ecological Restoration and NRSM444 Ecological Restoration Capstone;

2) completed a faculty-approved practicum proposal; and

3) developed a draft scope of work to be completed during the practicum.

Once these requirements have been met, the student may obtain an override registration form from the instructor to enroll in the course.

Definition of Service Learning: This course has the “Service Learning” designation. Service Learning is a method of teaching and learning in which students, faculty and community partners work together to enhance student learning by applying academic knowledge in a community-based setting. Student work addresses the needs of the community, as identified through collaboration with community or tribal partners, while meeting instructional objectives through faculty-structured service work and critical reflection meant to prepare students to be civically responsible members of the community. At its best, service learning enhances and deepens students’ understanding of an academic discipline by facilitating the integration of theory and practice, while providing them with experience that develops life skills and engages them in critical reflection about individual, institutional, and social ethics.
**Learning outcomes:** By completing this course students should be able to:

1) Work effectively with local professionals and community partners and organizations;
2) Conduct key aspects of restoration projects, including site assessment and monitoring;
3) Engage citizens in assisting with volunteer restoration work; and
4) Communicate effectively with restoration professionals and community partners.

**Requirements:** All of the following must be completed before credit can be assigned.

a) At least three meetings with the instructor and sponsor to develop the practicum work and to reflect on the practicum experience: an initial meeting during the first two weeks of the semester to finalize the contract (see below), a midway check-in during which the student provides a status report and reflects on experience, and an exit interview. [It is the student’s responsibility to initiate these meetings and to come to the instructor with any concerns or questions during the practicum.]

b) A practicum contract, to be signed by the student, instructor, and sponsor after the first meeting. This contract must list: 1) expectations for specific work to be done, 2) requirements for the final paper (see below), and 3) process of evaluation. [The practicum requires a minimum of 135 hours of work for 3 credits, with a maximum of 270 hrs for 6 credits (45 hours per credit)].

c) Bi-weekly meeting with the course instructor to discuss project progress and reflect on the service learning experience.

d) A student-led volunteer work day with NRSM 265 students.
   - Groups will design a field trip handout for NRSM 265 students (see example handout). Handouts will provide objectives, background information, preparation for the field trip, itinerary, equipment for students to bring, and field trip report questions.
   - Groups will write an answer key for grading the field trip reports. Handouts and answer keys will be due one week before your trip.
   - Groups will grade NRSM 265 students’ field trip reports. Grades are due one week after your field trip.

e) A final report of activities performed and hours worked based on the scope of work set forth in the contract.

f) A **final paper** summarizing practicum findings and/or projects; this paper must include a significant amount of literature research. Its length and format should be determined by the instructor and sponsor upon at the start of the practicum. A first draft of the paper must be submitted to the instructor and sponsor at least three weeks before the end of classes for review and required revision.

g) A written self assessment by the student, reflecting on the practicum experience and his/her self-evaluation of performance.

h) A letter from the sponsor evaluating the student’s performance. Students should ask the sponsor to send this letter directly to the course instructor.

**Due dates:**

1. Final papers are due **December 4th**.

2. Self assessments are the last day of classes (**December 11th**).
3. Sponsor evaluation letters are due December 18th.

**Evaluation**: Student performance will be evaluated by the level of initiative exhibited and the quality of work completed during the practicum (including the final paper). The final grade will be assigned by the instructor in consultation with the sponsoring organization. The rubric for evaluation will be included in the practicum contract (see above); 10% of the final grade is based on the final report of activities and self assessment.