



Resource Conservation M.S. 2022 Assessment Report

MISSION STATEMENT

The M.S. in Resource Conservation is a multidisciplinary program for graduate focused on environmental science, sustainability, and/or natural resource management, in the U.S. or abroad. The M.S. in Resource Conservation provides training for graduate students to conduct relevant, rigorous social and/or biophysical research on pressing problems in environmental science, sustainability, and natural resource management. More specifically, graduate students in the M.S. in Resource Conservation work at local to global scales on research that advances sustainability, resilience, conservation, environmental justice, and human well-being. The International Conservation and Development (ICD) option within Resource Conservation prepares students to conduct conservation and development research projects through international field assignments with attention to sustainable land/resource use in the context of social-environmental justice.

DEPARTMENT ALIGNMENT WITH PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

After listing each departmental objective, indicate which of the five [Priorities for Action](#) the objective supports. In this section, you may also briefly describe any innovative or noteworthy programs/initiatives that support the Priorities for Action.

1. Foster the success and professional growth of students and faculty who desire to solve an increasingly complex array of environmental, natural resource, and sustainability problems

PFA1: Place students at the center of all we do

PFA2: Drive excellence and innovation in teaching, learning, and research

PFA4: Partner with place

2. Deliver a high-quality graduate degree program in the environmental/natural resource/sustainability sciences which prepares graduate students to engage as professionals in science, policy, or management

PFA1: Place students at the center of all we do

PFA2: Drive excellence and innovation in teaching, learning, and research

PFA4: Partner with place

3. Cultivate an interdisciplinary cadre of faculty, students, and other researchers, who support a community of scholarship and an environment conducive to innovation and cutting edge research

PFA1: Place students at the center of all we do

PFA2: Drive excellence and innovation in teaching, learning, and research

PFA3: "Mission First, People Always"

PFA4: Partner with place

4. Provide research experience and training that prepares students to work at local, regional and/or international scales and to address the big problems in conservation, natural resource management, and sustainability

PFA1: Place students at the center of all we do

PFA2: Drive excellence and innovation in teaching, learning, and research

PFA4: Partner with place

5. Aspire to develop knowledge and skills in the social and biophysical sciences to advance more sustainable and resilient social and/or ecological systems

PFA2: Drive excellence and innovation in teaching, learning, and research

PFA4: Partner with place

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES and MEASUREMENT TOOLS

Student Learning Outcomes	Committee Coursework Evaluation/ Approval	Thesis Proposal Preparation and Defense	Thesis Presentation and Defense	Feedback from Partners (where relevant)
1. Demonstrate knowledge of relevant biophysical and/or social science/system principles, paradigms and interactions	x	x	x	
2. Ability to understand a range of research methods and their suitability to particular topics	x	x	x	
3. Self-direction and ability to identify a current environmental challenge or knowledge gap		x	x	
4. Demonstrate ability to successfully and rigorously conduct research		x	x	
5. Design and conduct original research		x	x	
6. Apply results of the research to problem solving		x	x	
7. Communicate effectively orally and in writing	x	x	x	
8. Conduct scientific research in an ethical and professional manner	x	x	x	
9. Complete the thesis and plan for dissemination of		x	x	

Student Learning Outcomes	Committee Coursework Evaluation/ Approval	Thesis Proposal Preparation and Defense	Thesis Presentation and Defense	Feedback from Partners (where relevant)
results (e.g., via peer review journals, technical reports, presentations, etc.)				
10. Problem solving and innovation		x	x	x
11. Prepares students for professional careers in conservation, environmental science, and/or sustainability	x	x	x	x

RESULTS and MODIFICATIONS

We are currently engaged in a college-level assessment of our graduate programs and the relevant modifications to the Resource Conservation M.S. may initially be more structural than course-specific. This planning process has been in progress for a number of years but has been slow due to the additional demands of the pandemic.

Student Learning Outcomes results

The recent FCFC Strategic Planning process revealed that nearly all Resource Conservation M.S. students are in the social sciences (advised by faculty in the Department of Society and Conservation). Most students in the Resource Conservation M.S. conduct research on the human dimensions of natural resources, environmental and public lands policy, environmental governance, sustainable communities and livelihoods, international conservation and development, environmental justice, environmental planning, private lands conservation, and resilience and transformation. In the past, Resource Conservation M.S. students were from a broader range of disciplines. This shift likely occurred when the Systems Ecology M.S. was established, which provided another option for faculty and students working in the ecosystem sciences.

We have identified the need for more professional development training within the Resource Conservation M.S. (e.g. science communication, translation and co-production skills, project management, conflict resolution).

Modifications made to enhance learning

The Department of Society and Conservation is currently in conversation about what this shift means for the Resource Conservation M.S. in terms of degree title, coursework, and program requirements. Any changes to the Resource Conservation M.S. will require dialogue and approval at the college-level, since faculty in the biophysical sciences occasionally advise students in this degree program through the International Conservation and Development option. One possibility is to turn the International Conservation and Development option into a graduate certificate that is available to students across degree programs.

As FCFC considers new professional M.S. degrees, we hope that new coursework will also meet needs for professional training within the Resource Conservation M.S. These conversations are underway at the college level.

FUTURE PLANS FOR CONTINUED ASSESSMENT

We plan to conduct annual listening sessions with current students to obtain feedback while they are students in the program.

We plan to implement exit surveys for all of our students to obtain feedback upon graduation.

An upcoming college-wide alumni survey will help us assess the Resource Conservation M.S. and make modifications to ensure it is relevant to the career pathways and professional goals of our students and their future employers.