

## Ph.D. Student Opportunity

*“Enhancing understanding and awareness of the benefits of prescribed burning in rangeland environments”*

### University of Wyoming (UW) - Department of Ecosystem Science and Management

Project Description: Prescribed burning objectives in rangeland ecosystems can include the removal of invasive vegetation species, improved forage quality and quantity for livestock and wildlife, and fuel reductions, yet the social aspects of burning are less clear. We are seeking a Ph.D. student interested in exploring the socio-ecological aspects of prescribed fire planning, practices, and applications across spatio-temporal gradients. This project will work closely with USDA NRCS to engage ranchers from at least 2 regions (e.g., southern Great Plains and the central Rocky Mountains) who are interested in incorporating fire into their management plans to understand how to enhance utility and efficacy of this practice for meeting management goals. Interactions with other managed and unmanaged disturbances, including grazing and extreme weather events such as drought, will also be analyzed. Focus groups comprised of ranchers and land managers will facilitate project development and communication of results across ecosystems and requisite variations in prescribed burning practices. The Ph.D. student will include comparative evaluation of similar intensity and duration fires in his/her data collection and analysis. Study design will emphasize statistically valid data analyses to generate outcomes that contribute to enhanced understanding and awareness of the benefits of prescribed burning in rangeland environments. This project will be supervised by Dr. Derek Scasta – University of Wyoming.

Qualifications: We encourage applications from students with a M.S. degree in Rangeland Management, Natural Resources, Environmental Science, Rural Sociology, Human Dimensions, Ecology, or a related field completed by May 2018 and competitive GPA (>3.0 required) and GRE scores (<http://www.uwyo.edu/esm/graduate/prospective/apply.html>). Experience with social science research, extension outreach, working with landowners/agencies, and fire (prescribed fire and/or wildfire) desired. We encourage applicants with previous experience and coursework in social science, pastoralism, or general rangeland and applications from underrepresented groups. Proficiency in spoken/written English, a valid US driver’s license, and the ability to pass a Wyoming driving record check are needed.

Specifics: The position can begin in August or December of 2018. The student will be supported by a three-year assistantship including summer salary covering tuition and fees, health insurance, and annual stipend. Opportunity to serve as teaching assistant for ‘Applied Fire Ecology’, assist with other prescribed burning projects, assist with Sustainable Rangelands Roundtable activities will also be available. The University of Wyoming, a land grant institution, is the only four-year university in the state. The University is located in rural southern Wyoming in the small city of Laramie, population approximately 30,000, close to excellent outdoor activities in the nearby Snowy and Laramie Ranges and near cultural and other amenities along the Front Range of Colorado. For more information department and the Laramie area, please visit: <http://www.uwyo.edu/esm/> and <http://visitolaramie.org/>. The University of Wyoming is an Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action employer.

Application: Candidates must apply to the University of Wyoming Graduate Admissions program (<http://www.uwyo.edu/uwgrad/prospective/applying/index.html>). **Before beginning this process, prospective students should contact Dr. Derek Scasta ([jscasta@uwyo.edu](mailto:jscasta@uwyo.edu)) for more information.** The following will be needed: personal statement, CV describing qualifications and experience, unofficial transcripts (official transcripts will be required for formal application), unofficial GRE scores (official GRE scores will be required for formal application), and contact information for three references.