Conservation Planning

EVIR 500B, SFR 590D

Winter 2010 (Wednesdays 1-3pm, 306 Anderson Hall)

**Overview**

This course takes a hands-on approach to learning about how agencies and conservation organizations select areas to protect biodiversity. Students will work together to redesign The Nature Conservancy’s (TNC) conservation portfolio for one or more ecoregions in the state of Washington using current data sets on biodiversity, acquisition costs, and potentially climate change. The course will address a real conservation research need and will produce products that will be directly used by TNC to protect Washington’s biodiversity. The course will involve a number of classroom meetings throughout the quarter and several fieldtrips. The field trips will include one or more days of working with TNC staff in the TNC offices in Seattle and a four-day trip to a research station for an intensive work session. Students will be expected to work long hours while on the field trips, meet at irregular times, present results to their peers and TNC staff, and help write a final report and manuscript for publication.

**Field trips**

**TNC offices (Seattle, WA):** We will spend at least one day meeting with TNC scientists, planners, and managers at the Seattle offices of TNC. We will likely spend one day learning about how the Washington office is structured, how they have do their planning, and what types of projects they are currently conducting. We will likely spend another half to full day with TNC staff talking about our project, gathering data, and planning analyses. We will also spend at least one half day presenting and discussing our results with TNC scientists and planners near the end of the quarter.

**Pack Forest Research Station (Eatonville, WA):** We will spend 4 days at the Center for Sustainable Forestry at Pack Forest working on the revised ecoregional plan. These will be long days in which we are primarily working in groups in the center’s computer lab.

**TNC preserve (TBD):** Ideally, we will also take one field trip to one of the sites that TNC owns and manages within our target ecoregion. At the moment, this field trip is tentative and will depend on time and funds.

**Structure**

We will spend the first six weeks of the course learning about and discussing the process of conservation planning. During this time, we will primarily be meeting as a group during the regularly scheduled class time (Wed 1-3pm). However, we may also have some meetings outside class time for guest lectures and other meetings. After the fourth week of the course, we will begin planning our analyses. This will involve trips to the TNC offices and some meetings outside of scheduled class time. During the field trip to Pack Forest, we will complete the bulk of our prioritization and selection analyses, however, there will likely be more analyses after we return to Seattle. After that field trip, we will concentrate on finishing the analyses, writing up our results, and designing one or more presentations. We will present our results to TNC, get feedback from them, revise our analyses, write a final report and begin writing a manuscript for publication. The goal will be to have the manuscript submitted by the Fall of 2010. Those interested in publishing the work can continue to meet on an as-needed basis until the manuscript is published.

**Discussions**

Three of the discussion sessions will be organized by teams of students. These three discussions will focus on the topics of connectivity, land costs, and climate change—and specifically, how these factors can be incorporated into conservation planning efforts in general and into our analyses in particular.

**Readings**

In addition to the many papers we will read from the primary literature, there is one required text for the course:

*Groves, C.R. 2003. Drafting a Conservation Blueprint, A Practitioners Guide to Planning for Biodiversity. Island Press.*

**Assignments**

Work outside of class will include lots of reading, some software testing, data compilation and analysis, preparation of presentations, and writing.

**Grading**

Your grades will be based on your participation in discussions, presentations, project design and analyses, and your contributions to the final report.

**Guest Speakers**

Jonathan Hoeskstra, Climate Team Leader, TNC

Peter Karieva, Chief Scientist, TNC

Craig Groves, Director of Conservation Methods and Learning, TNC