



# Opportunities for Students in Climate Change

The George Melendez Wright Climate Change Youth Initiative gives unique opportunities to undergraduate and graduate students to work on projects related to climate change in National Parks. There are two programs within this Initiative.

## Internship Program

Paid 12-week internships, usually during the summer. Park housing is often included. Work with NPS staff on various climate change projects specific to an individual park. Recent examples include:

- Monitoring greenhouse gases (GHGs) in alpine tundra at Rocky Mountain National Park.
- Developing educational displays and programs on climate change at Cape Cod National Seashore.
- Helping North Cascades National Park meet its sustainability goals and reduce the carbon footprint of its operations.

## Fellowship Program

The fellowship program supports climate change research relevant to managing impacts in parks, including transboundary issues and comparisons to Mexican or Canadian protected areas. These are one-year awards of up to \$20,000 for students enrolled in Masters and Ph.D. programs in the US, Canada, and Mexico. Recent examples include:

- Assessing effects of ocean acidification on marine invertebrates in Channel Islands National Park.
- Predicting how climate-induced changes in fire regime will affect mercury transport in Mesa Verde National Park.
- Understanding how forest and human communities are affected by decline of the culturally significant Yellow Cedar in Glacier Bay National Park.

## The Legacy of George Melendez Wright

Despite his short life and career, George Melendez Wright was deeply influential in bringing science to the management of America's national parks. As a child he fell in love with the natural environments of northern California. He pursued that love by studying biology at the University of California and working as a naturalist in Yosemite National Park. While there, he saw many problems with park wildlife and realized that good science is needed for effective conservation.

In 1929, Wright started a survey of wildlife and the threats they faced across all the National Parks, with the aim of recommending actions to restore and manage natural populations. In 1930, he was appointed Chief of the Wildlife Division for the National Park Service. As a result of his work, the NPS began moving away from practices like feeding



Amy Luxbacher, a GMW Climate Change Fellow, examining a red-cheeked salamander (*Plethodon jordani*) as part of her graduate project to study the changing distribution and genetics of this species in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Photo courtesy Jimmy Luxbacher.

bears to entertain tourists, and embraced science-based approaches to conserving species, habitats, and other natural conditions in the parks.

Wright's work was widely admired, and he joined an international commission to study the possibility of a trans-boundary park on the border of Texas and Mexico. Though he did not live to see that project to completion, the focus on international conservation was consistent with his bold vision.

## How to Apply

Both programs are best suited to students in natural, social, and cultural sciences; education; communications; resource management; public policy; or other disciplines relevant to a public agency that manages diverse natural, cultural, and historic resources.

The George Melendez Wright Youth Initiative is conducted in cooperation with the University of Washington. Proposals for research fellowships and applications for specific internship positions will be accepted beginning in late November on the UW website:

<http://ccyi.org/>

## More Information

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<http://www.nps.gov/climatechange/internshipsresearch.cfm>