

Environmental Sciences

Note: MSU's programs in the biological sciences are distributed across multiple departments. MSU does not have a single Department of Biology. For additional options see Biological Sciences at MSU.

Department of Land Resources & Environmental Sciences

<http://landresources.montana.edu/>

Effective management of land and water resources requires a solid fundamental understanding of the processes and relationships in land and natural resources systems, combined with applications of environmental science and applied ecology. The Environmental Sciences curriculum is designed to provide this classroom, laboratory, and field training. Graduates of this degree program will:

1. possess a broad knowledge of biological, physical, and chemical processes important across landscapes;
2. receive training in applied ecology, soil and water science, and land resources analysis;
3. be capable of critical analysis of land resource problems; and
4. be experienced with teamwork required to develop and implement effective land management strategies. They will be the scientists most capable of making significant advances and contributions in the 21st century!

Environmental Sciences

This program is for students who wish to obtain a more general Environmental Sciences degree and design more of their course of study than possible in one of the below options. The required courses in this major are also required in each of the options, allowing for a relatively seamless transfer to one of them if accomplished by the end of the student's second year.

Career opportunities: Environmental consulting firms, industry, government agencies, and the military careers where the focus is on using scientific knowledge to protect the environment and human health. An environmental scientist might pursue a career in consulting, research, or teaching. Consulting firms offer opportunities to help businesses and agencies comply with environmental laws and policy. This degree can also prepare a student for a wide range of graduate studies.

Environmental Biology Option

This option is intended to train students who are interested in understanding the ecology of organisms in natural environments, and/or in understanding how organisms may be used to clean up environments that have been disturbed by human activities. The curriculum launches from a base in environmental science which includes a broad knowledge of organisms (including plants, animals, and microorganisms) and the physical and chemical characteristics of natural environments. A special feature of this option is that it emphasizes cross-training between the traditional disciplines of Biology and Microbiology. Students trained in Biology or Microbiology normally focus on either large or small organisms or on human biology and disease. But, even biologists trained as ecologists have a poor understanding of microorganisms, despite the fact that they appreciate the great importance of microorganisms in most natural environments. Similarly, most microbiologists do not understand the diversity of large organisms and are never exposed to natural principles of ecology and evolution. In the LRES Environmental Biology option, students will develop a knowledge of the diversity of organisms and their interrelated functions in complex environments. In later stages of the curriculum, students may select from a wide

array of upper division courses in environmental microbiology, natural ecosystems, applied ecology, and policy and planning that enable them to specialize in areas best-suited to their own career vision.

Career opportunities: Environmental industries and consulting firms that address problems associated with disturbed environments. Biotechnology companies that attempt to exploit biological diversity for the benefit of humans. Government jobs in environmental management and policy making. Graduate training that leads to independent research in basic and applied ecology, environmental biology, and environmental microbiology.

Geospatial & Environmental Analysis Option

Effective management of agricultural and other managed land resources requires individuals to have sound fundamental understanding of the processes and relationships in land systems, combined with excellent skills in modern land inventory and analysis techniques including geographic information systems (GIS), global positioning systems (GPS), remote sensing, and an appreciation for the intricacies of land resources and land use practices. The Land Resource Sciences curricula are designed to provide classroom, laboratory, and field training. Graduates of this program will: (i) possess a broad knowledge of land processes, (ii) be able to critically analyze and solve land resource problems, and (iii) work in teams to develop and implement effective land management strategies. They will be the premier land resource users and managers in the 21st century.

This degree is for students interested in land resources and their management at landscape scales. All human activities depend on the world's land and water resource base. The air we breathe, the water we drink, and the food we eat all depend upon activities occurring and interacting across broad extents of the Earth's land surface. This curriculum is based on the philosophy that our well-being requires knowledge-based decision making involving land and natural resources across these large areas. Students build on knowledge of the basic natural sciences with course work in geology, biology, geography, soils, and ecology. Then, courses in remote sensing, geographic information systems, global positioning and statistics provide tools for gathering, processing, analyzing, and displaying information about land resources across large areas. Finally, students learn how to integrate land resource information with social and financial realities to support balanced management decisions. Throughout the program, students are encouraged to gain hands-on experience with land, people and information through field trips, internships, and the capstone field course. The knowledge and skills of land resource analysis and management are needed wherever there are land resources. Graduates in the LRES Geospatial & Environmental Analysis option can be the environmental scientists and managers most capable of providing information for sound management of the land resource base.

Career Opportunities: Careers in natural resource management, environmental consulting, precision agriculture, watershed management, and land mapping, requiring professionals who can work outdoors on the land and indoors with data and computer applications dealing with geographic information systems and remote sensing. Employment with federal government land management agencies, such as the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Bureau of Reclamation; state agencies, such as departments of natural resources; local and regional planning organizations; private organizations which own and manage land (timber companies, ranches, farms, recreation areas); consulting firms; conservation organizations such as land trusts; and Congressional staffs. Graduate training leading to independent research in remote sensing, ecological processes, and soil and water science.

Land Rehabilitation Option

The Land Rehabilitation curriculum provides training in site remediation and restoration ecology, including soil remediation, re-vegetation, fluvial and riparian restoration, investigation of impacted geologic resources, amelioration of contaminated soils and water, integrated management of invasive species, and remediation of sites impacted by industrial, recreational, and land management activities. Emphasis is placed on developing a broad understanding of hydrologic, soil, and plant processes from both a basic and an applied science approach. Coursework in the chemical, biological, and environmental sciences provides a foundation of knowledge. During the junior and senior years, students take courses in soil, water and plant sciences that range from molecular to landscape in scale. Students will acquire skills in plant identification and landscape inventory including geographic information systems. Land rehabilitation is critically important to Montana, to the surrounding region, and to the United States. Graduates possess a broad knowledge of land rehabilitation processes, are able to critically analyze and solve problems, and can work in teams to develop and implement effective land management strategies. Studies in Land Rehabilitation will infuse students with critical knowledge and skills needed to analyze and manage lands requiring rehabilitation. Students will also receive foundation skills in writing, communication, arts, humanities and social sciences.

Career Opportunities: Worker and manager for local, state, and federal agencies responsible for land rehabilitation and remediation, ecological restoration, invasive species management, and land resources management. Land reclamation managers for environmental consulting, mining, and highway construction companies. Stepping stone to Graduate School for independent research and advanced coursework in restoration ecology, soil sciences, geology, hydrology, ecology, and the plant sciences. Environmental consulting and non-profit organization related to restoration and conservation.

Soil and Water Science Option

The Soil and Water Science Option provides students with fundamental training in basic biological, chemical, and physical sciences and advanced training in soil and water sciences. Students are encouraged through choice electives to emphasize specific course sequences to help them understand the underlying processes central to managed and natural landscapes, as well as to develop practical skills and abilities relevant to applying this knowledge in land resource management and the environmental sciences.

Water is perhaps the most unique substance on earth, having a multitude of seemingly anomalous properties, and literally forms the basis for life as we know it. Soils form the precious 'skin' of the Earth, the critical interface between atmospheric and geologic/groundwater systems. The multitude of physical, chemical, and biological processes that occur in the three-phase soil system (solids, water and air) are critical to sustainability of natural and managed ecosystems. Soils and water will be among the most critical limiting resources in coming decades. The LRES Soil and Water Science Option provides students with advanced training in the chemical, physical, and biological sciences, and integration of these fundamentals in applications related to soil science, hydrology, watershed management, pollution treatment and prevention, land rehabilitation, agricultural and natural resources management, and bioremediation. Students develop relevant skills in written and oral communication, and gain experience in modern measurement, monitoring and analysis techniques used in land and water sciences and management.

Career opportunities: Environmental industries and consulting firms that work on problems associated with soils, water, contaminant transport, fate of chemicals in the environment, and water resource management.

Local, state, or federal government positions in natural resources and environmental sciences management and policy. Advanced graduate training to prepare for research and management positions in soil sciences, hydrology, water resources, land reclamation, and related areas.

Undergraduate Programs

- Environmental Sciences (<http://catalog.montana.edu/undergraduate/agriculture/environmental-sciences/environmental-sciences>)
- Environmental Biology Option (<http://catalog.montana.edu/undergraduate/agriculture/environmental-sciences/environmental-biology-option>)
- Geospatial & Environmental Analysis Option (<http://catalog.montana.edu/undergraduate/agriculture/environmental-sciences/geospatial-environmental-analysis>)
- Land Rehabilitation Option (<http://catalog.montana.edu/undergraduate/agriculture/environmental-sciences/land-rehabilitation>)
- Soil & Water Science Option (<http://catalog.montana.edu/undergraduate/agriculture/environmental-sciences/soil-water-science-option>)

Undergraduate Minors

- Soil Science Minor (Non-Teaching) (<http://catalog.montana.edu/undergraduate/agriculture/environmental-sciences/soil-science-minor-nonteaching>)
 - Entomology Minor (Non-Teaching) (<http://catalog.montana.edu/undergraduate/agriculture/entomology-minor>)
 - Water Resources Minor (Non-Teaching) (<http://catalog.montana.edu/undergraduate/letters-science/earth-sciences/water-resources-minor-nonteaching>)
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Font Notice

This document should contain certain fonts with restrictive licenses. For this draft, substitutions were made using less legally restrictive fonts. Specifically:

Times was used instead of Adobe Garamond Pro.

The editor may contact Leepfrog for a draft with the correct fonts in place.