

2023 Commonwealth Coastal & Marine Policy Fellowship

APPLICATION DEADLINE: MAY 1, 2023
FELLOWSHIP START DATE: SEPTEMBER 1, 2023

Virginia Sea Grant (VASG) and Virginia Environmental Endowment (VEE) are soliciting applications for the 2023 Commonwealth Coastal & Marine Policy Fellowship. VASG is accepting applications from current graduate students or those who recently graduated, including all recommendations, until 5:00 p.m. EST on May 1, 2023. Selected finalists will interview with prospective host offices to find the best fit for the fellow. VASG, VEE, and their partners anticipate supporting two to three post-graduate fellows starting on September 1, 2023. This announcement and guidance on how to submit your application can be found at <https://vaseagrant.org/commonwealth-fellowship-applicants/>

FELLOWSHIP DESCRIPTION

The Commonwealth Coastal & Marine Policy Fellowship is sponsored by VASG, VEE, and participating host offices. Modeled after the highly successful national Sea Grant Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship, this fellowship provides educational and professional development opportunities for post-graduates by partnering them with a host office mentor where they receive on-the-job training and hone their professional skills, while learning about the policy and management process at the state level. The program also aims to increase capacity of the host offices by supporting fellows who are working on mission-relevant programs, and leveraging the knowledge and capacity of Virginia's academic institutions.

VASG is currently recruiting host offices among local and state government agencies. Offices that have participated in previous years include Virginia's Department of Conservation and Recreation, Department of Environmental Quality, Department of Wildlife Resources, Marine Resources Commission, Office of the Secretary of Natural Resources, and the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission. Once confirmed, participating host office descriptions and project descriptions will be posted on the VASG website at <https://vaseagrant.org/commonwealth-fellowship-home/>.

SPONSORS

Virginia Environmental Endowment aims to improve the quality of the environment by using its capital, expertise, and resources to encourage all sectors to work together to prevent pollution, conserve natural resources, and promote environmental literacy. Established in 1977, VEE has worked collaboratively as a leading independent grant-maker, improving environmental quality, advancing environmental literacy, and partnering to establish land trusts, conservation networks, and a statewide mediation center. VEE is particularly interested in building capacity in state agencies through the Commonwealth Fellowship.

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Virginia Sea Grant advances the resilience and sustainability of Virginia's coastal and marine ecosystems and the communities that depend upon them. As a broker of scientific information, VASG works with resource managers, businesses, communities, and other stakeholders to provide and apply the best science and information available. We do this through funding, and by conducting research, education, outreach, and communication services.

VASG is a federal-state partnership, funded by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) with matching funds from our six university partners. Hosted at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science at William & Mary (W&M), VASG's other partner institutions include: University of Virginia, Virginia Tech, and George Mason, Old Dominion, and Virginia Commonwealth Universities.

FOSTERING A SAFE AND WELCOMING COMMUNITY

The funders are committed to building inclusive research, extension, communication, and education programs that serve people with diverse backgrounds, circumstances, needs, perspectives, and ways of thinking. Diversity includes, but is not limited to, age, race, ethnicity, nationality, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability and/or health status, religion, veteran status, geographic origin and socio-economic status.

VASG and VEE do not tolerate any form of misconduct, discrimination or harassment, including sexual harassment, or sexual misconduct (e.g. sexual assault within its organization, at awardee organizations, field sites, meetings, or anywhere VASG-funded research, outreach and education are conducted).

ELIGIBILITY

Graduate students close to completing their graduate, professional degree, or Ph.D. program at a Virginia university or college are eligible to apply. Recent graduates who completed their graduate, professional degree or Ph.D. program at a Virginia university or college, graduating in the spring semester 2023 or after, are also eligible. Applicants should demonstrate a strong interest and some experience in coastal or marine resource policy and management (e.g., course work, internships, independent study, etc.). Fellows must complete all degree requirements prior to starting the fellowship.

AWARD INFORMATION

VASG and VEE anticipate supporting two to three fellows for the 2023 Commonwealth Coastal & Marine Policy Fellowship. The length of the fellowship assignment is 12 months. The start date for the fellowship is September 1, 2023. All Commonwealth Coastal & Marine Policy Fellows who are placed in a host office are employees of W&M. Each fellow receives a salary of \$43,000 for the 12-month assignment, and \$5,000 for critical expenses (e.g., insurance, if needed) and professional development activities (e.g., travel, registration, or other expenses to participate in conferences, workshops, VASG-sponsored professional development training, etc.).

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HOST-FELLOW RELATIONSHIP

The Commonwealth Coastal & Marine Policy Fellowship is an innovative professional training experience and educational opportunity that will benefit both fellows and the host offices. As an integral foundation of the program, the fellows and host offices must be aware and sensitive to each other's mutual responsibilities, and the goals of the fellowship program. Fellows are expected to abide by standard code of conduct policies of their host office including, but not limited to, any: personnel policy, policy regarding sexual harassment, policy regarding workplace violence, policy regarding ethical behavior, and policy regarding the acceptable use of computer resources. Fellows will honor the working protocols of the host office and contribute to useful and relevant products that meet the host office's mission.

The host office is expected to provide opportunities for involvement in substantive projects that contribute to the fellow's professional development, education, and career goals, as well as provide adequate and appropriate mentorship to the fellow. Participating host offices have pledged to maintain a professional relationship with the fellows throughout the program and abide by all code of conduct procedures and policies including, but not limited to, the policies listed above. Additionally, all host offices have agreed to: 1) deliver an orientation that introduces their mission and goals, priorities, staff, and activities; 2) provide opportunities for substantive involvement in, and contribution to their program's activities, including a focused project and work tasks for the duration of the fellowship; 3) supply a professional mentor who will help support the fellow's professional growth through their individualized professional development plan, and regularly engage with the fellow during the 12-month fellowship; and 4) provide a work space, supplies, travel expenses, etc. necessary to accomplish the fellow's tasks.

FELLOWSHIP REQUIREMENTS

In addition to work responsibilities to the host office, selected fellows will:

- Collaborate with VASG's Communication Center: Assist VASG efforts to publicize their fellowship activities. Fellows are required to submit blog posts and share story ideas.
- Work with VASG's Professional Development Coordinator: To develop and launch an individual professional development plan, based on your short- and long-term professional goals.
- Collaborate with Your Mentor: Work closely with your host office mentor, including identifying opportunities to execute your individual professional development plan.
- Attend VASG Events: Participate in regular meetings with VASG, including: An orientation meeting at the beginning of the fellowship; VASG-sponsored professional development activities; and an exit interview at the conclusion of the fellowship.

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HOW TO APPLY

Applications must be submitted online via eSeaGrant (<http://vaseagrant.ecsion.com>) by 5:00 pm EST on May 1, 2023. VASG strongly encourages applicants to open an account in eSeaGrant at least one week prior to the May 1st deadline in order to familiarize yourself with the online system. Refer to the "Registration Information" under the Application Guidelines section below for additional information.

Instructions on how to register and start a fellowship application on eSeaGrant can be found on the VASG website (<https://vaseagrant.org>) and on eSeaGrant.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

All application elements must be submitted as PDF documents.

Personal and Career Goal Statement (1,000 words or less):

The statement should include:

- A description of the unique skills or perspective you would bring to the fellowship and proposed host-office project, including information relating to your leadership potential, communication ability, and stakeholder engagement interests.
- An overview of your short term (1-5yrs) and long term (>5yrs) professional goals, how those goals relate to broader societal needs in the coastal and marine environment and/or communities, and how this fellowship would contribute toward those goals.
- An example of a time the candidate faced and overcame a barrier, obstacle or challenge.
- Any other pertinent information relating to the candidate's plans to move forward their interests in coastal and marine resource management and the policy process occurring at the state level.

Resume or CV (two-page maximum; using 12 point font):

Applicants should demonstrate the diversity of their education and work experience, honors and awards, extra-curricular activities, volunteer history, and interpersonal, written, and oral communication skills.

Recommendation Letters:

Two letters of recommendation from individuals who have worked with the applicant.

- At least one letter must be from a faculty member with knowledge of the student's academic and research (when applicable) performance.
- Applicants should consider someone with a different perspective (e.g., a former employer, mentor from a previous internship, someone you worked with on an outreach or policy project) for the second letter in order to give the reviewers additional information regarding your strengths and experiences.
- Each letter should not exceed **two pages, single-spaced**.
- These letters should discuss the applicant's: **self-motivation, response to setbacks, skills and involvement in teamwork, collaborative leadership skills, willingness to learn a new skill or topic, and academic performance and potential.**

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- The letters should not include personal contact information or web links to external resources (e.g., LinkedIn, articles, blogs, etc.)
- Any letters beyond the two letters of recommendation will be disregarded by the selection panel. Letters of endorsement from members of Congress, friends, or relatives will not be accepted.
- To maintain confidentiality, VASG requires **that letters NOT be submitted with the student’s application**; instead, letters must be requested and uploaded through **eSeaGrant**. Letters must be submitted by the deadline and should be addressed to Dr. Troy Hartley, Director, Virginia Sea Grant. Applicants should refer their letter writers to the **“For Letter Writers”** page on the VASG Commonwealth Fellowship website.

REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

VASG will review all applications to ensure that they are complete and adhere to all guidelines. Applicants will be invited to participate in a virtual interview with the fellowship selection committee, which could be composed of the funders, future potential host offices, and VASG stakeholder advisors. The committee will select finalists based upon the submitted application materials and virtual interviews. The selection criteria will be based on the applicant’s academic and professional performance and potential, professional and career goals, relevant and qualifying experience, communication and professional skills, and supporting recommendations and endorsements.

The placement of the selected finalists will be based on in-person interviews with the participating host offices, and ranking of preferences by both finalists and hosts. Consequently, placement to a specific host office cannot be guaranteed. The Virginia Sea Grant Director has final discretion to select fellows based on the interview panel’s recommendations, ranking provided by the host offices and finalists, diversity and balance of the award portfolio, availability of funding, and programmatic objectives, needs and priorities.

TENTATIVE TIMELINE FOR FELLOWSHIP COMPETITION

Fellowship announcement released	March 2, 2023
Applications due to VASG by 5:00pm EST	May 1, 2023
Virtual interviews	Early June 2023
Notification of finalists	Late June 2023
Selected finalists’ interview with host offices	Early July 2023
Fellows notified of placement	Late July 2023
Fellowship begins	September 1, 2023
Fellowship ends	August 31, 2024

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