

Environmental Sciences Field Camp 2025

ESCI Field Camp consists of four integrated courses taught in spring. Most time will be spent at field sites away from campus, precluding enrollment in other courses and many other substantial time commitments during the months of April and early May. The group will travel, camp, prepare meals, study, and conduct field research together. During Field Camp, students will design and conduct two original field research projects. The research projects will culminate in research presentations during WWU's Scholars Week.

Field Camp will begin with instruction on research design, field methods, and scientific communication. It concludes with research presentations in Scholars Week. During intervening weeks, participants will complete all stages in the research process. Successful participants will emerge from the program as competent field scientists. They will develop skills in hypothesis development, study design, field research methods, data analysis, and scientific communication. Training and travel in wilderness settings will help participants develop knowledge and competence in wilderness skills, including navigation, risk management, group organization, rope skills, river travel, food preparation, living with wildlife, and Leave-No-Trace practices. If you are concerned about lacking personal gear or prior experience, please contact the instructor – we can overcome most barriers.

Field Camp schedule will be compressed and intense. There will be at least two preparation meetings during winter quarter 2025. The first two weeks in spring quarter will consist of on-campus meetings and day trips to local field sites. The third and fourth weeks will involve a backpacking trip to backcountry research sites. In the fifth and sixth weeks we will conduct research in remote study areas accessed via a river expedition. We will spend the seventh week analyzing data, preparing presentations, and giving presentations in WWU's Scholars Week. Contingent on participants' schedules during the seventh and eighth weeks, we may practice additional specialized field research methods at local field sites. Final research reports will be due by the end of spring quarter. We will maintain COVID-19 safety with testing prior to research expeditions, and then protect our "bubble" through group isolation during expeditions.

Field Camp integrates the following four courses, totaling 15 credits.

- ESCI 408 Field Methods in Wildlife Ecology (5 credits)
- ESCI 409 Riparian Conservation (4 credits)
- ESCI 433 Population Biology (3 credits)
- ESCI 438 Scientific Writing and Presentation (3 credits)

Everyone is welcome in Field Camp, but the program might not be desirable to everyone. Weather conditions will be beyond our control, which may require group efforts to weather storms. Participants must do without amenities common in town for 1-2 week periods. Hiking to field sites and camps will require substantial physical exertion. Time commitments during April and early May will be demanding, which may limit employment or much time and energy spent on other relationships and responsibilities. Conversely, concluding formal meetings in late May might allow participants to get summer jobs usually precluded by the quarter system. Extensive group work on research and expedition activities may not suit people who prefer to work alone. You might develop strong friendships. After spending weeks mostly immersed in nature, some people may find returning to urbanity unsettling.

Questions? Please ask John McLaughlin, jmcl@wwu.edu

More information and application: http://faculty.wwu.edu/jmcl/Field_camp/field_home.htm