ESS Newsletter
October, 2025

Owen and team collect data in the field

ESS Summer Research - Owen Werkeiser

Owen Werkeiser '26 and a team of three other researchers, including Professor Claire Griffin, were flown to a remote area along the Jago River in northern Alaska to do research on ice wedge polygons. The team collected data on mosses growing within the ice wedges, to examine connection between aquatic moss growth and the potential for the landscape to heal itself. They looked at how the biomass from these mosses repair the wedges in the ice, closing the gaps with soil matter. They also set out to understand why some troughs did not grow moss and only grew algae, which does not have the same regenerative properties to the land as moss does. This summer research served as a fantastic opportunity for Owen to get some experience in field research while earning his degree from Allegheny College.

Blue & Gold ESS Alumni Panel

On September 19th, as a part of the Blue & Gold Weekend activities, the ESS department held an alumni panel. The panelists covered a range of years and professions and included Megan Swing '22, SUNY Cortland Energy & Sustainability Engagement Coordinator, Jenny Thompkins '18, who works remotely for the National Wildlife Federation, Kristen Carter '91, Assistant State Geologist for the PA Geological Survey, and Joseph Zaso '07, a client-focused environment consultant.

The panel was an informal Q&A, where students were allowed to ask any and all questions, and lunch was provided. After background introductions, the panelists had conversations about job hunting strategies and etiquette, how to form an effective resume, the role of and paths to graduate school, and other things to keep in mind as we as students prepare for our future years in and outside of Allegheny.

This event was a wonderful opportunity for students to hear advice from alumni. The alumni stayed after to further talk and connect with students, many of whom took the opportunity. If you did not have a chance to go, I highly recommend participating in the Blue & Gold Weekend activities in future years! You never know what piece of advice is waiting for you to hear it or what connection is waiting to be made!

LS120 students meet with alumni

Green Coalition Takes Shape

A new club engaging in the practice of sustainability emerges. Green Coalition is a combination of five previous clubs themed around environment and sustainability: Bike Share, Green SOCS, Sustainable Design Team, Students for Environmental Action, and Food Recovery Network that came together at the end of the Spring 2025 semester.

In combining the five previous clubs into one, Green Coalition is working to create a dynamic community of sustainable perspectives to form an inclusive setting for a variety of topics and events. Green Coalition is working to maintain the ideas and traditions held by all of the previous groups.

New and returning members of the previous clubs can expect to have a good time learning about and practicing sustainability. Green Co wants to show that being sustainable comes in many different forms. Green Co holds space for people to connect with their peers with similar majors or minors, be informed about the abundant natural world around us, and become aware of other environmental themed events happening on campus. A future event to look out for is the Trick or Trashion Show on October 26th. Come dressed in fashion made from recycled material and vote for the best costume. General Green Coalition meetings are held every week on Thursdays at 7pm in Carr Hall room 239. If you have any questions or would like to be added to the email list do not hesitate to contact greenco@allegheny.edu!

GreenCo at the French Creek Watershed Cleanup

Mikko with a trout

Senior Comps Take Shape

With our new class of seniors comes a new batch of Environmental Science and Sustainability comps!
Senior Mikko Horsley ‘26, is doing his senior comp on the reintroduction of brook trout into streams in northwestern Pennsylvania. Despite brook trout being the only native trout to Pennsylvania, they are not stocked by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. By stocking non native trout species to prevent Brook Trout populations from returning to the area. Within his comp, Mikko aims to identify streams that would be best for brook trout and create a comprehensive plan to reintroduce them to those streams.

Another senior, Iris Styers ‘26, is doing her comp on food literacy among students on campus. By conducting surveys on students about educational components that would come from childhood, she is attempting to understand what causes food literacy in college students. Her comp will conclude with a proposal to Parkhurst to allow students in alternative housing with full kitchens to explore other food plans that would allow them to supplement Allegheny meals with their own home cooked meals. This would ideally allow them to learn to cook before graduation, preparing them further for the outside world.

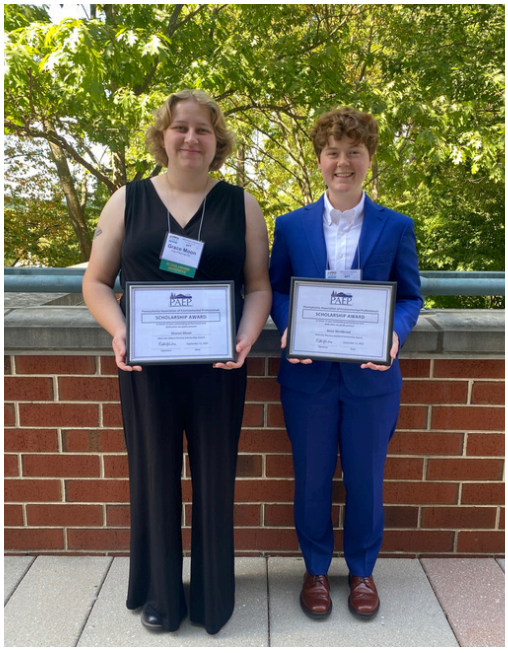
ESS Students Awarded PAEP Scholarships!

On September 10th ESS students Grace Moon '28 and Anna Westbrook '26 traveled to Penn State for the annual Pennsylvania Association of Environmental Professionals conference. In addition to networking and meeting many professionals in the field, Moon and Westbrook each accepted a scholarship of $1,500.

Moon was awarded the Gifford Pinchot scholarship for freshmen and sophomores, an award named after the man generally regarded as the "father" of American forest conservation. In her application Moon said she "hopes to find a career that allows her to balance both conservation and education" "she is looking into pursuing a career as an Interpretive Park Ranger with the National Park Service".

Westbrook was awarded the Maurice Goddard scholarship for juniors and seniors, an award named after the man considered to be the "Patriarch of Pennsylvania State Parks". In their application, Westbrook said they "plan to dedicate their career to public service and is especially interested in supporting environmental legal efforts."

Moon and Westbrook received funding from URSCA and the Environmental Science Department to attend the PAEP conference to receive their scholarships in person. Scholarship applications typically open in March of each year. Any student majoring in ESS or related fields is eligible to apply.



Westbrook and Moon accept their scholarships

Upcoming Events!

10/19 - Highway Cleanup *with the Green Coalition - 9:30-11:30am - email GreenCo to sign up*

10/26 - Trick or Trashion - *6pm in the CC Lobby with the Green Coalition*

11/2 - Cleveland Cavaliers College Sustainability Night *with the ESS Department - departing at 1pm*

11/7 - First Friday Sustainability Series - *1-4pm in Tippie B010*

11/19 - Phipps Virtual Nature Talk: The Little Brown Bird Film Screening and Discussion with the Filmmaker - *7pm in Quigley Auditorium with the Office of Sustainability*

11/22 - Gear Repair & Clothes Mending Workshop *with Green Coalition and Outing Club - details TBD*

12/5 - First Friday Sustainability Series - Natural Crafts and Gift Workshop - *1-4pm in Tippie B010*

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Interested in writing for the ESS Newsletter? Have news you think needs covered?

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