Congratulations Graduates!

The Spring issue is dedicated to celebrating our outstanding students, staff, and faculty. I hope you enjoy reading about our department’s many accomplishments as well as the many examples of excellence and classroom engagement.

We would like to recognize those graduating this academic year, which includes 19 undergraduates, 20 M.S. recipients and 2 Ph.D. recipients. Students, my warmest regards to each and every one of you; please stay in touch to let us know about the great things you are doing.

Tracy Sterling, Professor & Department Head

“Education is not the learning of facts, but training the mind to think.”
- Albert Einstein

MSU Excellence in Service Award

Anne Loi, Dorie Seymour, and Jessie Shepherd were recognized during the 30th Annual Celebrating Excellence in Service and Employee of the Year awards in a ceremony held on April 11, 2019 for the Competence, Team, and Courtesy/Reliability categories, respectively. They were each recognized with a certificate of nomination and a gift card.

Anne Loi has worked for MSU the past 23 years, currently serving as a Network/Computer Systems Administrator for the department and Spatial Sciences Center. Anne works behind the scenes to keep things running smoothly. She has developed a strong reputation as a no-nonsense, get-it-done technical support person, and her competence is second to none. Anne was nominated by Dr. Scott Powell for her hard work and unselfish dedication to the research and teaching enterprises that she unfailingly supports.
MSU Excellence in Service Award  
Continued ...

Dorie Seymour joined Team LRES last year and has served at MSU for over 10 years. She was nominated by Lisa Hespen for her outstanding work as part of the Staff Senate Team. Senators are elected or appointed classified employees who work together to create a positive environment at Montana State University for its staff, students, and guests. They serve as representatives to over 1,200 classified employees when speaking to campus, the community, the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE), and the Board of Regents (BOR).

Jessie Sheperd was nominated by Dr. Tracy Sterling for her reliable and courteous approach to accommodating the dozens of individuals that visit the front desk each day. Her personality is the perfect balance of thoughtfulness, adventurous, engaging and adaptable. She can multi-task, take initiative, is creative and an essential part of our office dynamics. In addition to her administrative duties, Jessie engages in the MSU community as a graduate student and with Extension and outreach events. It is awesome to have someone at the front desk who is simultaneously courteous at their job and actively contributing to the broader land-grant university mission.

Congratulations to our nominees!

LRES Outstanding Senior Award

Every year the department recognizes an outstanding senior and the department’s criteria for these awards are steep. Students must have strong scholarly standing, demonstrated interest in any aspect of environmental sciences, involvement and commitment in the classroom, leadership, participation and/or membership in scholarly and community groups and potential to contribute to environmental sciences in the future.

Zane Ashford is this academic year’s award winner. She graduated in December 2018 in Land Resources & Environmental Sciences in the Geospatial and Environmental Analysis Option with a 3.88 GPA and Highest Honors. She also minored in English writing.

Her awards include a Clark Foundation Scholarship and Montana Institute on Ecosystems Grant to fund her research about the effect of invasive species on soil processes in the Bitterroot Valley. It was clear that Zane has all the characteristics of an outstanding scientist—she is a careful thinker, thoughtful, and meticulous. She is the student who inspires faculty, because of the way she delves into the material, and the pure pleasure she takes in learning.

Zane’s innate capacity, brimming enthusiasm, and quiet leadership skills set high expectations for herself, and also inspired other students to do the same. In addition to being an excellent student and taking the initiative to conduct research, Zane worked as an MSU Writing Center tutor for two years. In that position, she worked one-on-one with student writers and participated in ongoing tutor education and research, along with facilitating writing groups, leading classroom workshops on writing, and mentoring incoming tutors. According to Michelle Miley, Director of the MSU Writing Center, “Very quickly, Zane became one of the leaders in our Center. As a STEM major and writing minor, Zane brought to the Writing Center an understanding of multidisciplinary ways of thinking. Her thoughtfulness and insight provided necessary ways of thinking as we develop course partnerships, particularly with STEM fields, and her openness to learning meant that we can rely on her when we tried out new models.” She is now working as a Big Sky Watershed Americorp team with the Greater Gallatin Watershed Council where she is coordinating in-stream restoration projects, creating a watershed restoration database, and managing science communications. Congratulations Zane!

Nominated by: Cathy Zabinski, Stephanie Ewing, and Rick Lawrence

Zane Ashford
The North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture (NACTA) Teaching Award of Merit recognizes those individuals whose efforts represent the very best in agricultural higher education and inspire all of us to achieve the highest levels of excellence. The department recognized the following awardees, chosen by the College of Agriculture, at our LRES Graduation Celebration on May 4th.

**College of Agriculture Faculty NACTA Teaching Award of Merit**

Dr. Scott Powell, Assistant Professor of Environmental Spatial Sciences is the winner of the COA Faculty NACTA Teaching Award of Merit. He is an award-winning faculty member in LRES and has been conducting extramurally funded forestry and spatial science research since 2000: in 2015, Scott won the MSU Excellence in Online Teaching Award and then, in 2018, the MSU Discovery Award (with 2 co-instructors) for a Great Expeditions course which brought juniors to Bonn, Germany as official UN Framework Convention on Climate Change observers and concluded with a review of climate change impacts in Iceland. Scott has also been instrumental in launching and co-teaching another highly-regarded summer field course that introduces incoming freshmen to real-world examples of the impacts of a changing climate, from shifting forest communities, to receding glaciers, to spreading invasive species. Dr. Powell has taught our freshman-level Introduction to LRES for several fall semesters, and three graduate courses - online Remote Sensing in Environmental Sciences, online Landscape and Ecosystem Ecology, and a face-to-face course on Drone Technology. His approachability, infectious enthusiasm, and drive to get students to weigh contrasting bits of evidence are highly valued by students. Common evaluations include: “This is one of the best courses I have had the opportunity to take... Dr Powell is also one of the best, most involved professors I have seen. He really cares about the students and was always available for assistance”. If that’s not enough, Dr. Powell coordinates our online MS in LRES (~70 students), serving as primary advisor for these place-bound students. While his impactful teaching skills are enough to make anyone wish they could go back to school, perhaps Dr. Powell’s most enduring contribution as a teacher may lie in his individualized writing guidance he provides each of his graduate students as they finalize their theses and professional papers. Congratulations Scott!

*Nominated by: Tony Hartshorn, Bob Peterson, and Tracy Sterling*
**Pure Gold**

*Kathrin Olson* was one of this year’s PURE GOLD award recipients in addition to being nominated for an Excellence in Service award. Kathrin was nominated by Dr. Clain Jones. A colleague notes that “Katherin is a good writer with an attention to detail that reminds me of the attitudes of my border collies: everything has a purpose and place. Like sheep who are crazy enough to think they can be independent, each period, comma and citation eventually succumbs to her will and proper order”. Her attention to detail, good humor, and breadth of scientific knowledge improves every Extension article that she authors or co-authors. She has inspired many with her thoroughness and passion to increase the sustainability of Montana agriculture.

**Promotion and Tenure**

Congratulations to *Lisa Rew* for earning promotion to Professor. Congratulations to *Rob Payn* for earning tenure and promotion to Associate Professor. Their achievements were recognized at President Cruzado’s Celebratory Dinner receiving a plaque and President Cruzado’s gold pin on May 1st. Additionally, *Amy Trowbridge* earned retention. Faculty got together to celebrate these milestones at Colombo’s on May 1st. Please take a moment to congratulate our accomplished faculty!

**LRES Recognition**

LRES and COA are sponsoring *Fabian Menalled* to participate in LEAD 21 during FY20, a leadership and professional development training program for faculty and professionals within the land-grant system. The primary purpose of LEAD21 is to develop leaders in land grant institutions and their strategic partners who link research, academics, and extension in order to lead more effectively in an increasingly complex environment, either in their current position or as they aspire to other positions. Learn more at:  [http://lead-21.org/](http://lead-21.org/)

*Richard Engel* was selected as the 2018 Soil Science Society of America Journal - Outstanding Associate Editor.

*Bruce Maxwell* was honored by the Weed Science Society of America with the 2019 Outstanding Researcher Award.

*Miles “Antman” Maxcer*, won first place with a cash prize of $15,000 in the final round of the John Ruffatto Business Startup Challenge. The Ant Network has worked with both NASA and the Smithsonian Institution to promote science and technology through content centered around nature, specifically ants.

*Jeff Pashnick*, LRES Weed Ecology Instructor, received the NACTA Graduate Student Teaching Award for the Department of Plant Sciences.
LRES Recognition
Continued ...

Bob Peterson
as incoming
President for
the Entomo-
logical Society of
America.

Gabe Bromley
participated in
an Advanced
Study Institute
on Field Studies
of Convection in
Argentina working
closely with a
hydrometeorology
group learning about convective
processes, upscale mesoscale
convective system growth, and severe
weather.

Nathan Barnes and Hailey Webb
were awarded Undergraduate Scholar
Program Fellowships to work with
Dr. Scott Powell and Mary Larina,
Ph.D. candidate on the use of drones
to quantify the spatial variability
of methane emissions in boreal
ecosystems in Alaska.

Cathy Zabinski
won the Anna K.
Fridley Phi Kappa
Phi Honor Society
Distinguished
Teaching Award.

Instructor Nicholas Fox,
served as a member on
the Center for Faculty
Excellence for attending
various workshops
offered at MSU. This
included participating
in the faculty learning
community, Advanced
Teaching Online Program (TOP).

Luke McKay (left) and Bill
Inskeep (right) featured in
Nature Microbiology for unique
organism found in Yellowstone
hot springs.

M.S. candidate,
Jordan Meyer-Morey
was awarded an
LRES Travel Grant
to attend Western
Society of Weed
Science conference
this March in Denver, CO.

Stephanie Ewing
named Co-PI on
$20 million NSF
EPSCoR CREWS
award to MSU/UM.

M.S. candidate, Shealyn
Malone was awarded
a Graduate School
Travel Grant to attend
the Plant-Herbivore
Interaction Gordon
Research conference this
February in Ventura, CA.

SALSA scientists lowered a gravity core
to the bottom of the Mercer Subglacial
Lake in Antarctica.

We'd love to hear from you!
To share your research and/or
professional accomplishments in an
upcoming newsletter, please contact:

Tracy Sterling, Department Head,
tracy.sterling@montana.edu

Jessie Sheperd, Administrative
Associate, lresfrontdesk@montana.edu

Spring 2019 LRES Newsletter 5
Sabbatical Highlights
Stephanie Ewing, Associate Professor of Soil Biogeochemistry

Appreciating 800,000 years of relict permafrost and Beringian fossils in western Yukon.

You can read about it, but it won’t compare to being there.

Dr. Stephanie Ewing spent Fall 2018 on sabbatical leave at the University of Alberta (UA), Edmonton, working with Dr. Duane Froese on using Uranium series age modeling and solute analysis in permafrost and surface waters adjacent to mining sites in the Klondike mining district near Dawson, Yukon Territory. Ahead of her leave, she travelled to the Klondike area with the Froese team and collected samples for the project, in addition to drawing upon the UA collection. As a result she was able to witness first hand the cascade of Beringian fossils that emerge when these deposits are hydraulically mined. During the fall term, she worked in the clean labs of Dr. Rob Creaser, as well as the various labs of the Froese research group, to prepare and purify permafrost and related samples. She will present results of her work during the fall seminar series in LRES.

Environmental Analytical Lab (EAL) Update

The EAL is located on the 8th floor of Leon Johnson Hall, in the Department of Land Resources and Environmental Sciences (LRES) at MSU. We house instrumentation for complete elemental analysis of water and soil samples, enabling research programs across the MSU campus and the Montana University System as a whole. Our goal is to provide analytical precision and accuracy in support of environmental research and education.

Current instrumentation, analytical capabilities, pricing, and detection limits can be seen on our newly-updated website: www.montana.edu/eal-lres. New instruments in the lab include a CEM microwave digester for processing of plant, soil and mineral samples prior to analysis on our newly installed Spectro Blue ICP-OES, and a new LGR water isotope analyzer. We recently finalized the purchase of an Aqualog fluorometer for DOC characterization (installation expected in early June).

The EAL will send emails a few times a year for periodic updates, EAL events, and arrival/installation of new instruments or methods. If you’d like be included on this email, or to schedule a tour of the EAL or a short presentation about EAL capabilities, please email us at lres.eal@gmail.com or call 994-5703.

Christine Gobrogge, EAL Chemist and Lab Manager
Montana State University’s Ecosystem Ecology and Biogeochemistry Lab, headed by Dr. Jack Brookshire, has been awarded a $15,000 grant from MJ Murdock Charitable Trust’s Partners in Science program. The Partners in Science grant will provide funding for a local high school science teacher from The Bozeman Field School for two summers of scientific research and mentorship with the Brookshire lab group, with a focus on bringing the knowledge gained over the course of the program back into the teacher’s classroom.

The grant was awarded to Tory Dille, a local educator and curriculum coordinator with The Bozeman Field School in Bozeman, Montana. Originally from Missouri, Tory obtained her B.A. in Anthropology and Environmental Studies from Washington University in St. Louis in 2013. Since, Tory has coupled her summers working in the field and outdoor classrooms for organizations in both Colorado and Montana and currently holds a faculty position at the Bozeman Field School. In addition to working as an educator, Tory is the outreach manager for the Montana Wilderness School, a local outdoor education non-profit. She holds advanced certifications in wilderness medicine and is currently pursuing an M.S. in Science Education through Montana State University (expected graduation July 2019).

Over the course of Tory’s two summers with the Brookshire lab group, Tory will conduct her own research project as well as assist with on-going projects in the lab. The Brookshire lab conducts much of its work in the Missouri River Breaks region of central Montana. Here, the lab has established a long-term ecological monitoring site to examine the ecology and biogeochemistry of the mixed-grass prairie ecosystem of the Northern Great Plains. This region constitutes one of the world’s last remaining intact grasslands but is highly vulnerable to land use and climate change. Disentangling the effects of long-term fire suppression, historical grazing, and climate change on vegetation and plant-soil biogeochemical cycles is crucial to evidence-based management of these ecosystems.

The Brookshire lab is excited to partner with Tory and the Bozeman Field School to support local educators and student learning through engagement in the scientific research process and incorporating hands-on understanding of ecosystems into K-12 education through a mentored experience. You can follow Tory’s progress and the Brookshire lab group @thefulgur_ite on twitter. For more information on the Partners in Science program or how to apply for grants, go to murdocktrust.org.

Justin Gay & Dr. Jack Brookshire

Universidad de Veracruzana-Tuxpan!

In early February, 10 agriculture students and a professor from Tuxpan, Veracruz, Mexico visited MSU to observe classes, visit laboratories and meet with faculty, staff, and students to learn about what MSU has to offer. LRES was happy to host a lunch to welcome the students on campus and discuss graduate school opportunities.
In early April, I attended a conference in Denver, CO that was hosted by the Online Learning Consortium. The goal of this annual conference is to help educators in higher education advance quality online teaching and learning experiences for their students. As a new program manager for LRES’s online master’s program, this conference gave me the opportunity to be immersed in the world of online teaching, and to learn about the types of remote support services that are available for online students. It was apparent to me that Montana State University is still in the early stages of developing and supporting online programs, but that these distance-learning programs are becoming more popular as people realize how much they can change lives.

I attended workshops that discussed the importance of providing quality support services for online students. Although the LRES online master’s program provides many essential supports to students, I learned that there are areas where these support services could be improved, including virtual orientation for new students, math/statistics support, career counseling/job fair services/internship resources, online tutoring, and providing students with opportunities to view and participate in departmental seminars virtually. Throughout the conference, there was constant discussion about the unique needs of distance learners, and the best ways to accommodate them. Online learning is especially beneficial for students who are place-bound because of family and/or career obligations, and it allows them to further their education without forcing them to make a choice between family/job and continuing their education. I’m glad to be part of a program that provides high-quality instruction and new opportunities for nontraditional students, and I hope to help it grow in the future!

Marni Rolston
LRES Online Master’s Program Manager

Fourth Annual LRES Ski Social

Our fourth annual LRES Ski Social was held at Crosscut Mountain Sports Center on Monday, January 21st. The event was well attended with nearly 30 faculty, staff, and students. The morning was spent cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and playing games followed by a delicious lunch catered Cravin’s at the cozy Warming Hut - thank goodness for the wood stove! Snow conditions were fantastic and overall it was a great day. We are so fortunate to have this beautiful facility here in Bozeman and hopefully we can continue coming back for this annual event!

Community Chair, Rick Engel
On April 17, 2019, the LRES Graduate Student Organization (GSO) hosted a successful 9th Annual LRES Research Colloquium. This is a key LRES function that provides students, staff, and faculty members a chance to listen to the diversity of research being conducted within the department.

The event offered 28 students the opportunity to present their research (16 posters and 12 oral presentations) and socialize with food and drinks in a professional meeting atmosphere. Presentation topics ranged from Antarctica to the Arctic and from microbes to mammals. The colloquium kicked off with a few words from Associate Dean Tracy Dougher from the College of Agriculture to begin the poster session, followed by a prologue to the oral presentations by Dr. Tracy Sterling, head of the LRES department, and finished with an insightful keynote talk about Adventure Scientists by their Director of Program Investments, Marcus Pearson. Marcus entertained those gathered with examples of Adventure Scientists work around Montana and the globe, and a magical analogy between Harry Potter and gene transfer.

The raffle provided attendees the chance to win great door prizes provided by local businesses and add a fun element to the afternoon. In addition to the raffle, prizes were awarded in accordance with the poster and oral competition. Poster judges were Drs. Clain Jones, Perry Miller, Paul Stoy, and David Weaver from the LRES department and Dr. Katey Plymesser, P.E., from the Civil Engineering department. Oral judges were Dr. Mark Greenwood from the Mathematical Sciences department, Dr. Katey Plymesser, P.E., from the Civil Engineering department, and Rachel Schmidt from KC Harvey, a local environmental consulting firm. Many thanks to these judges who kindly volunteered their valuable time to enrich the LRES Colloquium experience.

Both the poster and oral competitions were highly competitive; Rekha Bhandari (pictured below on left) won the first place prize for oral presentations and Gabe Bromley and Carrie Harris tied for second place! Carrie Harris (pictured below in middle) also won first place for graduate posters and Shealyn Malone (pictured below on right) won second place for graduate posters. First place for undergraduate posters was awarded to Kevin Goodan and second place went to Daniel Banker. Congratulations to those winners and thanks to all oral and poster presenters! All presenters did a wonderful job!

Following up on last year’s success, a travel grant for online LRES masters students was awarded with funding from the LRES department and the Graduate School. Hannah Thatcher, advised by Dr. Scott Powell, was awarded this grant and travelled from Billings to share her research on, “The Impacts of Road Construction on Bull Trout Populations in Western Montana Rivers”. Congratulations to Hannah for her hard work and thanks for taking the time to travel to Bozeman.

The LRES department, MSU Graduate School, ASMSU, Office of Student Engagement, KC Harvey Environmental, Heebs Fresh Market, and the Bozeman Co-Op are very much appreciated for generously funding this great event. Many thanks to the GSO planning committee and their faculty advisor, Dr. Jane Mangold for their work to make the 9th Annual LRES Research Colloquium a success!

GSO Leadership:

*Jordan Meyer-Morey, Paul Hegedus, R. Sasha Loewen, Hannah Duff, Gabriel Bromley, and Kelsey Smith*
Hannah Thatcher is a Geologist working for the Montana Department of Transportation Billings Materials Laboratory. She will graduate with her Masters in Land Resources and Environmental Sciences this Spring and hopes to transition this degree into a more environmentally based field.

“Thank you so much for the opportunity to present at the recent LRES Research Colloquium. I was honored to have been selected as the recipient of the travel grant. All the presentations and posters were very interesting, well organized, and well researched. The LRES department felt like a tight knit group with a wide range of knowledge and research interests that I’m proud to be a part of. Having only presented in small corporate and government settings, this was a great change for me to present my paper in an academic venue. As I complete my time at MSU, I am extremely thankful for such an experience and it was great to be able to meet everyone. Thank you again for your generosity.”

Hannah A. Thatcher, 
Online M.S. student visiting from Billings, MT

Happy Spring from the LRES Undergraduate Club!

The LRES Club has had a wonderful year of growth and experiences. We have collaborated many activities and opportunities for the undergraduates of the LRES department to establish faculty connections and learn more about the department and resources available to students, including welcoming several guest speakers to our meetings. This spring, we hosted another successful research mixer for the faculty and students, providing a platform for undergraduates to learn about valuable work and research opportunities available to them. The number of professors and faculty almost outnumbered the number of students this year. There were many great opportunities presented and it seemed like every student that attended had at least one promising conversation!

We also had the chance to be adventurous- taking a hiking trip up to Lava Lake, while keeping an eye on the beautiful natural resources and formations. Gearing up for finals, we hosted a “De-Stress with LRES” pizza party at Bogert Park. Students had fun playing Badminton and frisbee, it was a great way to welcome in the spring weather!

As we look ahead to next year, we are excited to collaborate with LRES Graduate Student Organization and continue to grow as a club, finding new opportunities and continuing to contribute to our fellow students and department. If you would like to get involved, please email us at lresclubMSU@gmail.com.

LRES Undergraduate Club Leadership: 
Toby Leppicello, Elizabeth Rieger, and Abby Northrup

Top & Left: LRES Undergraduate Club members Toby, Megan, Katya, Elizabeth, Kathleen, and Leah attend a hiking social at Lava Lake. The event included a great lunch with even better company!
Opportunities to Support LRES

A gift to the department is a great way to support student and faculty endeavors. Donations can be earmarked for student scholarships or internships, graduate fellowships, undergraduate and graduate student programs, endowed professorships, and more. For information about making a donation to the Department, please contact Kevin Peterson, MSU Alumni Foundation, College of Agriculture, Director of Development (406-994-7089) or kevin.peterson@msuaf.org.

Bachelor’s Degrees

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Graduate Degrees

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LRES Degrees Awarded: Spring 2019

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Meghan Tomczyk

Environmental Sciences - Environmental Biology
Damion Lynn
Edison Meece, with Highest Honors
Nicolette Standley

Environmental Sciences - Soil & Water Science
Elfrida Isaksen Swensen, with Honors
Brody Wallace

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