

Opportunity Title: USDA-FS Distribution of Endemic Tree Species in Hurricane Affected Caribbean Forests

Opportunity Reference Code: USDA-FS-IITF-2025-0094A

Organization U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)

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How to Apply *To submit your application, scroll to the bottom of this opportunity and click **APPLY**.*

A complete application consists of:

- An application
- Transcript(s) – For this opportunity, an unofficial transcript or copy of the student academic records printed by the applicant or by academic advisors from internal institution systems may be submitted. Click [here](#) for detailed information about acceptable transcripts.
- A current resume/CV, including academic history, employment history, relevant experiences, and publication list
- Two educational or professional recommendations. At least one recommendation must be submitted in order for the mentor to view your application.

All documents must be in English or include an official English translation.

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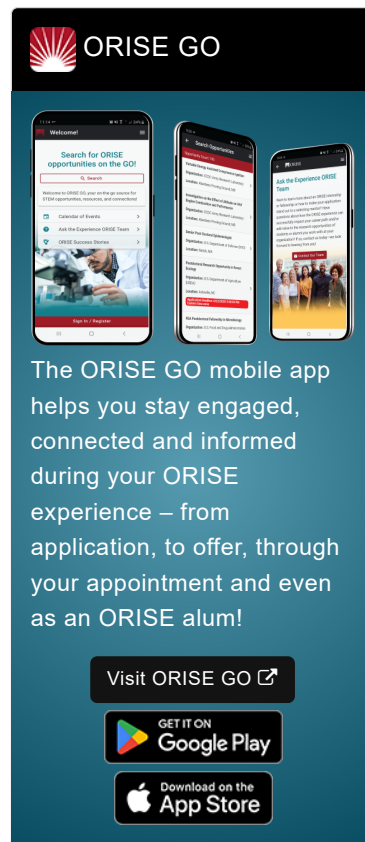
Application Deadline 10/24/2025 3:00:00 PM Eastern Time Zone

Description ***Applications will be reviewed on a rolling-basis.**

USDA Forest Service Office/Lab and Location: A fellowship opportunity is available with the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service (USFS) within the International Institute of Tropical Forestry (IITF), located in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

At the heart of the USDA Forest Service's mission is their purpose. Everything they do is intended to help sustain forests and grasslands for present and future generations. Why? Because their stewardship work supports nature in sustaining life. This is the purpose that drives the agency's mission and motivates their work across the agency. It's been there from the agency's very beginning, and it still drives them. To advance the mission and serve their purpose, the USDA Forest Service balances the short and long-term needs of people and nature by: working in collaboration with communities and our partners; providing access to resources and experiences that promote economic, ecological, and social vitality; connecting people to the land and one another; and delivering world-class science, technology and land management.

The intention is to help sustain forests and grasslands for present and future generations, as stewardship work supports nature in sustaining life. The IITF is headquartered in Río Piedras, Puerto Rico, and its mission is to develop and disseminate scientifically based knowledge that contributes to the conservation of forests, wildlife, and watersheds of the American tropics



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in the context of environmental change.

Research Project: The project fellow will assist in a project that addresses gaps in knowledge of the location and distribution of endemic Caribbean tree species. Using geographic information system methods and tools, research analyses aim to generate regional population size estimates, incorporate land cover and vegetation change maps, geological/environmental variables, and data on endemic tree species to identify locations of high abundance of endemic tree species across the three main archipelagos of the Caribbean (Lucayan, Greater and Lesser Antilles).

The project approaches include integration of spatially explicit environmental variables including climate, hurricane disturbance, geology and land-use, among other global and Caribbean regional drivers with species distribution models. The project fellow would conduct research and analyses on Caribbean endemic tree species. The project will use data from permanent forest plots and other sources, focusing on the various Caribbean forest types in the Lucayan, Greater and Lesser Antilles archipelagos. Development of analyses and maps identifying areas with high concentration of endemic species, quantifying land cover and endemic species richness, and other analyses describing forest composition, endemic tree species identified for agroforestry, wood resources, and non-timber uses (fruits, fibers, etc.), are a goal of this research project. Further project goals are to broadly map endemic species based on land cover to support conservation assessments and management actions in the Caribbean region. The project will address the need to assess the distributions and potential conservation status of tree species as important elements of biodiversity, cultural heritage, and other ecosystem services.

Learning Objectives: The research fellow will have the opportunity to participate in processes for documenting, organizing, and integrating botanical, geological, climatic, and other environmental data sets. The project will also provide opportunities to learn about forest ecology, forest types, land cover change, species distributions, species ecosystem services, and hurricane disturbance dynamics in Caribbean forests. The fellow will have the opportunity to present analyses and quantitative map outputs in workshops, seminars, reports, and peer-reviewed publications developed and co-authored with mentors and collaborators. The fellow will have ample opportunities to share communications of outputs in various platforms that are expected to serve to inform knowledge of local and regional plant taxonomy, and species distributions for Caribbean tree species.

Mentor: The mentors for this opportunity is Tamara Heartsill-Scalley (tamara.heartsill-scalley@usda.gov) and Eileen H. Helmer (eileen.helmer@usda.gov). If you have questions about the nature of the research, please contact the mentors.

Anticipated Appointment Start Date: January 2026. Start date is flexible and will depend on a variety of factors.

Appointment Length: The appointment will initially be for six months if full time but may be extended upon recommendation of USDA Forest Service and is contingent on the availability of funds.

Level of Participation: The appointment is part time or full time.

Participant Stipend: The participant will receive a monthly stipend commensurate with educational level and experience. **Current monthly stipend for this six-month opportunity is**

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\$6,000 for a postdoctoral scientist, based on full-time participation. Health, medical and dental, insurance reimbursement up to \$547 per month.

Citizenship Requirements: This opportunity is available to U.S. citizens only.

ORISE Information: This program, administered by ORAU through its contract with the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) to manage the Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education (ORISE), was established through an interagency agreement between DOE and USDA Forest Service. Participants do not become employees of USDA, USDA Forest Service, DOE or the program administrator, and there are no employment-related benefits. Proof of health insurance is required for participation in this program. Health insurance can be obtained through ORISE.

Questions: Please visit our [Program Website](#). After reading, if you have additional questions about the application process please email ORISE-USFS.WO@ornl.gov and include the reference code for this opportunity.

Qualifications The qualified candidate should be currently pursuing or have received a master's or doctoral degree in the one of the relevant fields (e.g., Ecology, Geography, Biology or Forestry or other related field). Degree must have been received within the past five years, or be currently pursuing and anticipated to be received by 10/15/2025.

Preferred skills:

- Experience using geospatial land cover, geological or environmental data for landscape-scale research.
- Analytical skills and demonstrated experience with statistical programming with programs such as R.
- Experience using geographic information system platforms, methods and tools for mapping and analyses.
- Experience with Species Distribution Modelling.
- Enthusiastic about developing novel research ideas, questions, and approaches.
- Ability to communicate in an effective manner with research team members.
- Capacity to perform independently.
- Strong writing skills and demonstrated experience lead-authoring peer-reviewed publications.

Stipend \$6,000.00 Monthly

Point of Contact [Justina](#)

- Eligibility Requirements**
- **Citizenship:** U.S. Citizen Only
 - **Degree:** Master's Degree or Doctoral Degree received within the last 60 months or currently pursuing.
 - **Discipline(s):**
 - **Computer, Information, and Data Sciences** ([2](#)👁)
 - **Earth and Geosciences** ([1](#)👁)
 - **Environmental and Marine Sciences** ([1](#)👁)

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- **Life Health and Medical Sciences** ([6](#) )
- **Veteran Status:** Veterans Preference, degree received within the last
120 month(s).