

Opportunity Title: USDA-FS Berry Phenology for Subsistence Use in Alaska

Opportunity Reference Code: USDA-FS-PNWRS-2026-0155

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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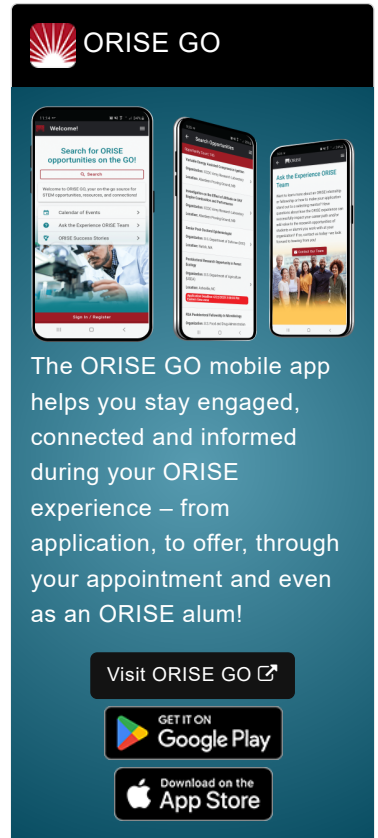
Application Deadline 6/5/2026 3:00:00 PM Eastern Time Zone

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 (FS) within the Pacific Northwest Research Station (PNWRS) located in Juneau, Alaska.


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.


Research Project: Harvesting non-timber forest products for subsistence and cultural uses is an important activity in Southeast and Southcentral Alaska. The most harvested understory plants in the region's temperate rainforests are blueberry (*Vaccinium ovalifolium*, *V. alaskaense*) and salmonberry (*Rubus spectabilis*). Sitka blacktailed deer also rely on these


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species for forage and serve as a significant source of protein for Alaskan communities. Shifts in environmental conditions and increasingly variable weather patterns are anticipated to drive shifts in the phenology of blueberries and salmonberries that may alter plant production and/or require harvesters to make difficult decisions regarding when to prioritize harvest. This research project uses repeat photographs, forest structure, and environmental data to monitor the timing and drivers of blueberry and salmonberry leaf burst, flowering, and fruiting through the growing season and to forecast how the timing of phenological stages may shift in the future. The fellow will have the opportunity to participate in these aspects of the research project. This project will improve management of understory vegetation for subsistence and cultural use, and improve understanding of how site and stand structure factors determine understory vegetation production and response to silviculture treatment.

Learning Objectives: Under the guidance of a mentor, the participant will have the opportunity to learn how to:

- Understand the cultural and subsistence importance of harvesting non-timber forest products in Southeast and Southcentral Alaska.
- Identify key understory species in temperate rainforests, particularly blueberry (*Vaccinium ovalifolium*, *V. alaskaense*) and salmonberry (*Rubus spectabilis*).
- Recognize the ecological role of these species as forage for Sitka black-tailed deer and their connection to community food systems.
- Explain how shifts in environmental conditions and weather variability influence plant phenology (leaf burst, flowering, and fruiting).
- Analyze how changes in phenology may affect plant productivity and subsistence harvest timing decisions.
- Methods used to monitor phenology, including repeat photography, forest structure measurements, and environmental data collection.
- Apply knowledge of phenological forecasting to improve management of understory vegetation for subsistence and cultural uses.

Mentor: The mentor for this opportunity is Kellen Nelson (kellen.nelson@usda.gov). If you have questions about the nature of the research, please contact the mentor.

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

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

Level of Participation: The appointment is full time.

Participant Stipend: The participant will receive a monthly stipend commensurate with educational level and experience. **The anticipated stipend range is \$3,200 - \$3,500 monthly.**

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

ORISE Information: This program, administered by ORAU through its

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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.PNWRS@orau.org and include the reference code for this opportunity.

Qualifications The qualified candidate should be currently pursuing a bachelor's degree in the one of the relevant fields.

Preferred skills:

- Knowledge of environmental or biological sciences.
- Knowledge of Alaska including its ecosystems and plants is preferred.

Stipend \$3,200.00 – \$3,500.00 Monthly

Point of Contact [Michele](#)

Eligibility • **Citizenship:** U.S. Citizen Only

Requirements • **Degree:** Currently pursuing a Bachelor's Degree.

• **Discipline(s):**

- **Environmental and Marine Sciences** ([9](#))
- **Life Health and Medical Sciences** ([7](#))