

Photo by: Carolyn Holowczak, PWS



# SWSPCP

## ◆◆◆ Winter Newsletter ◆◆◆

### FROM THE PRESIDENT

#### Building Bridges for Wetland Conservation: Lessons from Recent Months

Over the past few months, I have had the privilege of sharing a message that first emerged during COP15 of the Ramsar Convention in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe a message that continues to resonate strongly within our wetland science community. This reflection was developed into a manuscript titled “Legitimizing, Invisibilizing, and Millennializing: Three Things Conservationists Must Avoid,”

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now published and freely available in its Spanish version.

The manuscript was born from honest conversations about how, despite good intentions, some conservation practices can unintentionally weaken the very ecosystems we seek to protect. Its core message is simple but challenging: *wetland conservation must be not only more efficient, but also more self-aware.*



When we hide our errors, oversell our successes, or silence critical voices, we create blind spots that ultimately harm wetlands rather than protect them. These ecosystems are fragile, and time is not on our side our actions must be faster, smarter, and grounded in transparency.

In sharing this message across scientific events and with NGOs in Peru, I have witnessed meaningful engagement from students, researchers, and practitioners. These discussions reinforced an essential truth: humility is not a weakness in conservation, but one of its greatest strengths. Recognizing our limitations opens the door to innovation, collaboration, and more effective decision-making. Wetlands deserve nothing less than informed action guided by honesty.

Alongside this work, I have also been advancing an exciting new initiative: the development of a formal partnership between Universidad Científica del Sur (Peru) and the Society of Wetland Scientists Professional Certification Program (SWSPCP).

This collaboration aims to promote professional certification among Peruvian scientists and students, helping them gain international recognition while strengthening their technical and ethical foundations.

The response from the university community has been overwhelmingly positive. We already have a draft agreement and are optimistic that it will be signed soon.



These recent months have been a powerful reminder that conservation is as much about people as it is about ecosystems. It is built on trust, shared knowledge, and meaningful collaboration. As we move into this winter season of reflection and planning, let us commit to working with greater efficiency, deeper humility, and genuine transparency. Let us avoid legitimizing flawed practices and invisibilizing critical perspectives. Wetlands are vital for life on Earth and they deserve our honesty, our urgency, and our sustained commitment.

- Héctor Aponte, *PWS*  
*President*



## Ramsar Convention on Wetlands COP15, Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe



Back in July, 172 countries, that are signatories to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, met in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe to further wetland global conservation and restoration.

SWSPCP has been working for several years to raise the profile of the program internationally and we're very pleased to announce that on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> July the Convention on Wetlands approved SWSPCP as an official Observer organization to the convention. This is an important step to gaining wider recognition of the certification of wetland professionals and allows us to meaningfully engage with the 172 countries of the convention. It also means SWSPCP can officially take part in the work of the Convention's Scientific and Technical Review Panel and support Ramsar Advisory Missions to specific wetlands in trouble. This will provide global opportunities for certified Professional Wetland Scientists to contribute their knowledge and skills.

We were represented at COP15 by past and current leadership from the program including Matt Simpson and Rob McInnes from the UK, Gillian Davies, Nancy Lin and Ellen Hartig from the US and Hector Aponte from Peru. We were also joined by [Adrianna Borczyk](#) from the business office who helped run our exhibit booth which proved very popular. We also managed to have a lot of meetings with government and non-profit organization representatives about further recognition of the program around the world. Overall, it was a great success for SWSPCP and provides an important platform to build upon.



As for the COP15 more generally, discussions went the way of many intergovernmental conventions where geopolitics seemed to override the goal of wetland conservation despite warnings from the [Global Wetland Outlook 2025](#) that wetland loss and degradation continues and many of the world's remaining wetlands are being destroyed.

For example Russia, upset with support for Ukrainian resolutions that highlight the wetland destruction resulting from Russia's invasion, only appeared at COP15 to announce they are withdrawing from the Convention and the United States, along with 38 other countries, didn't even send a delegation until a representative arrived at the last minute to announce that they didn't want mention in any resolution of: climate change; diversity, equity and inclusion; gender; the United Nations' sustainable development goals; or requests for financing in excess of a 0% nominal growth budget.

Despite this and negotiations going down to the wire in late night sessions, a key resolution agreed was the new strategic plan for the Convention which can be viewed here: [https://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/2025-09/xv.3\\_fifth\\_strategic\\_plan\\_e.pdf](https://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/2025-09/xv.3_fifth_strategic_plan_e.pdf)

Other successes included pledges to scale up wetland restoration and countries were encouraged to consider the [Freshwater Challenge](#) to enhance national implementation of the Convention. Several adopted resolutions also focused on key wetland-dependent species, including river dolphins and waterbirds. Parties agreed to strengthen action on flyway conservation to protect migratory birds and endorsed the establishment of the Global Waterbird Estimates Partnership. Countries also agreed to stronger collaboration through the [Wetland City Accreditation](#) program.

- Matthew Simpson, PWS  
*Globalization Committee Chair*



## NEW - Wetland Professional Certification Option Coming in 2026

Have you got colleagues who are wetland educators or wetland practitioners that tell you that they'd love to get certified as a Professional Wetland Scientist (PWS) but they just don't have the physical or ecological sciences education qualifications to qualify? Well, we've been hearing this a lot and particularly as we expand the program around the world it is coming up more and more as a barrier for people to get recognised as wetland professionals.

To overcome this, we have been working with experts in the field and the board of SWSPCP to develop a parallel program to the PWS program that recognizes wetland professionals that have academic backgrounds including, but not limited to: social sciences, planning, law, economics, arts, etc., and then switched into wetland science. This new program will be as rigorous as the existing PWS program, but recognizes that many experienced wetland professionals do not have a physical science or ecological educational background.

To apply to be a Wetland Professional (WP) individuals will need the following education and experience:

- An arts or other academic background but with a minimum of 10 years work experience with wetlands; or
- A social science academic background including environmental economics, human geography, environmental law, human health, and similar courses and a minimum of 5 years work experience with wetlands.

Certification as a Wetland Professional Trainee (WPT) will be a preliminary step towards Wetland Professional certification for persons who have completed educational requirements but do not yet meet the experience or specialized wetland course work requirements.

- Matthew Simpson, *PWS*  
*Globalization Committee Chair*



## Certification Requirements NEW OPTION

### Requirements to become a WPT/WP - WP OPTION 1

- 1a. Bachelors College/University Education (WPT and WP)  
(i.e. Social Sciences / Law / Econ / Planners / etc and Qualitative Courses)
- 1b. 15 credits in Specialized Wetland Course Work (WP Only)
2. Professional References (WPT and WP)
3. 5 Years' Full Time Wetlands Work (WP Only)
4. Expertise Essay (WP Only)
5. Application Fees (WPT and WP)
6. Code of Ethics (WPT and WP)

### Requirements to become a WP - WP OPTION 2

- 1 Bachelors College/University Education  
(i.e. Art / Graphic Design, Language Courses)
2. Professional References
3. 10 Years' Full Time Wetlands\* Work
4. Expertise Essay
5. Application Fees
6. Code of Ethics

\*Engage in research that results in publication.

\*Direct a research project

\*Lead / manage or assistant lead / manage wetland projects requiring independent judgment and action

\*Teach a college course or equivalent in wetlands science

\*Work as a wetland specialist, scientist, or manager

\*Direct wetlands program (region-wide or local)

\*Conduct wetland management, restoration or enhancement projects

\*Wetland program planning

\*Conduct wetland delineation, assessment or evaluation.



## New Opportunities in Professional Wetland Certification

On November 7, SWSPCP attended the Association of Massachusetts Wetland Scientists (AMWS) 2025 Annual meeting, themed “Changes” in Sterling, Massachusetts (<https://amws.org/wp-content/uploads/Draft-Agenda-Annual-Meeting-2025.pdf>). The Annual Meeting serves as a gathering mainly for consulting and regulatory professionals to discuss regulatory updates, case studies, and other topics of interest. SWSPCP past-president, Nancy Lin, SPWS, and Outreach Chair, Sara Kreisel, PWS, led a presentation entitled, “New Opportunities in Professional Wetland Certification.” The presentation highlighted much about the inclusive and global outreach efforts of SWSPCP and identified updates and changes to Certification including: the 2024-approved international fee structure and the highly anticipated parallel types of Certification that will soon be made available and live in 2026 for applications!

In 2025, the SWSPCP Board approved parallel certification for the Wetland Professional (WP) and Wetland Professional Trainee (WPT) which will give those with careers in wetland science who started with non-science educational pathways the opportunity to earn a parallel, fully-accredited Certification. The introduction to these options was first identified in the Spring 2025 Newsletter ([wetlandcert.org/newsletters/Spring\\_2025\\_SWSPCP\\_Newsletter.pdf](https://wetlandcert.org/newsletters/Spring_2025_SWSPCP_Newsletter.pdf)) by the Globalization Committee Chair, Matt Simpson, PWS who has been working tirelessly to make this parallel certification a reality for many years.

The presentation allowed attendees to ask questions about certification and renewals, as well as information on the new proposed certifications. SWSPCP is looking forward to continuing to invite many more Wetland Professionals into the certified community in the years to come.

- Sara Kreisel, PWS  
*Outreach Committee Chair*



## STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE ON THE SWS PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION PROGRAM'S (PCP) BOARD OF DIRECTORS

“My term as the Student Rep with SWSPCP was enlightening and fulfilling. I met an amazing group of mentors and colleagues who valued my input from the student perspective and contributed their time and energy to help me push forward student goals. I found that I learned from them at every interaction, from technical knowledge to organizational skills. Serving as the Student Representative provided me opportunities for networking, conference attendance, and for my voice to be heard in creating a more inclusive program. I highly recommend working with this fantastic group!”

*Kyle Runion*

*Outgoing Student Representative in the PCP Board of Directors*

PCP is keenly interested in building the program to hear the needs and perspective of students and those soon launching into the professional world of wetlands. This individual will take the reins from our outgoing student representative.

**Apply here:**

[https://www.wetlandcert.org/student\\_board\\_rep\\_application.html](https://www.wetlandcert.org/student_board_rep_application.html)

### **Why does the PCP have a Student Representative?**

To gain insights from students on the application and certification process, and on the initiatives of the Program, the PCP Board of Directors established a position on the Board for a Student Representative (Rep), as a non-voting member.



**Who can apply?**

The applicant for Student Rep should be a graduate student and an SWS member (1 year minimum) and should have attended an SWS Annual Meeting at least once in the past 3 years (this criterion may be flexible to include virtual conferences).

**How long is the appointment?**

The Student Rep will be appointed for a 1-3-year term, depending on active, graduate student status.

**What are the responsibilities?**

Attend quarterly Board meetings; provide reports on activities and initiatives that affect students who have been or those who desire to become certified as a WPIT or PWS; represent student members of SWS from around the globe; participate in discussions relating to the role of students in the Program; and promote interactions and common activities between PCP and student groups in SWS.

**What are the perks?**

The Student Rep will be offered a stipend to cover their WPIT (Wetland Professional in Training) or PWS (Professional Wetland Scientist) application and/or annual maintenance fees during their term of service.

**The SWSPCP Student Rep must:**

1. Be an enrolled graduate student;
2. Be a SWS member for a least one year;
3. Have attended one SWS Meeting in the past 3 years (this could include a SWS Virtual Meeting); and
4. Submit information on this short form at:  
[https://www.wetlandcert.org/student\\_board\\_rep\\_application.html](https://www.wetlandcert.org/student_board_rep_application.html).

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Sound intriguing? Please contact Adrianna Borczyk, Program Administrator, for more information and share this with other students that you think would be interested.





# Welcome



**Congratulations to all of our newly Certified PWSs and our WPITs who are taking a major step towards PWS certification! Welcome to our PCP Community!**

**Please find below the list of newly certified WPIT and PWS professionals over the last three months:**

## Approved WPIT Certifications:

- Jonathan C. Austin - 8/28/25
- Joseph Salerno - 8/28/25
- Elise LeBlanc - 8/28/25
- Cooper T. Read - 8/28/25
- Jonathan S. Edwards - 8/28/25
- Christian Slone - 9/4/25
- Ryan Cruz - 9/4/25
- Caleigh M. Dahn - 9/4/25
- Ryan Cruz - 9/4/25
- Patrick S. Ferebee - 9/20/25
- Cory P. Ryder - 9/20/25
- David Brodwyn - 9/25/25
- Samantha N. Spector - 9/25/25
- Michael R. Cecil - 9/25/25
- Daniel J. Weber - 9/25/25
- Heather M. Otto - 9/25/25
- Sara A. Prussing - 9/27/25
- Sarah Masters - 9/27/25
- Jaemie G. Bynum - 9/30/25
- Stephen B. Cochrane - 9/30/25
- Elizabeth D. Chappellear - 9/30/25
- Alexis S. Whittle - 10/8/25
- Taylor R. Maxwell - 10/8/25
- Rachel Thornton - 10/8/25
- Mary C. Massie - 10/8/25
- Maya Pope - 10/8/25
- Samuel D. Dickinson - 10/8/25
- Gabrielle G. Esparza - 10/8/25
- Andrea E. Reinman - 10/8/25
- Tia E. Fidaleo - 10/8/25
- Abigail J. Brainard - 10/8/25
- James C. Stowe - 10/8/25
- Noah T. Bloxton - 10/8/25
- Ciara A. Shirey - 10/9/25
- Wesley G. Danheim - 10/9/25
- Dayne A. Zauner - 10/9/25
- Alec J. Garber - 10/9/25
- Leilani R. Hyatt - 10/17/25
- Abigail Schuetze - 10/25/25
- Olivia L. Backer - 10/30/25
- Lindsey C. Hues - 10/30/25
- Samantha T. Tepper - 10/30/25
- John P. Burke - 10/30/25
- Annika J. Kuleba - 10/30/25





# Welcome



## Approved PWS Certifications:

- Patricia Schuyler - 8/27/25
- Jesse K. Sorrells - 8/27/25
- Hannah L. Fotherby - 8/28/25
- Nicholas E. Denk - 8/28/25
- Jane Rombouts - 8/28/25
- Melissa R. Norris - 8/28/25
- Jason T. Mann - 8/28/25
- Erik Oien - 8/28/25
- Melissa N. Barnes - 8/28/25
- Melanie L. Mason - 8/28/25
- Jesse Roper - 9/4/25
- Owen R. Zalme - 9/4/25
- Abigail Medis - 9/4/25
- Grace M. Brennan - 9/20/25
- Natalie Moreno - 9/20/25
- Anne W. Dahlem - 9/20/25
- Peter A. Gell - 9/20/25
- Francisco J. Faria - 9/25/25
- April Silva - 9/25/25
- Thomas F. Guidry - 9/25/25
- Jessica N. Huffman-Mainelli - 9/26/25
- Megan E. Gilliland - 9/26/25
- Scott Thelen - 9/26/25
- Line Rochefort - 9/26/25
- Jessie Buckner - 9/26/25
- John C. Marshall - 9/27/25
- Will B. Saunders - 9/30/25
- Timothy J. Noel - 9/30/25
- Dessa F. Clock - 9/30/25
- Theodore E. Reese - 9/30/25
- Samantha C. Bombara - 9/30/25
- Heidi K. Barnett - 9/30/25
- Kristen H. Deason - 10/8/25
- Hannah L. Lieffring - 10/10/25
- Vince Mosca - 10/10/25
- Daniel L. Buczek - 10/15/25
- April M. Brummage - 10/15/25
- Koen R. Kraner - 10/17/25
- Eri R. Licho - 10/17/25
- Michael A. Inman - 10/25/25
- Korbyn M. Gehlbach - 10/27/25
- David P. Brunet - 10/27/25
- April M. Brummage - 10/27/25
- Samuel A. Schmid - 10/27/25
- Zapata Courage - 10/27/25
- Michael S. Van Loan - 10/31/25
- Daniel W. LeJeune - 11/3/25
- Jan U. Gay - 11/3/25



## SPOTLIGHT ON OUR NEWLY CERTIFIED PROFESSIONALS

We're excited to celebrate the commitment and hard work of our newest certified PWSs and WPITs! These individuals have taken an important step in their careers and are eager to share why they decided to pursue a certification.



*Jonathan Scott Edwards, WPIT*

Certified on 8/28/2025

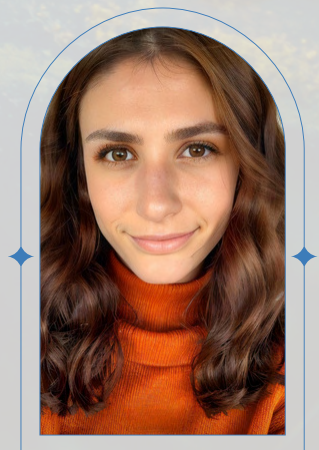
I applied for the SWSPCP WPIT certification because I have a deep passion for all aspects of Natural Resources and am committed to advancing my expertise in this field. With a Master's degree in Natural Resources, I want to complement my academic background

with recognized professional credentials that demonstrate my knowledge and dedication. Ultimately, obtaining this certification is an important step toward my long-term goal of earning my Professional Wetland Scientist (PWS) designation, ensuring I provide the highest level of professional competence in my work.

*Alexis S. Whittle, WPIT*

Certified on 10/8/2025

I decided to apply for the WPIT certification to build a strong foundation in wetland science and demonstrate my commitment to professional growth in this field. It's an important step toward continuing to develop my technical skills and contribute to responsible environmental work.





## *Samantha Bitar, WPIT*

Certified on 8/14/2025

The important role wetlands play in biodiversity, climate regulation, and water quality/protection align with values that I am passionate about and strive to uphold in my work. I was inspired by my colleagues who are Professional Wetland Scientists (PWS) and have made valuable contributions to the field, as well as the Society of Wetland Scientists' dedication to scientific integrity, continued learning and education, and collaboration. These factors motivated me to apply for my WPIT certification, to formally demonstrate my commitment to professional growth in wetland science, and to put myself on a path for continued learning and development in the constantly evolving field of science and policy.

## *Annika Kuleba, WPIT*

Certified on 10/30/2025

As an early-career environmental scientist who recently earned an M.S. from Clemson University and now serves as an Environmental Research Manager at the Baruch Institute in South Carolina, I pursued the WPIT Certification to strengthen my foundation in wetland science and demonstrate my commitment to continued learning and professional growth. This certification ensures that wherever I land, whether in academia or applied conservation, I will be grounded in best practices, supported by a professional community, and equipped to make meaningful contributions to the field.





## *Elizabeth Chappellear, WPIT*

Certified on 9/30/2025

I stumbled into wetland work through my research with beaver-based restoration, where I found an appreciation for the hydrological and geochemical interactions within these habitats. The WPIT certification reflects my commitment to the high educational, experiential, and ethical standards of SWS; I look forward to attending workshops, connecting with other wetland professionals, and serving in my new role as Staff Scientist.

Below are a few photos of Elizabeth's research.







# Coming Soon!

## DEI Survey Results

Thank you to everyone who took the time to complete the survey. Your insights are truly invaluable and play an important role in helping us better understand your needs and experiences. We're excited to share the results with you in the new year—stay tuned for the full overview!

We also welcome article contributions from Certificants and would love to hear ideas on topics you would like to see featured!



Send to: [aborczyk@association-resources.com](mailto:aborczyk@association-resources.com)