

OPPORTUNITY FOR NERC POLICY PLACEMENT FELLOWSHIP IN THE ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

TITLE OF PROJECT; ECOSYSTEM SERVICES AND FLOOD AND COASTAL RISK MANAGEMENT

The Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) and the Environment Agency (EA), welcome applications for a temporary specialist **Fellow** to work with the Environment Agency based in its Bristol offices at Horizon House, Deanery Road, BS1 5AH, for a period of 12 months, on a full time basis (although part time working will be considered).

The post is being offered as part of the [NERC Policy Placement Fellowship scheme](#), aimed at supporting the science to policy process and improved science evidence for UK policy, enabling environmental scientists to spend time within a partner organisation to undertake policy-relevant research and to develop the research skills of partner employees.

The post holder will interact on a regular basis with NERC science managers, theme leaders for the “Sustainable Use of Natural Resources” and “Natural Hazards” themes and the NERC Knowledge exchange team. The placement will be jointly funded by NERC and the Environment Agency, and whilst based at the Environment Agency, the Fellow will remain officially employed by his/her institution. The fellowship will cover salary cost (see guidance notes for details) and arrangements will be made to cover travel and subsistence expenses on a case-by-case basis.

Closing date for applications: Friday 14th October 2011

Interviews will be held on: Friday 21st October 2011

For application form and guidance notes please see:

<http://www.nerc.ac.uk/using/publicsector/fellowship.asp>

For further information please contact: Neil Millard, Evidence Partnerships, EA (e-mail: neil.millard@environment-agency.gov.uk Tel: +44 (0)117 934 4318) or Lesley Aspinall, Science to Policy Facilitator at NERC (e-mail laa@nerc.ac.uk Tel:+44 (0)1793 411536) or for further details about the project (e-mail: geoff.baxter@environment-agency.gov.uk Tel: +44 (0)781 0855756).

Job Purpose and description

The Government’s increased focus on ecosystem services will have an impact on a wide range of environment related work. But, what will this mean for those working in the Flood and Coastal Risk Management (FCRM) sector? This fellowship will look at how ecosystem services thinking could impact on the broad range of FCRM activities ranging from planning through to construction and maintenance.

Policy Driver / Legislation

The section of the Defra website entitled “Ecosystem Services – what nature gives us”: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/ecosystems-services> includes a number of guidance documents describing the application of ecosystem services thinking and an update to “Securing a healthy natural environment: An action plan for embedding an ecosystems approach”. These documents will be the starting point for this research which will consider how these approaches relate to flood and coastal risk management.

Objectives

Specifically the research will address questions such as:

- What is our current understanding of the role that ecosystem services play in our analysis of FCRM strategic planning? This will help to highlight i) the current position and ii) in some of the hurdles that would need to be overcome to allow the FCRM sector to fully embrace ecosystem services thinking.
- What are the evidence needs? What evidence do we need to produce to allow ecosystem services to be properly assessed as part of England and Wales' FCRM Operating Authorities plans.
- Data availability and quality for decision making – Is the data required to produce the evidence available and of sufficient quality to allow practitioners to confidently factor an ecosystem services approach into planning for flood and coastal risk management?

Other topics that could be addressed as part of the research include:

- The implications of a catchment wide approach to the FCRM planning and how this can be integrated into a consideration of the delivery of the other joint ecosystem services, such as clean water, recreation navigation and the various other ecosystem services provided by catchments.
- The implications of the systems approach inherent in the Ecosystems approach and identify how the various ecosystem services such as clean water, nutrient stripping and recreation can be included in the process of planning.
- Consideration of the barriers to the use of soft catchment wide, rather than hard localised interventions. These issues include civil engineer liability insurance, the treatment of uncertainty and the modelling difficulties involved in evaluating complex ecosystems, when viewed at the catchment level.
- Consideration of novel delivery instruments, such as Payment for Ecosystems approaches mediated through trusted ecosystem brokers such as NGOs and non for profit organisations.

This fellowship would closely align with the UK National Ecosystem Assessment work and provide an opportunity to specifically focus on what the findings from the National Ecosystem Assessment work mean for FCRM practitioners.

Skills required

The successful applicant should ideally have a strong scientific background and will be expected to have relevant qualifications and experience in the area of Environment and Flood and Coastal Risk Management. Additionally, an awareness of the FCRM regulatory and policy landscape would be advantageous. The following skills are expected:

- Knowledge and research experience in a relevant field is essential, as well as an understanding of NERC and Environment Agency remits and responsibilities.
- Good communication, networking and presentation skills and report writing skills.
- Ability to work strategically across the disciplines commonly associated with Flood and Coastal Risk Management
- Good project management skills, and an ability to work independently as required.
- Ability to build and maintain relationships with the FCRM practitioner community.
- Willingness to undertake frequent (UK) travel to meetings.

Timescales for delivery of the work

This placement is for 12 months on a full time basis, although part time working will be considered. Ideally work will commence November 2011.

Background

The Environment Agency is an Executive Non-departmental Public Body responsible to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and a Welsh Government Sponsored Body responsible to the Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development. Its principal aims are to protect and improve the environment, and to promote sustainable development. The Environment Agency plays a central role in delivering the environmental priorities of central government and the Welsh Government through its functions and roles. Science and technology play a vital role in the work of the Environment Agency in providing key information, advice, tools and techniques to support its policies and work in protecting and improving the environment.

NERC funds world-class science in universities and research centres that increases knowledge and understanding of the natural world, through independent research and training in the environmental sciences. NERC's current strategy defines seven themes under which its science will be delivered: climate system, biodiversity, sustainable use of natural resources, earth system science, natural hazards, environment pollution and human health, and technologies. NERC interacts and works regularly with a wide range of stakeholders, including policy-makers, to support the science to policy process and help develop appropriate ways to address environment issues.