**Joshua A. Nickerson Conservation Fellowship**

*Offered in partnership between Cape Cod National Seashore - Atlantic Research and Learning Center, and Friends of Cape Cod National Seashore*



**Background**

Scientific research is an important tool used by the National Park Service (NPS) to protect and foster stewardship of the park’s natural and cultural resources. The goal of the Nickerson Conservation Fellowship Program is to support scientific research that assists park managers in making informed decisions about the resources of the Seashore.

Cape Cod National Seashore contains a diverse variety of habitats and is characterized by open ocean, beaches, estuaries, and tidal flats. In addition to the marine environment, the Seashore is home to a unique kettle pond system, sensitive vernal pools, upland forested habitat, and coastal heathlands - a globally uncommon habitat supporting species that are correspondingly rare. More than seventeen federally-listed threatened or endangered species are found throughout the Seashore and its marine waters. The physical processes that initially formed Cape Cod continue to reshape the area via wind, waves, tides, and longshore currents. Humans have been a part of this dynamic landscape for at least 10,000 years. These ecosystem processes have created and continue to influence the sensitive natural and cultural heritage that the Nickerson Conservation Fund is dedicated to study.

Proposals will be accepted for research in the broad areas of the natural and social sciences. Topics of interest include terrestrial and aquatic ecosystem processes, biotic and abiotic ecosystem components, cultural and natural resource management, and the political and social implications of resource protection and management. As research results should be useful for management of Cape Cod National Seashore resources, discussions with park staff about your project are encouraged to maximize its value to managers.

In 2024, fellowship applications will be considered for funding requests up to $4,000. Multiple fellows may be selected.

**Eligibility**

The Nickerson Conservation Fellowship supports field research in the biological, ecological, physical, social, and cultural sciences. Project requests are more likely to be successful if they contribute to the protection of the Seashore’s natural and cultural resources. Selected fellows share their research with others through some form of outreach, coordinated through the Atlantic Research and Learning Center (ARLC).

The fellowship is open to anyone, regardless of student or professional status. Research fellows must be self-directed individuals whose work will contribute to the scientific knowledge of the natural and cultural resources of Cape Cod National Seashore. The fellow must be able to complete the proposed project within one year, and provide a final report, even if the project is part of a larger thesis project. Recipients may apply for an additional research fellowship in subsequent years, but project proposals will be evaluated independently of the previous year’s work.

Funds may be used for a variety of purposes, including salary support; room, board, and travel directly associated with fieldwork; supplies; and analytical costs. Funds may not be used to support indirect costs (overhead).

**Some Additional Research Considerations**

Limited researcher housing may be available but is not guaranteed. Requests for park housing, as well as any other special requests, should be incorporated into the proposal. More information for prospective researchers is found at <http://www.nps.gov/caco/learn/nature/arlc.htm>.

**Provisional Acceptance Pending Research Permit**

Acceptance into the Fellowship Program is provisional until a Research and Collecting Permit is approved and issued. Initial acceptance as a Fellow is not a guarantee that a Research and Collecting Permit will be issued for the work as written in the proposal. Modification of methods or sites may be necessary. Information on applying to conduct research in any national park may be found at the NPS website <https://irma.nps.gov/rprs/Home>. Please contact Cape Cod National Seashore Chief of Natural Resources Management and Science, Geoffrey Sanders, geoffrey\_sanders@nps.gov for information.

**Requirements of Award Winners**

Each fellow is required to provide these items to the Chief of Natural Resources Management and Science (NRMS) within six months from completion of proposed work. Exceptions need to be arranged with the Chief of NRMS.

* Present findings and progress report of proposed research to Nickerson Committee members, Cape Cod National Seashore scientists and staff, and cooperators at a science meeting generally scheduled for the fall of the award year. The presentation should include a briefing of the proposed and/or completed research and allow for discussion among the committee and feedback to recipient.
* Recipients will be invited and are encouraged to present their findings at the ARLC’s Science in the Seashore Symposium. This presentation will occur a year after work in the park was completed. For instance, 2024 fellows would be invited to present at the 2025 symposium. In-person presentations are encouraged but presenting remotely can be accommodated.
* Provide electronic final report on the component of the research that was funded (title, key words, abstract, intro, methods, results, practical applications).
* Provide a one-page summary or resource brief of research results for a general audience, with particular attention to practical applications.
* Send several digital photos (.jpg or .tif files) of research/field work in progress, with captions for photos in a separate word document.
* May be asked to produce an educational outreach product such as public involvement in research, public presentation, poster, fact sheet. Discuss options for educational component(s) with Chief of NRMS at the start of the funding period.

In addition, each fellow should provide to the Chief of NRMS a hard copy of researcher’s thesis, dissertation or publication, as appropriate.

Research Fellowship recipients working in a park must also fulfill all conditions of the park research permit (e.g., submit an Investigator’s Annual Report and comply with guidelines for collections).

**Important Dates**

The deadline for fellowship applications is **March 24, 2024**. Late proposals will not be considered. Awards will be announced as soon as possible (hopefully by the end of April). Awards will be disbursed in two payments:

1. 80 percent at the outset of the field work (on approval of Research Permit);
2. The remaining 20 percent when all specified project deliverables (final report, science presentation, summary, photos with captions, educational product) have been received by the Chief of NRMS. These deliverables are due within six months after the completion of field work. Extensions may be granted by the Chief of NRMS.

**Application Process**

Individuals wishing to apply for the research fellowships should submit the following documents electronically (preferably in MS Word) to the Chief of NRMS:

* An Application Coversheet that can be downloaded from the following website <http://www.nps.gov/caco/learn/nature/nickerson-fellowship.htm>.
* A Research Proposal that contains the following sections, with headings:
  1. Project title
  2. Research objectives
  3. Statement about the significance of this project to park management issues or resources (see evaluation criterion #3 below)
  4. Methods
  5. Project budget for Fellowship funds
  6. Project timeline, including tentative dates for fieldwork
  7. List requests for logistical help in the park (e.g., housing, temporary work or storage space, lab equipment needs). For more information, visit <http://www.nps.gov/caco/learn/nature/arlc.htm> or contact Chief of NRMS.
* A Curriculum Vitae or Resume that lists background, qualifications, and research experience, manuscripts or published papers, presentations, etc.
* For current students, a letter of support from an academic advisor or principal investigator is required. This may be submitted with the proposal or sent electronically by the reference directly to the Chief of NRMS (geoffrey\_sanders@nps.gov). Nickerson Fellowship and your name should appear in the subject line.

Proposals will be evaluated by the Nickerson Fellowship Committee:

The following criteria will be used to determine which project(s) are funded.

1. Completeness of proposal (Are all the items listed above included?)
2. Technical merit (Does the project have scientific or scholarly merit? Are the study questions and methods clear?)
3. Significance of the project to park management issues or resources. (Will the work help managers make decisions about critical resource issues? Does the project provide missing resource information or help set targets for indicators of desired resource condition?)
4. Feasibility and ability of investigator to complete the work (Is it realistic for the timeframe suggested? Does the researcher have some experience or credentials to be able to competently do this research?)
5. Have you previously received the Nickerson Fellowship and if so what is the status of your research?
6. Potential of the work to boost Fellow’s professional development (Will the work provide new/unique opportunities?)

**Contact Information**

Direct questions to the Cape Cod National Seashore Chief of NRMS, Geoffrey Sanders, geoffrey\_sanders@nps.gov.