

Passion for Policy

With the Ecological Society of America's policy award, this graduate student blends science and policy

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MASTER'S
STUDENT SAMANTHA WERNER '14 RECEIVED THE ECOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF
AMERICA'S GRADUATE STUDENT POLICY AWARD.

Samantha Werner '14 wants to bring local food to the policy table. With all the political energy around supporting local agriculture, says the master's student in natural resources studying environmental economics, an understanding of issues beyond the farm is essential.

This month, Werner will get her chance. As one of just six recipients of the [Ecological Society of America's Graduate Student Policy Award](#), she'll travel to Washington April 27 and 28 to participate in policy trainings and meet U.S. representatives and senators.

"I really want to figure out how to convey ideas from ecology to the public and to policymakers," says the Derry, New Hampshire, native, who studies with professor of resource economics John Halstead. "I need to make sure the science is being relayed and being practiced in a transdisciplinary manner."

"What are local farmers facing when they expand their operations? What are consumers willing to pay when they look for local products?" Werner's research looks at local food production in northern New England. "I want to understand both the consumers and producers," she says. "What are local farmers facing when they expand their operations? What are consumers willing to pay when they look for local products?"

A lifelong Granite Stater, Werner has traveled widely thanks, she says, to UNH. The [EcoQuest](#) program in New Zealand, where she worked with native Maori on issues of biodiversity, introduced her to policy work. In 2013, she spent a summer in [northern Sweden](#) working with Earth sciences professor Ruth Varner, the Class of 1940 professor, on a National Science Foundation-funded fellowship. "That was my first field experience and the most rigorous science experience of my life," she says.

While a Ph.D. is likely in her future, Werner anticipates this award and the introduction to Washington policymakers it brings will help set her post-master's degree course. "I'm so thankful I get to be part of the bigger picture, be included in the ESA's broader agenda," she says. "So many new doors are opening at this point."

UNH graduate students are conducting research on many different topics in multiple disciplines. See for yourself at the Graduate Research Conference, April 11-12, 2016.

- WRITTEN BY:

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