

Environmental Program Officer

Job Description

Environmental Program Officers oversee efforts by organizations and companies to further sustainability initiatives. These professionals often specialize in specific fields, such as aquaculture or sustainable agriculture. Environmental Program Officers' primary focus is to monitor and improve the environmental conditions of business conducted within a sector.

Salary

Entry — \$57,000
Middle — \$77,000
Top — \$104,000+

Core Tasks

- Travel to different communities to broaden understanding of environmental complexities
- Monitor the progress of environmental conditions within a specific sector
- Generate publicity surrounding sustainable practices
- Consider economic opportunities for sustainable products and services
- Develop educational materials and reports to share progress towards environmental goals

Workplace / Environment

- **Work hours**
Approx. 40 hours/week
(At key milestones overtime work may be required to meet deadlines)
- **Environment**
Mix of time spent in an **office setting**, overseeing program progress, and time spent **in the field**, communicating with members of the general public
- **Travel**
Frequent travel to attend **conferences** on environmental topics and **visit communities** to understand unique situations surrounding sustainability

Education / Prerequisites

Education Level

Bachelors or Masters degree in Environmental Science, Environmental Studies, or another degree more specific to the target field of work

Licensing

Usually not required

Pre-Job Preparation

Courses to develop a broad understanding of environmental science and environmental justice topics, Understanding of chosen field through travel and study abroad experiences

Experience

Soft Skills

- Creative Problem Solving
- Empathy
- Written Communication

Technical Skills

- Knowledge within chosen field
- Understanding of environmental justice
- Communication programs (Microsoft Suite, etc.)



Career Path: Bailey Moritz

About Me

Aquaculture Program Officer at World Wildlife Fund

Bachelor's Degree in Earth & Oceanographic Science
and Environmental Studies at Bowdoin College

High School Life

"I graduated from Inglemoor High School in 2012, back when the biggest thing we were working on was getting the **composting system** up and running at Inglemoor through the environmental club, **Earth Corps**. It was quite an undertaking and a huge learning experience. The club had to work with administrators, janitorial staff and other schools to try to find partnerships and deal with the endless frustrations of trying to get folks to actually put things in the right containers."



"Earth Corps was one of the places where I think I got the most experience with helping to **organize projects** and **interact** with different groups of people to make decisions. It was definitely a huge part of what **solidified my interest** in environmental work."

College Choices



"After I graduated from Inglemoor High School, I went to college in Maine because they had a really strong environmental science program at **Bowdoin College**. I went there because I knew I wanted to do environmental work. I loved the **smaller class sizes** in high school and how closely I got to know many of my teachers. I didn't want to lose that when I went to college. I ended up looking at a lot of schools in New England on the East Coast because I also wanted to experience a new place, and stretch myself to become a little more **independent**."

"I studied **Earth & Oceanographic Science** and **Environmental Studies** at Bowdoin. Maine is the perfect place for that because there's so much **nature** and a large **fishing economy**. I also continued trying to get some form of composting to happen at college."

Seeing the World

"One of the first things on my pathway from high school to where I am now was **studying abroad** during college. I went to **Panama** with a tropical and marine ecology field-based program. I took Spanish while I was in high school, so I got to live with a host family that I got really close to in Panama City, which is one of the **most globalized cities in Central America**. We traveled around the country and were exposed to a lot of different aspects of environmental science and sustainability."

"During the last month of this program, we got to do an **independent study project**. I did a project with **lobster divers and lobster fishermen**. That was my first introduction to **fisheries** and using the ocean to produce food. I learned to consider not only how important it is to protect the ecosystem while extracting from it, but also how important fisheries are to local communities and the people that rely on them."

"That inspired me to apply for a job during my college summers at the **Hurricane Island Center for Science and Leadership**, which is on this tiny island off of the coast of Maine. They fish for scallops in Maine and we were doing scuba surveys of the fishery since it had collapsed about 10 years ago, and we were trying to understand if and how it was regrowing. One of the things we wanted to do was start an **aquaculture farm** for research and education. Aquaculture is essentially farming in the ocean. Another big part of the aquaculture industry in Maine was **seaweed**."

Defining Interests

"My life has become about seaweed and it was something I didn't even know existed when I was in high school. My growing passion for seaweed inspired me to spend some time in **Madagascar**, where there was an organization starting seaweed farms for a community where fisheries had been overfished. Fishing was their only form of income, so seaweed farming became this great alternative. I got to go out on the water and learn from them and see the impact that overfishing was having on the community. Then, I went back to Maine and started to work for the first and **biggest seaweed company in the United States**."

"With seaweed being my obsession, I ended up going to **graduate school** for a year in Maine and spent time in **Belize** doing research with a group of **women seaweed farmers**. They were really interested in finding what products they could make out of the seaweed that was being grown in their country—it was an industry that was dominated by men and they wanted in."

"That work in seaweed brought me to **World Wildlife Fund**. Seaweed is a new project for World Wildlife Fund, but the organization really believes in seaweed as a **sustainable biomass form** that can also contribute to climate change gains and can be used in so many products from food to bioplastics. My job role is basically to try to help **grow the global seaweed industry** from its annual growth rate of about 8% per year to about 12% per year. It's a massive industry in the world that will only continue to grow."

About My Job

"Aquaculture is important and beneficial to the environment and to livelihoods"

Pros

- "In my role, I really get to work with people from all **different industries and geographical locations**. It's really cool to go from having a conversation with a farmer who's on the water all day, to someone in government, or someone who's a researcher, or a big business person at McDonald's. Those diverse perspectives keep it exciting."
- "I love that I get to **stay up to date** on a field that I think is super cool. I get to talk to the people who are doing what's really on the cutting edge of aquaculture and seaweed."
- "I enjoy getting to **direct funding** and help decide where the money is going to actually make a difference in terms of climate change impacts and growing a sustainable industry."

Fieldwork

- "I'm so lucky to have a job where we have a pretty **sizeable travel budget**, both for **conferences**, and also for **visits** to different field sites. We've got farmers and organizations and researchers that we're working with in a lot of different places. Our hope is to be able to visit their farm and ground truth the work that they're doing. Luckily, World Wildlife Fund covers that travel."
- "Just getting to be **on the water** is really my favorite thing—getting to touch **seaweed** and handle **sea creatures** and see these things happening. The **innovations** that farmers have on the water to do this work more efficiently is always really incredible. That's definitely the best part."

Cons

- "A con for me is the **bureaucracy of nonprofits**. So much of my work day can sometimes be caught up in trying to figure out how to get through certain red tape and meet requirements. There's a lot of **administrative and technical paperwork** and talking to the legal teams to make sure that all agreements and grants are proper can be time-consuming and tiring."
- "Sometimes **things don't happen as quickly** as some of our business partners would like to see happen."

General Work

- "We are trying to help speed up the **development of seaweed markets**, so we're really interested in bioplastics made out of seaweeds. Some seaweed species, when they're fed to cows, can actually reduce methane output. We're looking at that as a **big market**."
- "We're trying to get the **technology** to be at a level and a size where this can happen in a big way. We want to see seaweed as a cool **sustainable product** on our plate more frequently."
- "We're trying to ambitiously grow the seaweed industry, from trying to **create more publicity** around the benefits of seaweed farming and to **working with communities** that might push back against having farm gear in their water."

Skills

- "Learning how to **write** in different forms is important—not just formal essay writing, but even **emails**, and really learning how to **communicate** with different types of people, such as informally with fishermen or with policymakers. Getting that practice in any way that you can is a great skill to start as early as high school."
- "What has benefited me a lot has been a **breadth of information**. In my job now, I'm not actually doing much hands-on science, but I am working with scientists who have a whole range of different research techniques. Having that awareness and being able to pull from a wide breadth of **concepts**, even social science concepts, is useful. It also helps you figure out what you're most interested in if you've got an exposure to a **wide variety** of things."

Education/Experience

- "When you have the chance to **see other places**, even if it's a part time thing, take those opportunities. There are some cool programs like WWOOF ([Worldwide Opportunities on Organic Farms](#)) and some projects where you can **work abroad**. With WWOOF, you can go to any country in the world and work on an organic farm. You don't pay to be there in exchange for you working about 20 hours a week on the farm."
- "I had a huge education in college and through traveling surrounding **environmental justice issues**. That was something that I hadn't had a lot of prior exposure to. Find any time when environmental justice, and the intersections of **racism** and other **societal structural topics**, can be interwoven within conversations in your life. It's crucial to hold those discussions and open up that dialogue."

The Future of **Aquaculture Careers**

"We're going to see more jobs in the aquaculture field"

"Hands down, we're going to see **more jobs** in the aquaculture field, especially in sectors like **seaweed** and **shellfish**. Aquaculture is important and beneficial to the environment and to livelihoods. I think we'll start to see more room for some really **creative, innovative ideas**, because more and more funding will be available for those things."

"As an industry like seaweed grows, there's more and more **funders** and investors who want to see companies and research projects and businesses start to pop up to make it a reality. I think we'll start to see more **partnerships** between industry and science, or nonprofits working with private companies, to see results that are not only good for business, but also good for the planet and good for people."

"I'm seeing that trend amongst nonprofits and other groups who really want to work with a **broad range of people**. The only way you're going to grow an industry that's sustainable and environmental is if the government people talk to the business people or the nonprofit people talk to the people on the water. We'll start to see exponential growth from that."