

February 15, 2023

Shawn Johnson and Travis Anklam  
Co-Chairs of Natural Resource Conflict Resolution Program  
The University of Montana  
Center for Natural Resources & Environmental Policy  
32 Campus Drive  
Missoula, MT 59812

RE: Letter of Intent

Dear Shawn Johnson and Travis Anklam,

I am writing to express my strong interest in the Natural Resource Conflict Resolution (NRCR) Certificate Program. Through my experience, I have developed a keen interest in conserving Montana's natural resources. Please find attached my application materials, including the following: statement of interest, academic and professional goals, proposed courses, and resume.

After graduating from MSU in May 2021, I took a position with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in Choteau, MT. In my previous role as the Rocky Mountain Front Operations Assistant, I gained valuable experience communicating with farmers, ranchers, agency employees, non-profit partners, donors and preserve visitors. These encounters have taught me that good communication skills and the ability to facilitate and negotiate with stakeholders is critical to achieving collaborative conservation goals. That is why this fall I started my graduate study in Communication Studies at the University of Montana.

Pursuing the Natural Resource Conflict Resolution certificate has been a personal goal of mine for several years. It would provide me with valuable knowledge and skills for career development. My interest and enthusiasm lie in working with diverse communities to find common interests, resolve tensions, and build capacity. I want to expand my skills so I can facilitate discussions with different interest groups to improve community and landscape resiliency.

Given my background, I am confident I would be an asset to your program. I especially look forward to all of the opportunities and connections that are provided with your program.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'SK Coston', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Sylvia K. Coston

## Program of Study for Sylvia K. Coston

Core Requirements, COMX

15 credits (36 credits for degree), green

Core Requirements, NRSCR Program

12 additional credits (15 credits), blue

Other Classes & Credits

9 credits, orange

Course Number	Course Title	Credit Hours	Professor	Date
COMX 520	Seminar in Organizational Communication	3 Elective Credits, Natural Resource Governance COMX	Gregory Larson	Fall 2023
COMX 424	Risk and Crisis Communication	3 Elective Credits, Broadening Your Perspective COMX	Joel O. Iverson	Fall 2023
NRSM 515	Skills for Natural Resource Leaders	3 NRSCR Core, Elective, COMX Out of Dept.	Shawn Johnson, Travis Anklam	Spring 2024
LAW 613	Natural Resource Conflict Resolution	3 NRSCR Core, Elective, COMX Out of Dept.	Shawn Johnson, Travis Anklam	Fall 2024
ENST 579	Practicum in Collaborative Conservation	3 NRSCR Core, Elective, COMX Out of Dept.	Shawn Johnson	Spring 2025
COMX 591	Interpersonal Health Communication Seminar	3	Heather Voorhees	Fall 2023
SOCI 561	Qualitative Methods	3 Methods Requirement	Anne Rooks	Spring 2024
SOCI 595	Applied Research Methods	3 Methods Requirement	Rachel Goen	Spring 2024
COMX 591	Communicating Community	3	Joel O. Iverson	Fall 2024
COMX 510	Interpersonal Communication	3	Steve Yoshimura	Spring 2025
COMX 593	Professional Paper	6	Christina Yoshimura, Joel O. Iverson	Spring 2025

## **Preliminary Schedule**

### Fall 2023

Seminar in Organizational Communication, COMX 520 (3 credits)  
Interpersonal Health Communication Seminar, COMX 591 (3 credits)  
Risk and Crisis Communication, COMX 424 (3 credits)

### Spring 2024

Qualitative Methods, SOCI 561 (3 credits)  
Applied Research Methods, SOCI 595 (3 credits)  
Collaborative Skills for Natural Resource Leaders, NRSML 519 (3 credits)

### Summer 2024

Research Assistantship for USFS, 20-29 hrs/wk

### Fall 2024

Natural Resource Conflict Resolution, LAW613 (3 credits)  
Communicating Community, COMX 591 (3 credits)

### Spring 2025

Interpersonal Communication, COMX 579 (3 credits)  
Practicum in Collaborative Conservation, ENST 579 (3 credits)  
Professional Paper (R-6), COMX 593 (6 credits)

# SYLVIA K. COSTON

## EDUCATION

### **University of Montana**

MA Communication Studies

Natural Resource Conflict Resolution Certificate

Expected Graduation Date May 2025

*Research Assistant for US Forest Service*

- Reframing Wildland Fire Communication
- Communities of Practice for Wildland Fire Planning
- National Wildfire Cohesive Strategy Workshop, Planning and Implementation Team
- USFS Region 3 Executive Leadership Communication Workshop, Planning and Implementation Team
- International Crisis and Risk Communication Conference, Volunteer Implementation Team

*Field of Study*

- Communities of Practice Theory, Community Communication, Organizational Communication, Natural Resource Conflict Resolution

### **Montana State University**

BA Liberal Studies – Environmental Option

Graduated May 2021

- Senior Capstone: Grizzly Bears: Impacts on the Livelihoods of Rural Communities on Montana's Rocky Mountain Front
- MSU Dean's List 2018 – 2021
- Study Abroad at University of Lausanne, Switzerland Spring 2020
- MSU Sophomore Surge Mentor 2018-2019

### **Stevensville High School**

Graduated May 2015

- Senior Class President
- Honor Roll 2011 – 2015
- Member of Key Club 2012 – 2015
- Student Council Representative 2013 – 2014
- USSA Academic Achievement Award 2011 - 2013

## SKILLS

- Excellent communication skills including experience public speaking, writing, newsletters, policy briefs, grants and social media
- Disciplined and able to focus on achieving goals independently to meet deadlines
- Strong interpersonal skills with ability to appreciate diverse opinions to build strong community relationships
- Illustrates leadership skills and works well with teams of all sizes

## EXPERIENCE

### **The Nature Conservancy** – Choteau, MT

Rocky Mountain Front Operations Assistant – June 2021 to Present

- Networked with diverse groups, including landowners, partners, donors, board members and the public to support The Nature Conservancy's mission and goals
- Collected ecological monitoring data, data entry and data management
- Maintained and operated vehicles, ATVs, equipment, structures, fences and trails
- Identified routine problems and utilized resources to resolve issues
- Supervised seasonal staff by making independent decisions based on analysis, experience and context
- Monitored conservation easements and completed monitoring reports
- Participated in prescribed fire operations, preparations and planning
- Assisted with the control of noxious weeds and monitoring control efforts
- Worked with Operations, Development and Conservation Staff to create new volunteer process for the Montana Business Unit
- Assisted Director of External Affairs with Lobbying Reports for the 2023 Legislative Session

### **American Prairie** – Bozeman, Montana

Temporary Administrative Support – Aug. 2019 to Jan. 2020

- Efficiently and accurately completed data entry and data processing
- Production, printing and merging of documents
- Coordinated outgoing and incoming mail packaging and processing
- Proficiently organized, scanned and filed confidential documents
- Completed Administrative projects and tasks as assigned

### **The National Wildlife Federation** – Missoula, Montana

Intern – Summer 2018, 2019

- Assisted in deployment, monitoring and maintenance of remote wildlife cameras for ongoing MDOT 'Jens Safety Project' along I-90 near Drummond, MT identifying wildlife migration opportunities
- Communicated with the public in a respectful and representative way for NWF at events
- Updated social media and regional website
- Created and managed e-newsletter for Montana Beaver Group
- Assisted in planning and executing events and meetings
- Program Director of Nature Walk for Soft Landing Missoula
- Provided NWF with an opportunity to initiate diversity within a local refugee community
- Successfully wrote proposal and budget for grant funding
- Organized and coordinated involvement of 5 organizations with volunteer support

## VOLUNTEER WORK

### **Mountain Bike Missoula** – Missoula, MT

Board of Directors – October 2023 to Present

- Public Relations Committee Member
- Increase engagement with University of Montana students
- Promote and create mountain biking opportunities in Missoula and surrounding areas through trail building, advocacy, and outreach
- Secure resources for organization to fulfill its mission

# SYLVIA K. COSTON

## LANGUAGES

- English – Native (IRL Level 5)
- French – Limited Working Proficiency (IRL Level 2)

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Established Avalanche/All-Mountain Safety Program for USSA Northern Division Athletes, 2015 - 2017
- Mission Ridge Academy Team Captain 2016 -2017
- Pacific Northwest Alpine Team 2014 – 2017
- Bridger Ski Education Foundation: Most Dedicated Athlete 2013 - 2014
- Northern Division Western Region Championship Team 2013 – 2014
- Missoula Ski Education Foundation: Most Dedicated Athlete 2012 – 2013
- Northern Division Junior Olympic Team 2011 - 2013

## CERTIFICATIONS

- Firefighter Type 2 Certification, May 2022
- First Aid/CPR Certified, June 2022
- Avalanche 1 Certification, December 2017

## VOLUNTEER WORK CONTINUED

### **Choteau Youth Soccer** – Choteau, MT

U-8 Girls Head Soccer Coach – Fall 2022

- Designed and developed training program that kept athletes interested, while developing their fundamental skills
- Supervised practices and games
- Developed positive relationships with athletes, parents, schools, and the community

### **Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks** – Choteau, MT

Grizzly Bear Management Volunteer – Summer 2021

- Actively listened to landowner's concerns
- Implemented management tools to mitigate conflict between bears and agricultural attractants
- Assisted with two grizzly bear handlings
- Quickly, efficiently and quietly monitored grizzly bear's vital rates
- Accurately recorded and completed NCDE Capture Form
- Assisted with setting up electric fencing to mitigate conflict between bears and agricultural attractants
- Located radio-collared bears and dropped collars
- Strategically set culvert traps

### **United States Ski Association (USSA) Northern Division** – Bozeman, MT

Board of Directors, Athlete Representative – 2017 to 2020

- Represented Northern Division athletes at quarterly meetings
- Provided insight, suggestions, and concerns regarding policies
- Voted on decisions in the best interest of USSA Northern Division's athletes