

## NRC 597C: Case Studies in Conservation. Spring 2012.

## Professional Practicum Experience

There is enormous value in learning about local conservation and land protection through osmosis and experience with people engaged in these activities. There honestly are not good text books on this subject. This is one of the reasons we bring in guests from various aspects of the real world of conservation to speak in class. Another way to learn is through associating with these people **outside** the confines of the classroom.

Part of the required activities for this class will involve a **Professional Practicum Experience**. You must spend a minimum of 8 hours in a professional setting shadowing someone, assisting with something, participating in a meeting, or in other ways engaging meaningfully in a conservation-oriented activity. This could include *but not be limited to* things such as: attend meetings of an organization's board of directors; attend meetings of a local Conservation Commission, Community Preservation Act committee, or Open Space Committee; participate in baseline or annual easement monitoring of a property; "shadow" or "ride shotgun" as someone makes a visit to a property or landowner; attend or - even better yet! - prepare a public event designed to feature a conservation success (woods walk?); attend and/or volunteer at a conference; assist with deed research at the local registry of deeds. *Do not be constrained by this list. If you have an idea you wish to pursue, please discuss it with the Instructor.*

The intent of the Professional Practicum Experience is to provide you with an opportunity to experience some of the things we talk about in action. ***The practicum experience, though, needs to have professional relevance.*** Please do not engage in the following kinds of activities, which may be helpful or worthwhile, but not educational or professional: stuff envelopes; wash windows at the local land trust office; cut brush or clear trails;

The requisite minimum 8 hours of contact for the Professional Practicum Experience can come in several formats: one 8-hour day; two 4-hour afternoons; four 2-hour meetings. Of course this can't be monitored to the nearest minute, but I expect that if you choose to meet the expectation of this requirement with meetings, it will involve 4. If you choose to do field work, it will involve the equivalent of roughly one 8-hour day or two 4-hour half days.

Importantly, and **as part of this professional practicum experience, you must make these arrangements with a person, group, committee, or organization.** You can do this in your hometown, or here in the general Amherst or western Massachusetts area. An excellent place to look for contacts or ideas is <http://masswoods.net/>. Click on the map or enter your zip code, and you will find a list of agencies and local organizations that operate in that community.

Please do not wait until the final two weeks of the semester and tell the instructor that you cannot find any Professional Practicum Experience opportunities or make any connections. Please do not tell the instructor that "they" haven't returned your email. This is an indication that you have not tried hard enough. Reach out, be proactive, and create an opportunity that ***you will learn from!*** This assignment intentionally has tremendous flexibility for you to make it what you want it to be!

**Deliverable:** Due no later than Tuesday, 8 May, 5:00 pm. A 4-5-page description of your Professional Practicum Experience. ***Please include in this description:*** description of the organization; identification of the people you associated with; dates, times, locations of your experience; description of activities; description of what you learned from participation in and observation of these activities; reference to or comparison with experiences or organizations we learned about in class. ***Please make this an integrative summary of your Professional Practicum Experience, not merely a description of what you did and who you talked to. What did you learn, what does it mean, and how does it compare to other groups, experiences, or situations?***