



CULTIVATING TOMORROW'S CONSERVATION LEADERS

EMERGING LEADERS PROGRAM UPDATE

JANUARY, 2024



ABOUT THE PROGRAM:

The Emerging Leaders Program by the Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS) is designed to nurture the next generation of conservation leaders. This initiative blends learning modules, mentorship, and hands-on projects to foster resilient professionals capable of addressing modern conservation challenges.

Through experiential learning and skill development, participants gain the expertise, networks, and passion needed to drive positive change in their communities.

We're looking for additional support for this program. Check out these blue stars to see how you can get involved!

WWW.SWCS.ORG/GROWCONSERVATION

ADDRESSING WORKFORCE NEEDS:

This program is a response to the critical industry need for skilled leaders equipped to tackle evolving challenges. It intends to tackle various workforce concerns, including:

- mitigating high employee turnover rates;
- bridging the transition into a career after academic pursuits; and
- addressing imminent workforce vacancies due to retiring professionals and new positions created by increased funding.

By fostering a new generation of conservation leaders, this program cultivates a skilled, resilient workforce capable of driving sustainable solutions. We aim to accomplish this by providing a safe space for the next generation of conservation professionals to grow and take risks as part of their leadership journey, creating a support network of conservation professionals, and serving as a resource for leadership and event planning tools. Learn more about [our work](#).

PROGRAM DETAILS

WHO?

The program is for professionals in the first 5 years of their career in the conservation field. Participants are new to their roles in a wide variety of disciplines and sectors.

WHERE?

The program is completed primarily online. Participants will host a local, in-person conservation event.



"I am excited about learning from experienced professionals, accessing valuable resources, and building connections with fellow agricultural professionals who share my passion for sustainability, resilience, and a just society."

– Ñawi Flores, NY

PARTICIPANT BENEFITS:

- One year of complimentary SWCS membership and associated member benefits (\$115 value)
- Complimentary registration to the 79th SWCS International Annual Conference (\$500 value)
- Conservation Events Planning Certificate
- One item of SWCS branded
- Formal recognition in SWCS's Annual Report
- Recognition at the 79th SWCS International Annual Conference
- Listing in SWCS's online member directory

COST TO THE PARTICIPANT: \$0

APPROXIMATE COST TO SWCS PER PARTICIPANT: \$965

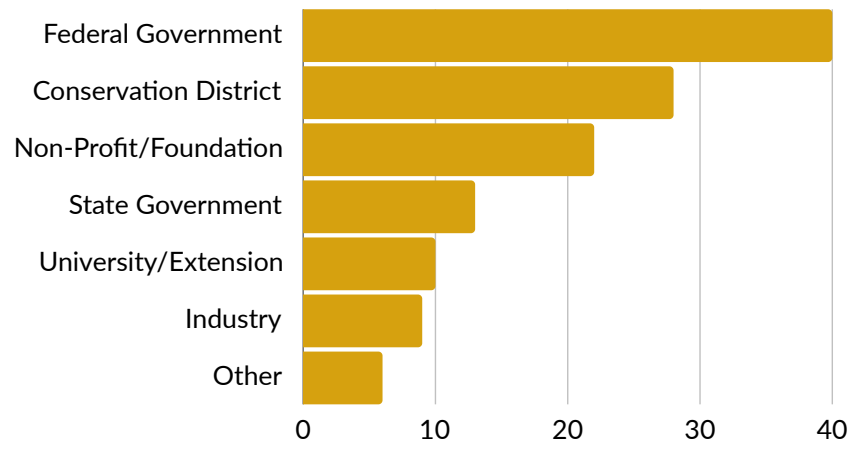
This program is currently offered at no cost to the participants. Help us keep this opportunity accessible!

We need help growing and institutionalizing this program - starting with funding! We're actively seeking financial support for these participants, including partnerships and grants.

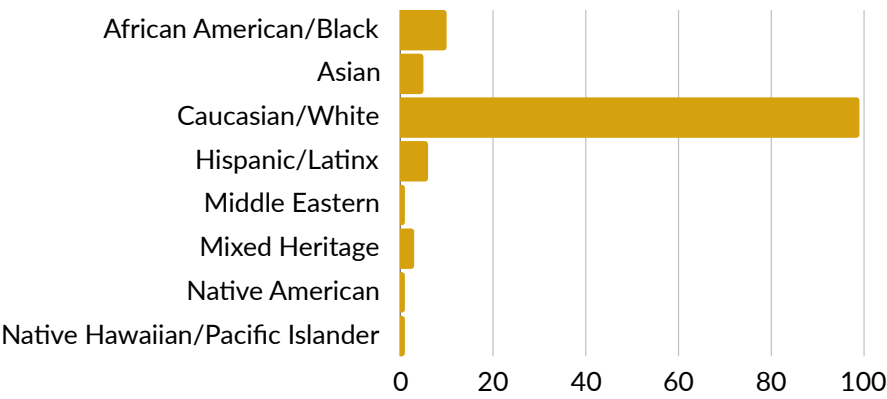
PARTICIPANT DATA

CLASS OF 2023-2024 LEADERS

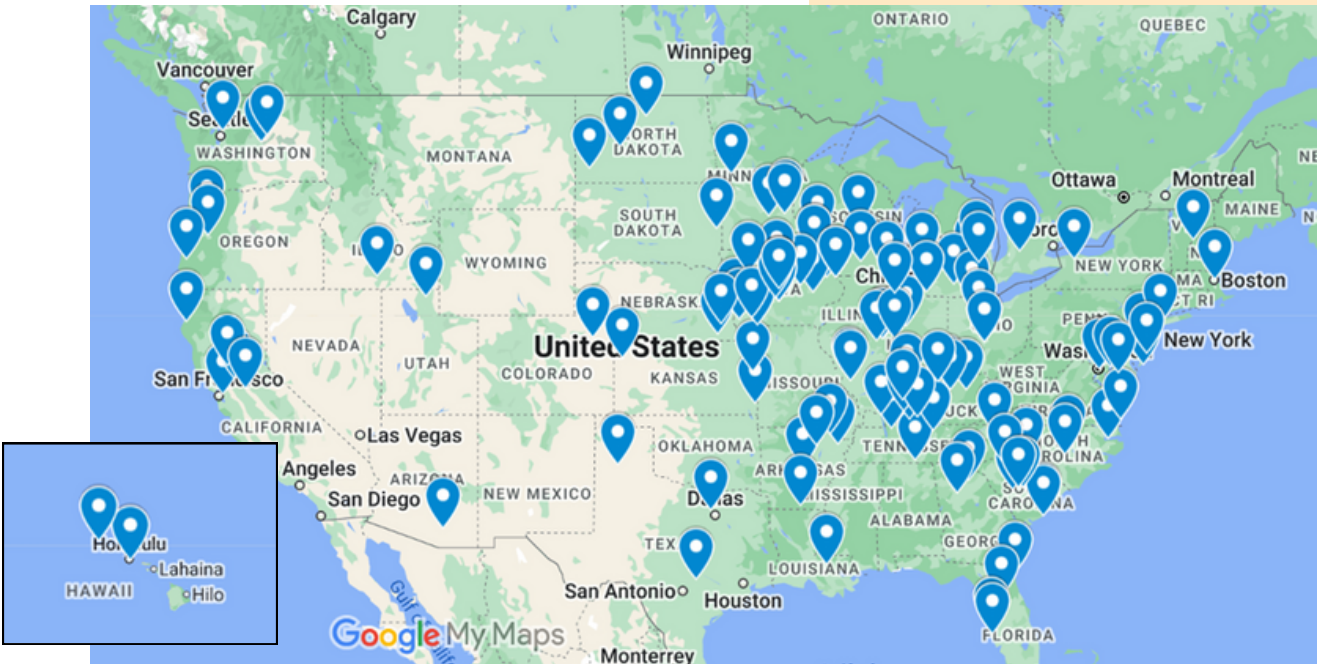
EMPLOYMENT CATEGORY



ETHNICITY



PARTICIPANT LOCATIONS



APPLICANTS

135

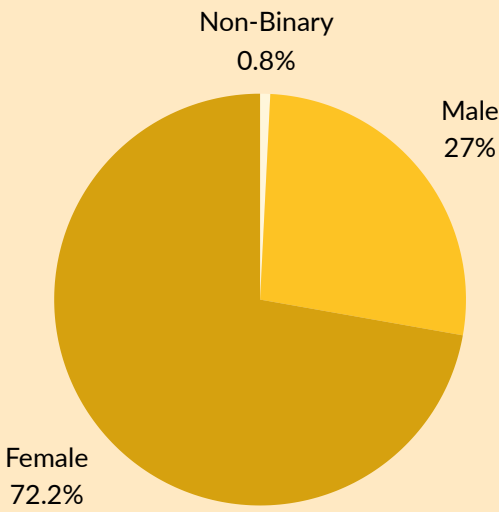
PARTICIPANTS

128

STATES/TERRITORIES/ PROVINCES REPRESENTED

36

GENDER



PROGRAM TIMELINE

MODULE 1 - FALL, 2023

- Program kickoff webinar
- Define leadership and your leadership style
- Address barriers to leadership
- Receive tools to serve as an SWCS leader and ambassador

MODULE 3 - SPRING, 2024

- Put your training into practice and host a conservation activity in your area
- Receive SWCS support, resources, and local contacts

Graduate from the program and continue your leadership through SWCS with your new skills and network!

MODULE 2 - WINTER, 2024

- Virtual Conservation Events Planning Workshop
- Connect with other Emerging Leaders and Industry professionals
- *(Optional)* Virtual work sessions to address your event planning questions as they arise

Serve as a local mentor! Sign up at: https://SWCS.forms.tack.com/forms/23_elp_es

MODULE 4 - SUMMER, 2024

- *(Optional)* Attend the 79th SWCS International Annual Conference (participants receive a complimentary registration)
- Reflect on the program and your experiences
- Update your resume and online presence to reflect your growth

MODULE 1

SEEING YOURSELF AS A LEADER

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

The content was very motivating. I really liked how it **emphasized knowing yourself and leading yourself first**. Also clarifying that leading does not equal managing. That really set the tone for personal development.

Everyone's positive attitude about the program! It felt great to see people so excited about the opportunity. **Feels like home already.**

I enjoyed the affirmations and reminders that **I am not expected to be perfect**, I am a young professional with minimal experience starting out, it's okay not to know everything. It is reassuring to know that **all of us young professionals are in this together and will learn and grow together as we go.**

I especially enjoyed the **vulnerable, personal stories** shared by the presenters and their real leadership journeys.

I enjoyed the positive nature, **the welcoming community**, the recognition that this is a positive step forward for us in our early career journeys, and the apparent excitement by the presenters to help us make the most of this experience.

October/November, 2023

Key Learning Skills:

- Defining your leadership style
- Learning to lead yourself through self-awareness
- Determine and address your barriers to leadership

SURVEY RESPONSES

79

PERCENT RATING THE SESSION "GOOD" OR "EXCELLENT"

94%

GUEST SPEAKER



Jaqueline Comito
Iowa State University

MODULE 2

CONSERVATION EVENT PLANNING AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

Do you have an event idea you need help executing? Could participants assist with an event you already have planned?

Submit your events and ideas:

https://SWCS.formstack.com/forms/23_elp_es

Key Learning Skills:

- Persuading and leading others
- Understanding the value of building social capital through convening people
- Growing the knowledge, skills, resource hub, and confidence of participants to hold impactful conservation meetings
- Building connections within the SWCS community

January, 2024

This module continues the participants' leadership journeys through a presentation with partners on community building and an events planning workshop. SWCS staff will host additional, optional virtual work sessions to address direct event planning questions.

Module 3 will require participants to put this knowledge into action by hosting a local conservation event.

**47% OF ELP PARTICIPANTS
ALREADY HAVE EVENTS THEY
NEED HELP PLANNING**



“[I’ll grow thorough this program by being] more confident planning events for my team as well as gain[ing] a better understanding of local and national soil health [and] conservation networks.”
– Kennedy Smith, GA

COMING NEXT:
**79TH SWCS
INTERNATIONAL
ANNUAL CONFERENCE**
JULY 21 - 24, 2024
MYRTLE BEACH, SOUTH CAROLINA

The SWCS International Annual Conference is the convergence of research, science, policy, and practice. This four-day, summer event brings together hundreds of conservation leaders from academia; the agriculture industry; nonprofits; private organizations; local, state, and federal government agencies; and more! The conference is the perfect place for our Emerging Leaders to jump start their career in conservation and network with industry professionals.



This year's conference theme, "Rising Together: Collaborative Conservation for All," challenges all conservationists to rise to the great challenges and opportunities ahead of us, together.

WWW.SWCS.ORG/24AC

Attend the event and network with the program participants! There are also opportunities for event sponsorship and individual support. Some ELP participants need additional financial assistance for travel and lodging.

SWCS AND THE NEED FOR COMMUNITY-DRIVEN CHANGE

At SWCS, we strongly advocate for community-driven innovation as the cornerstone of impactful and enduring change. We believe that genuine transformation and progress emerge from locally empowered initiatives that embrace inclusivity. Learn more about our [core values](#).

Our organizational structure and programming rely heavily on local participation of a diverse, multidisciplinary community of conservation professionals and students. Our Emerging Leaders also know this is the future of leadership in our field. We must engage, listen to, and collaborate with stakeholders to accomplish our collective goals.

“How can communities living on the land have their needs met, while maintaining healthy soil, water, air, and other natural resources? Leaders should be able to navigate these difficult relationships with empathy and be understanding of all the needs of all the stakeholders... Who should be at the table? Who is not able to advocate for themselves, but deserves a voice? And as relationships continue to evolve, [how] do we continue to support and show up for people and the land...?”
– Annie Liu, HI



Applications for the 2024-2025 Class of Emerging Leaders will open in the summer of 2024. We request you share this opportunity within your network and with your employees!



“The conservation field needs leaders who understand that these grand challenges will not and cannot be solved by individuals alone. We are stronger together, and we need leaders who are committed to supporting a conservation movement that is rooted in collective action and is building toward a future where we are all empowered to protect the natural resources on which we all rely.”
– Helen VanBeck, IL

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

We invite you to join us in empowering the next generation of conservation leaders by supporting the SWCS Emerging Leaders Program. There is currently no cost for participants to take part in the Emerging Leaders Program, and we need your help to ensure this opportunity for future leaders.

By investing time and resources in this initiative, you'll help provide tools, mentorship opportunities, and educational experiences vital for emerging leaders in the field. Your contribution will impact the growth and development of aspiring conservation professionals, ensuring the continuity and success of this program.

Sponsorship and partnership opportunities are available, offering you and your organization a chance to align with our mission of cultivating dedicated conservation leaders through community-level support.

Contact Renee Bouldin at renee.bouldin@swcs.org for more information.

