

Fish and Wildlife Conservation

Human Dimensions Option

What is it?

The human dimensions of fish and wildlife conservation are the human considerations that may be the cause or the cure for conservation challenges and threats to fish and wildlife populations. Research in human dimensions is applied social science research that informs fish and wildlife management and conservation.

The Human Dimensions Option within the Fish Conservation and Wildlife Conservation majors is designed to train undergraduate students in both natural and social sciences and better prepare them to be part of interdisciplinary teams, tackling complex fisheries and wildlife management problems.



Why do it?

The effective conservation of fish and wildlife populations requires people to engage in conservation solutions. After all, conservation strategies rarely aim to change the behavior of fish or wildlife. Instead, conservation efforts often strive to change the behavior of people.

Federal and state agencies and non-profit organizations are increasingly realizing that they must have staff skilled in working with and better understanding people - whether managing human-wildlife interactions, conducting biological monitoring on private lands, running a citizen science project, developing educational materials about fish and wildlife conservation, or engaging the community in conservation activities. Students who graduate with the Human Dimensions Options will be well-positioned for these jobs.

Students with the Human Dimensions Option who also participate in research opportunities will be competitive for Human Dimensions graduate research assistantships in fisheries and wildlife, which are offered at most land grant universities. Or, they might go on to graduate degree programs in environmental education, ecotourism, interdisciplinary conservation science, or parks and protected areas management - all areas that they can explore with this Option.



Who is it for?

Students who are majoring in Fish Conservation or Wildlife Conservation can sign up for the Human Dimensions Option. For Fish Conservation majors, this Option would be instead of the Marine or Freshwater Options. Wildlife Conservation majors can select the Human Dimensions Option within the Wildlife Conservation Major.

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Requirements

For the first two years of your Fish Conservation or Wildlife Conservation degree, most of the coursework for the HD Option is the same as the coursework for other Options (other than Social Science Statistics instead of Biological Statistics). During Junior and Senior year, HD Option students take 15 credits of human dimensions restricted electives, rather than some of the required courses and electives they would otherwise take for the majors (e.g., Genetics, Physical Science Restricted elective).



Restricted Elective Courses

Students in the Human Dimensions Option take one course in each of the 5 areas:

- » Education, Outreach, and Interpretation
- » Ethics and Humanities
- » Social Sciences
- » Stakeholder Engagement and Conflict Resolution
- » Tourism, Recreation, and Management

Each of these restricted elective areas includes several course options. For more information, see the major checksheets [<https://www.registrar.vt.edu/graduation-multi-brief/checksheets.html>] found under the College of Natural Resources and Environment.



When should I sign up?

We encourage you to declare the Option in your freshman year, but you can declare the Option as late as the beginning of your junior year. The sooner you declare the Option the sooner you will be assigned a Human Dimensions faculty mentor in the Department of Fish and Wildlife Conservation. When you declare the Human Dimensions Option we will add you to a Human Dimensions listserv to learn about opportunities specific to your interests.

Contacts:

For general academic advising information as it relates to Human Dimensions Options (requirements, checksheet questions, option declaration, etc.), contact Lauren Varboncoeur (lvarboncoeur@vt.edu).

For additional information about the human dimensions field and related careers, contact Dr. Ashley Dayer (dayer@vt.edu).

