

## Sample Statement of Interest

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### Statement of Interest – Kristen Kieta

When answering the question “why do you want to go to graduate school?” I can say with confidence and honesty that I am driven by the pursuit of knowledge of a specific environment so that one day my research can be used by land managers to restore or improve the environment in which we live. It is in this regard that I am applying to The University of Northern British Columbia; not for letters after my name or to gain approval from my peers, but because I have not yet given up on the belief that through education and research I can still make a great impact throughout my lifetime. I believe that enrolling in the Natural Resources and Environmental Studies master’s program will further focus my research interests and allow me to outline current gaps in knowledge and research that managerial and regulatory organizations need. I am resolute in my belief that the research I conduct and projects I participate in are conducted with the goal that their results will be a tangible tool for environmental managers or other cooperative agencies. In discussions with my potential supervisor Dr. Phillip Owens, it is clear that he conducts his research in this regard.

While working for the US Geological Survey, the project that I have taken the greatest interest in is an investigation assessing the effectiveness of perpetual easements on phosphorus reduction in a tributary to the Minnesota River. This study is what initially interested me in the science and design of buffers, and it is what I hope to continue to study and research during my time at UNBC. Broadly I am interested in improving water quality through best management practices, especially in agricultural areas where I have seen first-hand the negative impact of industrial agriculture. The USGS project enabled me to work with a broad coalition of scientists and land managers specializing in a range of fields including biology, hydrology, agriculture and conservation. The reason I am so enthusiastic about graduate school and more specifically about the NRES program at UNBC is because I foresee many opportunities for interdisciplinary research like what I have found through this USGS study. Beyond just focusing my research goals and expanding my knowledge of hydrologic systems, I also want my graduate program to be a learning experience in experimental design, writing proposals and technical papers, and new ways of approaching environmental problems. The impressive research facilities and unique faculty from a diverse range of scientific and management backgrounds lead me to believe I would get exactly this experience during my time at UNBC.

As I reviewed the graduate calendar on the UNBC website I saw a number of courses I would be interested in taking outside of the required core courses. One of the draws to the NRES program is its interdisciplinary nature that allows students to take electives from a broad spectrum of concentrations. In order to fulfill the 9 credits of elective courses, I would be interested in taking ENSC 651: Groundwater hydrology, BIOL 632: Aquatic Plants, GEOG 605: Fluvial Geomorphology. However, as all courses are not always offered, there are a number of other courses I am interested in including ENSC 652: Reclamation and Remediation of

Disturbed Environments, NREM 608: Watershed Management, and ENSC 660: Soil Chemical Processes and the Environment. I choose each of these courses in particular because they would both increase my knowledge of subjects directly involved with Dr. Owen's research project, but also because they are each directly related to the hydrologic career path I hope to take after graduate school.

When I first began thinking about graduate school it was with the intention of eventually becoming a professor, either at a four year college or community college. However, after spending more than two years with the USGS, it is my hope that after graduation I will find a position as a civil scientist. There is a value that cannot be monetized in much of the science being done at agencies like Environment Canada, the US EPA, and the USGS. Whereas small watershed projects and conservation groups do not have the ability to take on large scientific studies, agencies like those listed above can do so while acting as a completely neutral party, delivering solid science that can be used immediately.

I am also keenly aware that positions with federal and state governments are not easy to come by, especially in the current political climate where funding is limited and government is shrinking. It is for this reason that I am most excited about this master's program as its interdisciplinary nature and balance of research and coursework leads me to believe I will graduate with the skills needed to be successful finding employment in a variety of careers in the environmental field. In speaking with Dr. Owens and reviewing the Environment Canada project proposal, it became clear that partnerships among numerous universities and agencies are vital. Thus, it is my hope that during my time as a graduate student I would have the opportunity to develop relationships with scientists in a number of different agencies. Ultimately I intend to find a job where the work being done is of use to others in progressing towards a healthier environment and sustainable future. Only time will tell whether this will be through scientific research at a federal agency, remediation work at a consulting firm, or teaching at a community college, but regardless of my eventual career, I am confident that a master's degree from UNBC will have prepared me for any task I am asked to complete.