



## **Executive Director Washington, DC**

### **SEARCH OVERVIEW**

The Ecological Society of America (ESA) – the largest community of professional ecologists in the world – seeks an Executive Director. This is an exciting opportunity to provide vision and direction to a vibrant scientific society of 9,000 individual members globally. ESA is the flagship organization for one of the youngest, most energetic scientific fields today, with an extremely broad disciplinary scope and important policy relevance. The Society connects scientists across multi-faceted disciplines and promotes ecological science through publications, events, and educational programs. It works to infuse ecological knowledge into national dialogue and to garner federal support for ecological research.

Following more than two decades of dedicated leadership from outgoing Executive Director, Katherine McCarter, ESA is poised to enter a new era of service to its members and to society. It seeks to broaden and grow its membership; connect, support, and inspire ecologists at all career levels in all types of organizations; and raise public awareness of the vital importance of unbiased, policy-relevant science in addressing challenges to human and environmental health.

The Executive Director oversees a staff of 26 and a 2017/18 operating budget of \$5.4 million. The position calls for a dynamic leader and spokesperson who brings proven managerial and organizational leadership skills and outstanding abilities in communication, collaboration, and customer service. While scientific credentials and/or professional experience in ecology would be an asset, ESA is open to strong candidates from a range of professional backgrounds. Informed passion for ecology and the role of science in society is essential.

An eight-member search committee has been established to conduct this search on behalf of ESA's Governing Board. The search committee is assisted by Isaacson, Miller, Inc., a national executive search firm. Inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed in confidence to the search firm.

### **BACKGROUND**

Established in 1915, the Ecological Society of America is a nonpartisan, nonprofit scientific organization. Its founding purposes were to unify the science of ecology, stimulate research in all aspects of the discipline, encourage communication among ecologists, and promote the responsible application of ecological data and principles to the solution of environmental problems. The organization welcomes members from broad disciplines at all stages of their careers, including “those who have advanced the science of ecology; those who have attained recognition through their contributions to other fields, and are interested in ecology; those who have conducted researches in ecology which are not yet published; those who have the training and opportunity to conduct observations or instrumentation of importance in ecological work; and those who are interested in the application of ecological principles.”

Today, ESA is a diverse global community of approximately 9,000 scientists, researchers, decision-makers, policy-makers, and educators who are dedicated to improving society's understanding and stewardship of life on earth. The organization's goals, as stated in its bylaws, include:

- Promote ecological science by improving communication among ecologists;
- Raise the public's level of awareness of the importance of ecological science;
- Increase the resources available for the conduct of ecological science; and
- Ensure the appropriate use of ecological science in environmental decision-making by enhancing communication between the ecological community and policy-makers.

Committed both to serving members and serving society, ESA fulfills its mission through a wide range of services, programs, and initiatives. Members receive a suite of publications, including five scientific journals which are respected sources of research and analysis; convene annually for a multi-day conference to share and discuss research and relevant public policy (with 5,000 participants in 2017); and connect with colleagues between annual meetings through more than 35 regional and special interest sections and chapters. The Society also works to broadly share ecological information through policy and media outreach, education and diversity initiatives and workshops, and projects that connect ecological research and management communities. Its professional certification program certifies actively practicing ecologists at different levels who meet standards of education and experience and who adhere to high ethical standards.

ESA's highly ranked and respected scholarly journals have been a hallmark of the organization since its early years. These include its flagship title, *Ecology*, and top-ranked peer-reviewed journals, *Ecological Monographs*, *Ecological Applications*, and *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment* as well as the Open Access publication, *Ecosphere*. In 2016, ESA transitioned from self-publishing to a new seven-year partnership with John Wiley & Sons. Under this arrangement, ESA retains editorial control of the publications, and Wiley undertakes the publishing and marketing responsibilities, transitioning all ESA journals except *Frontiers* to exclusively digital publication. The partnership, which benefits from Wiley's state-of-the-art technology and global customer base, has already resulted in increased worldwide distribution of the journals and provides complimentary access to ESA publications for members. It has also given ESA greater financial stability and predictability and freed up resources that the organization can devote to other needs.

With its headquarters in Washington, DC, ESA is especially well-positioned to inform policy making and raise public awareness about the importance of sound ecological science in environmental decision making. Often in partnership with other scientific societies, ESA actively works to encourage federal support of science and weighs in on key policy issues where scientific integrity is at risk. This work, long of great interest to many ESA members, has intensified in recent years and is expected to be an ever more important part of ESA's role in the future.

### **Governance, Organization, and Finance**

ESA is governed by an elected eleven-member Governing Board which meets formally three times a year. ESA's President serves a total of three years on the Governing Board, including one as President-Elect and one as Past President. Four Vice Presidents – for Education & Human Resources, Finance, Public Affairs, and Science – and the Secretary serve for staggered three-year terms. Three Members-at-Large are elected for two-year terms, and the Secretary serves a three-year term.

Currently, ESA has five chapters (Canada, Latin America, Mid-Atlantic, Southeastern, and Southwestern) and 32 active sections, ranging from aquatic ecology – the largest and one of the oldest sections – to newer sections in such areas as environmental justice, invasion ecology, and open science. These chapters and sections foster professional collaboration by special interest or region and are the venues for members' greatest activity outside of ESA's annual meeting. They have also played an important role historically in broadening ESA membership.

ESA's staff of 26 is based in Washington, DC. The six-member senior team reporting to the Executive Director includes the Chief Financial Officer, the Editor-in-Chief of the journal *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*, and Directors of Education and Diversity, Public Affairs, Publishing and Member Services, and Science.

For FY18, ESA anticipates operating revenues of \$5.4 million. Approximately 50 percent of this is estimated to come from publications, 22 percent from the annual meeting, 12 percent from membership dues, and the remainder from grants and other sources. As of June 2016, ESA's audited net assets totaled \$4.2 million, \$3.2 million of which are unrestricted.

### **Strategic Plan**

In 2015, as the reorganization of its publications program neared completion and with the increased financial stability that came with this new arrangement, the ESA Governing Board undertook a year-long strategic planning effort to establish future organizational priorities and to formalize procedures for the Governing Board to assess progress against goals. The resulting 2016 Strategic Plan ([www.esa.org/esa/about/governance/esa-long-range-plan/](http://www.esa.org/esa/about/governance/esa-long-range-plan/)) identified enhanced member services and an emphasis on communications as ESA's highest priorities for the coming three to five years. Under this plan, ESA has committed to:

- Develop a comprehensive communications strategy that encompasses the range of diverse communication channels and spans the activities of the Society;
- Strengthen the programs, benefits, and networking opportunities for non-academic ecologists (currently 30% of the Society's membership); and
- Increase benefits for academic scientists at multiple career stages.

Implementation of the plan is now underway, and ensuring its success will be a key focus for the incoming Executive Director.

### **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Reporting to the ESA Governing Board and working in close partnership with its President, the Executive Director is the chief executive officer of ESA with oversight of all its activities and responsibility for its financial wellbeing.

The core objectives for the Executive Director are as follows:

- Lead the implementation of the strategic plan and ensure that ESA's organizational structure and resource allocation are well-aligned with its direction and goals.
- Provide disciplined organizational vision and management, ensuring long-term financial sustainability. Effectively lead ESA staff, promoting high standards of excellence and accountability. Foster a culture of openness, accessibility, inclusivity, and teamwork.
- Ensure a strong ongoing partnership with John Wiley & Sons, upholding the rigor and quality of ESA publications while keeping close watch on trends, opportunities, and potential threats to the publishing enterprise.
- Retain, grow, and broaden the Society's membership. Help make ESA ever more relevant and accessible to today's multi-faceted community of ecologists, including those in academia, government, and the private sector, so that members value and deepen their connection to the organization. Support members' professional development and help them forge connections to colleagues across sectors and disciplines. Pursue innovations to advance collaboration, skill-building, and action at the chapter and section levels.

- Raise the profile of ecology as a dynamic, highly impactful and interdisciplinary field of endeavor and of the ESA as an influential voice for the field. Support and coalesce members as they play more prominent, public-facing roles. Nurture and develop diverse new and younger leaders for ESA and the profession while still drawing upon and energizing key leaders of the past. Maintain the Society's standards of academic rigor and respect even as it works to influence public policy.
- Significantly enhance ESA's digital presence across multiple platforms including via social media and through a redesigned website. Strengthen internal technology capabilities to better serve ESA membership and reach decision-makers and the public.
- Raise the visibility of ESA broadly and heighten its presence in Washington, DC. Forge productive relationships with public officials, governmental and non-governmental agencies, and the media. Make the case for the relevance of ecological sciences to issues of economic prosperity, equity, human health and wellbeing, climate change, and other major societal concerns.
- Pursue new and enhanced revenue sources for the Society, including where possible, philanthropic support.
- Continue to build, strengthen, and promote ESA's certification program. With increasing demand for certification in the profession, ESA's program has the potential to play an even more important role in furthering diverse career opportunities for ecologists and in defining professional standards for members and nonmembers alike.
- Set a standard for diversity and inclusion within and among ESA's membership, board, staff, and partners, and in the field of ecology as a whole.

## **QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE**

For this pivotal role, ESA will search broadly for a leader who embraces ESA's mission. The Executive Director must relish the challenge of attending to a complex and diverse membership who share organizational authority and have high expectations for both service and leadership. Although ESA's next Executive Director could be an ecologist with organizational management experience, candidates are welcome from outside the field if they have a strong belief in the importance of science and specifically the importance of ecology. Abilities to innovate, inspire and mobilize others, understand and leverage technology, and circulate widely are all important.

In addition, the qualities of an ideal candidate include:

- Passion for science and the vital work of scientists in society. Appreciation for the role of research and the challenges facing researchers today.
- Organizational leadership experience within a multi-million dollar organization. Proven business acumen. Discipline and focus in setting clear priorities, meeting or exceeding goals, delegating effectively, and running a fiscally sound operation. Experience in a scientifically based organization or association would be an asset, and experience working closely with or reporting to an engaged board is preferred.
- Knowledge, interest, and experience with new communications technologies and platforms. Inventiveness in how the use of these technologies might enhance the ESA's purposes and its members' work and careers.

- Proven understanding of the science/policy interface. Sound political judgment and media savvy. Experience with government relations and a wide network of contacts in DC. Experience building productive partnerships and strategic alliances.
- Understanding of the dynamics of a membership organization. The ability to listen well, communicate widely and frequently, and promote a sense of common purpose.
- A management style which is goal-oriented but flexible, which respects the capabilities, resourcefulness, and independence of staff members, delegates to them as appropriate, and provides them with a clear sense of direction.
- Cultural competence. Demonstrated commitment to advancing diversity and inclusion.
- Strong writing and public speaking skills.
- Integrity, good humor, diplomacy, patience, warmth, resilience, and considerable energy.

#### **TO APPLY**

Inquiries, nominations, and applications (including resume and 1-3 page cover letter) may be directed in confidence to:



Karen Wilcox, Vice President  
Karen McPhedran, Associate  
Isaacson, Miller  
[www.imsearch.com/6341](http://www.imsearch.com/6341)

*The Ecological Society of America is an Equal Opportunity Employer and  
we seek and welcome a diverse pool of candidates in this search.*

Applications received by November 1, 2017 will be assured full consideration. The ESA Governing Board expects to announce the selection of its Executive Director in the first quarter of 2018.