

2026 Jobs in Environmental Toxicology (For students with a B.S or M.S. degree)

Project Descriptions

The student contractor will work with scientists in the Ecology and Toxicology branches of the U.S. Geological Survey Columbia Environmental Research Center to support multiple research efforts. Projects include:

- Acute and chronic laboratory exposures of freshwater insects, mussels, and fish to emerging contaminants
- Aquatic community mesocosm experiments evaluating the fate and effects of contaminants
- Field assessments of freshwater ecosystems impacted by pollution or environmental stressors

Types of Services Required

The student contractor will assist with a suite of laboratory, field, and data management responsibilities primarily in Columbia, Missouri. Duties include:

Laboratory, Field, and Data Responsibilities

- Support laboratory and mesocosm studies in the Ecology and Toxicology branches
- Preparation of biological samples for chemical analysis
- Maintain aquatic organism cultures and perform other laboratory activities, as needed
- Enter, harmonize, and summarize laboratory and environmental datasets
- Data management of laboratory and field-collected datasets, occasional statistical analysis
- Assist with figure preparation, data summaries, and report development
- Support occasional field sampling of chemical and biological matrices in freshwater ecosystems

Project Independence and Professional Development

- Student contractors will have opportunities to lead components of ongoing projects
- Student contractors may develop side projects using collected data if they fit within program goals
- Publication or presentation of student contractor-led work is possible if desired and supported by project timelines
- The student contractor may also assist with other research within the Ecology and Toxicology Branch, as needed

Requirements

Applicants must have completed a Bachelor of Science degree or be nearing completion of their Bachelor of Science in the current academic term. Individuals with a Bachelor of Science or Master of Science degree are encouraged to apply. Degrees should be in environmental science, ecology, toxicology, or a related discipline. Terminal degrees (either Master's or Bachelor's) must have been completed less than one year prior to

appointment. Former students who graduated more than 12 months ago and are not currently enrolled are not eligible.

Required qualifications

- Experience working in a laboratory setting, including following SOPs and QA/QC procedures
- Basic proficiency with computers, spreadsheets, and data entry
- Strong interpersonal skills suited to collaborative field and lab environments
- A valid driver's license

Preferred qualifications

- Experience or interest in ecology, toxicology, or environmental chemistry
- Experience with R and analyzing environmental datasets
- Experience conducting field work, particularly in aquatic ecosystems
- Experience or interest in freshwater organisms including freshwater insects, mussels, and fish

Description of working conditions

Work will take place primarily in office and laboratory settings at the U.S. Geological Survey Columbia Environmental Research Center. There may be occasional fieldwork associated with this position. Fieldwork will occur in a wide range of weather and environmental conditions. If overnight travel is required for extended field operations, lodging and per diem will be provided.

Compensation rate applicable to the specified education level and locality

Compensation is commensurate with the level of education and experience, as follows:

\$21.01 per hour for a Bachelor of Science degree, or \$38.52 for a Master of Science degree

There is no salary withholding from contractor compensation. Student contractors must pay for their own social security, health insurance, and any applicable taxes. Student contractors are responsible for all costs of transportation to and from the principal duty station location (Columbia, Missouri). The Government does not provide housing, meals, or other living expenses while working at the principal duty station. Transportation will be provided to and from field investigation site(s). Meals/cost of food while on travel away from the principal duty station at field investigation sites will be provided by the USGS in the same manner as for federal employees, in accordance with the Government Travel Regulations. The position is a contract position, and not a federal government position.

Principal Duty Station

USGS Columbia Environmental Research Center
4200 New Haven Rd
Columbia, MO 65201

How to apply

The anticipated start date is in summer 2026 and will continue through Summer 2027. The contract may be renewed for 1 additional year.

The job will remain open until filled, but it is anticipated that all selections will be made in the Spring or Summer of 2026. After selection, selected applicants will be required to provide an official transcript and to register as a contractor, including acquiring and providing a UEI number to USGS. A UEI number is required for all federal contracts. There is no charge for a UEI number. No work can be performed, and no payment can be provided prior to USGS receipt of the applicant's UEI number. Successful candidates are contractors and will be responsible for withholding of state and federal taxes.

In responding to this USGS contract opportunity, interested students should submit a cover letter and resume that includes: full legal name of the student, mailing address, telephone number, email address (if available), date of birth, place of birth, citizenship (if not a US citizen, provide immigration/VISA status), education (including descriptions of relevant classes) and work or volunteer experience related to the scientific field. In addition, a copy of the most recent transcript listing courses taken and the student's overall GPA should be submitted. Review of application materials will begin in Spring 2026 and will continue until the position is filled.

Applicants should submit their materials to Dr. Christopher Kotalik (ckotalik@usgs.gov) and Dr. Brittany Perrotta (bperrotta@usgs.gov). Additional information about the position can be requested by email inquiry.