

THE JANICE LEE FENSKE EXCELLENCE IN FISHERIES MANAGEMENT FELLOWSHIP

The Department of Fisheries and Wildlife (FW) at Michigan State University is currently accepting applications for the Janice Lee Fenske Excellence in Fisheries Management Fellowship. Jan Fenske was the first female biologist for the Fisheries Division of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. During her 27 years of service, her love of the environment compelled her to work untiringly for the long-term protection and sustainable use of the State's aquatic resources. The intent of this award is to honor Jan's attitude, deep commitment to the resource, integrity, and memory by providing graduate students in FW with additional financial and mentoring opportunities to assist them in developing successful careers in fisheries management. For more information about Jan Fenske, refer to the [Biography of Janice L. Fenske](#) on the Michigan Chapter of the American Fisheries Society website.

Financial Award and Mentoring Experience

A single recipient will receive a financial award and be engaged through a rich mentoring experience. Funding for this award is spread out over the fall, spring, and summer semesters. The recipient is expected to work closely with a university mentor and with a mentor from a state or federal fisheries management agency to address a practical issue facing the agency. Through these mentoring relationships, it is expected that the award recipient will benefit greatly from collaborations with university and agency mentors, from interactions with others in the agency, and from their focused consideration of a high priority, real-world issue that challenges the management agency.

Eligible state agencies include fisheries management agencies in Michigan, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. Tribes who are federally recognized under the 1836 Treaty of Washington are also eligible. Eligible federal agencies include the Great Lakes Fishery Commission in Ann Arbor, MI and the US Fish and Wildlife Service's Ecological Services Office in East Lansing, MI.

Application Requirements

To apply for this fellowship, the applicant **must be a graduate student of the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife at Michigan State University during the Fellowship award year**. Applicants may be Master's or Doctoral students in the initial stages of their research program. Applications will be evaluated based on requirements listed below, and application materials shall include:

1. A cover letter that clearly articulates the applicant's career goals and demonstrates evidence of leadership potential in the field of fisheries management.
2. A resume or CV that includes the following information (along with other relevant information):
 - a. Educational history including:
 - i. Overall GPA and GPA in the major field of study for each degree earned.
 - ii. Overall GPA and GPA in the major field of study for completed semesters in the current program of study.
 - iii. Relevant courses taken for each degree earned.
 - iv. Relevant courses completed or enrolled in as part of the current program of study.
 - v. Graduate Record Exam (GRE) scores.

- b. Employment or volunteer activities in the field of fisheries management.
 - c. Employment or volunteer activities and leadership roles in academic or civic communities.
 - d. Affiliation with a State or Student Chapter of the American Fisheries Society, including the initial year of membership, meeting attendance and participation, committee involvement, and presentations made at chapter meetings.
 - e. Affiliation with the American Fisheries Society Parent Organization, including the initial year of membership, meeting attendance and participation, committee involvement, and presentations made at annual meetings of the Society.
3. Identification of specific mentors within FW and within an approved mentoring agency.
 4. Identification of a specific project that is of high priority to the mentoring agency and that addresses a practical application of fisheries management, as opposed to more theoretical research. This project may be a component of the applicant's graduate research project; however, it must be accomplished within one year.
 5. A clear project proposal written by the applicant with guidance from the mentors. The project proposal should include the need, goals, objectives, methodology, expected outcomes, and time frame.
 6. Identification of time constraints for accomplishing the project, including a description of how the management agency project fits with the applicant's class schedule, research requirements, and other responsibilities.
 7. A separate letter of recommendation from each of the applicant's mentors in FW and the mentoring agency. In their letters, mentors should describe their commitment to meet with the applicant for feedback and planning over a one-year period. The mentors are expected to file quarterly reports on the fellowship experience and attend the final meeting with the Fellowship Review Committee. The mentors should also describe their ability to guide the applicant in the following areas:
 - Act as a source of information on the mission and goals of FW and the mentoring agency
 - Give feedback on observed performance
 - Provide recommendations on activities that will add to experience and skill development
 - Provide encouragement
 - Provide opportunities and resources
 - Provide increased exposure and visibility through attendance at various meetings both within and outside the mentoring agency
 - Assist in planning a career path

In the letter of recommendation from the FW mentor, it should also be acknowledged that the funding provided with this fellowship is *in addition* to other assistantship or fellowship support held by the applicant during the Fenske Fellowship period. The FW mentor should indicate what other support will be available to the student during this period. The Fenske award is intended to support the additional efforts undertaken by the awardee for their Fenske project, not their thesis or dissertation research.

8. Unless the applicant is being sponsored by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Fisheries Division, a letter of recommendation from the head of the mentoring agency is needed.

Beginning the Application Process

Interested applicants are encouraged to contact the Review Committee via e-mail prior to formal application. Upon request, a committee member will advise prospective students on the application process and will provide guidance on connecting with mentors and mentoring agencies. Applicants are also encouraged to invite their academic advisors to contact the Review Committee.

Review Committee Members:

Mary Bremigan, Fisheries and Wildlife, Michigan State University, bremigan@msu.edu
Randy Claramunt, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, claramuntr@michigan.gov
Dana Infante, Fisheries and Wildlife, Michigan State University, infanted@msu.edu
Jessica Mistak, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, mistakj@michigan.gov
Seth Herbst, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, herbsts1@michigan.gov

Application Submission

Electronic submissions (single PDF document) are preferred. Application materials should be sent to:

Janice Lee Fenske Excellence in Fisheries Management Fellowship Committee
c/o Dr. Dana Infante
Department of Fisheries and Wildlife
480 Wilson Road
East Lansing, MI 48824
infanted@msu.edu

DUE DATE FOR ALL APPLICATION MATERIALS: January 16, 2026 at 5 PM

Acceptance

Applicants will be notified of their acceptance status no later than April 17, 2026. Once accepted, the awardee will be responsible for reporting requirements that include quarterly progress reports, publications, and formal presentations described in more detail below.

Fenske Fellowship Reporting Requirements

1. **Quarterly Updates** – The Fellow must provide the Review Committee with quarterly updates on the project and the Fellowship experience.
 - a. Quarterly updates will be due by September 30, December 31, March 31, and June 30. These may be written in a Word document or an e-mail sent to the Review Committee. In these reports, please comment on the following:
 - *What is going well?*
 - *What is not working out as planned/what challenges have you faced?*
 - *What additional support or opportunities would you like to receive from the fellowship experience?*
 - b. The fall quarterly update may take place during a face-to-face meeting attended by the Fellow, the Mentoring Committee, and the Review Committee.

2. **Oral Presentations** – The Fellow must orally present project progress or results either during the Fellowship or the following year in at least two of the following venues:
 - a. The Department of Fisheries and Wildlife’s Annual Graduate Student Research Symposium.
 - b. The Michigan Chapter of the American Fisheries Society Annual Meeting.
 - c. The Midwest Fisheries and Wildlife Conference.
 - d. The American Fisheries Society Annual Meeting.
3. **Project and Fellowship Engagement** – The Fellow must participate in at least two opportunities to further promote their project and the Fellowship experience either during the Fellowship or the following year. Examples include:
 - a. Write an article for the annual MSU Fisheries and Wildlife Spotlight Magazine, produced by graduate students of the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife.
 - b. Participate in a podcast (e.g., American Fisheries Society [Beneath the Surface](#), [The Fisheries Podcast](#)).
 - c. Host a webinar through entities such as the [American Fisheries Society](#) or the Michigan Chapter of the American Fisheries Society.
4. **Fellowship Network** – During the Fellowship and in following years, help grow the Fenske Fellowship network by conducting the following activities:
 - a. Meet with previous Fenske Fellows during the Fellowship and, following the Fellowship, meet with prospective Fellowship applicants.
 - b. While a current fellow, assist with obtaining updated contact information for previous Fellows. This may occur by sending an introduction email to previous Fellows and asking for updated contact information.
 - c. Attend informal gatherings during the annual American Fisheries Society meeting or other meetings where Fellows are in attendance. Current Fellow will be responsible for reaching out to past Fellows to organize these social gatherings with input from committee members.
 - d. Maintain Fenske Fellowship activity information on the internet, including but not limited to Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/msufenskefellows>) and the Fenske blog <https://fenskefellow.wordpress.com/>.
5. **Final Report** – Final reports must be submitted within 3 months of the end of the Fellowship.
 - a. The Fellow must prepare a final report for the Review Committee that describes the fellowship project in detail, their experience as a Fellow, participation in the Fellowship Network, lessons learned, and advice for future Fellows.