



2027 - 2029 Margaret A. Davidson Graduate Fellowships for the National Estuarine Research Reserve System

Applicant Tips for Reserve Outreach

One of the most important first steps in the Davidson Fellowship application process is figuring out which reserve management need aligns with your research interests and the reserve with which you might like to work. This involves taking a look at the needs, identifying those that match your interests, and then reaching out to the relevant reserve to learn more about the need. This is the starting point from which you will develop your proposal. Information that you learn from conversation with the reserve will inform the project idea you develop for your proposal.

The [Request for Applications](#) outlines expectations for engaging with reserve staff. This document offers some specific tips to help you prepare for and get the most out of the conversation with reserve staff.

Keep in mind: Reserve points of contact and staff are unable to co-produce or review a proposal before it is submitted. Use the conversation to better understand the need and the reserve; do NOT expect to discuss project details.

Tips for getting started

Review the list of [reserve management needs](#) in the context of your interests.

Before reaching out to a reserve, get to know the needs of that reserve by reviewing this list. Familiarizing yourself with the needs ahead of time and figuring out what you want to better understand will set the stage for a more meaningful and productive conversation.

Ask yourself questions like the following:

- Which needs align with my research interests and why? What specific ways do I see connections to my interests?
- What am I curious about? What clarification or further explanation would be helpful to better understand the need and assess potential alignment with my interests?

Reach out to the reserve point of contact.

As soon as you have identified a need that you would like to discuss with reserve staff, reach out to the appropriate point of contact. Each need includes a reserve point of contact and email address. This reserve staff member is the best person for you to contact to schedule a conversation.

[Tips for setting your expectations](#)**Approach outreach with a curious mindset.**

Be inquisitive. The purpose of your outreach to reserves is not to “convince” the reserve of a project idea. Instead, seek to become more familiar with the reserve and its needs. Think of your outreach not as an interview, but rather a conversation to help you learn more and inform your next steps.

Look for shared interests.

At this stage of proposal development, try to learn more about the priorities of the reserve so that you can assess how your own goals and interests might intersect with those of the reserve.

[Tips for preparing your questions](#)**Ask open ended questions to spark more conversation.**

Learn more about the reserve’s needs and approaches by asking questions. Your conversations might explore topics and questions such as those below. Pick and choose according to what you already know and are curious to better understand. Ask additional questions as you like.

Suggested questions and topics:**Reserve needs**

- How or why was this need identified?
- How does this need show up in the reserve’s work or otherwise affect the reserve?
- What is important to the reserve for addressing this need?
- Is there past work that you’ve done (or are familiar with) on this need that you could share about?
- Who would likely use whatever is produced from a project addressing this need?

- Who else cares about this need? Who do you recommend I speak to about this need?

Collaborative science

- How does collaborative science fit into the work of the reserve? From your perspective, why does the reserve use collaborative science?
- How has the reserve worked with previous Davidson fellows?

Logistics

- What are potential housing accommodations at the reserve to support fellowship work on-site?
- What are research facilities and equipment that might be helpful and available for use?

