MOVING PLANTS MOVING MINDSETS: HOW ASSISTED PLANT MIGRATION CAN HELP COMBAT THE CLIMATE CRISIS

Session: In-Person

Shay Steeves*, @shaylovesearth, Program on the Environment, Political Science, University of Washington

Site Supervisor: Rowan Braybrook, Northwest Natural Resource Group

Faculty Advisor: Laura Prugh, College of the Environment, University of Washington

Assisted plant migration (APM) is a new-age tool in climate adaptation research, utilized to mitigate the environmental impacts of ecosystem degradation ensuing from the climate crisis. Assisted migration involves the human movement of plant species from their local range to a new environment likely to suffer or that is currently suffering from climate-related effects, to increase population resistance, biodiversity, and combat the effects of climate change. My research on APM involved a case study of the Stossel Creek APM scientific site in Carnation, Washington. This study aids the expansion of knowledge surrounding climate adaptation techniques that are pivotal to the health and longevity of Washington's precious forest lands. Through an in-depth holistic literature analysis of APM, interviews with the Stossel Creek staff, and analysis of the Stossel Creek Year 1-3 data set, I looked to analyze the effectiveness of the APM process and the positive environmental implications it can have on Washington's forests, as well as its barriers to implementation. My independent research of APM was supplemented through my internship with the Northwest Natural Resource Group, where I conducted forest patch cut and snow monitoring and measurement research as a parallel climate adaptation strategy which aided me in an encompassing perspective of the topic. The concluding evidence from my research showcased that APM is well on its way to being an effective fighter in the battle towards climate resiliency, despite further research being of necessity.