Rural Reporting Fellowship: Ecotrust's fellowship to support rural journalism

As more local news outlets disappear, making a living as a journalist has become increasingly difficult for those who don’t live in a big city. Seventy-three percent of all internet publishing jobs are concentrated in coastal cities. That means that journalists are becoming less connected with rural communities that depend on natural resources for economic survival and are being directly impacted by the effects of climate change. Further, the rural West is home to people—some of whom carry the legacy of oppression and unequal access to power—with diverse, and sometimes divergent, life experiences.

Climate change and racial equity—issues that are central to the work of Ecotrust—are among the most complex and important issues of our time, and rural voices are being given short shrift. Further, opportunities are being missed to center the voices of people—including Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC)—with lived experience of injustice. Despite mainstream depictions, people with these identities live in rural communities and have important stories to share. Journalists who parachute into a community for a story often miss the local nuance or subtleties of the communities they are seeking to cover. And for that, we all suffer.

In response to this journalistic landscape, Ecotrust is taking action with the Rural Reporting Fellowship. Now in its second year, the Rural Reporting Fellowship is a yearlong fellowship for a journalist living in and reporting on a rural community in Northern California, Oregon, Washington, or Alaska. By providing economic support, the Rural Reporting Fellowship enables journalists who live in rural communities to tell stories that are truly of those communities and partner with the new outlet or outlets that can ensure this perspective is amplified.

Who Should Apply?
- Journalist must be mid-career with a proven track record covering racial equity, the environment, and/or natural resource issues, and placing these stories in news outlets.
- We strongly encourage applications from journalists who identify as BIPOC and have connections to members of marginalized communities.
- The journalist must live full-time in a rural community that has a small population and is not proximate to a major city; ideally the journalist will have lived there for a while (as opposed to moving for the sake of the fellowship), though this decision will be made on a case-by-case basis. The community can be coastal or inland, as representative of Ecotrust’s work.
- Journalists currently employed by a rural news outlet who have the opportunity to sustain or expand their reporting for that outlet via the fellowship will be given strong consideration.

Stipend and Expenses:
- Fellowship is $25,000 per year with additional available funds for expenses, including travel for reporting and travel for up to two Ecotrust events.
- Fellowship stipend is to be paid quarterly, following journalist or news outlet invoice.
- Travel expenses are to be agreed on in advance, submitted, and paid upon receipt.
Editorial:
- Journalist will develop a minimum of four stories over the course of fellowship (one per quarter) with a goal of media placement for each story.
- Fellow will discuss story ideas with Ecotrust prior to developing them.
- Ecotrust does not have editorial control over stories. No mention of Ecotrust is required in the story, and Ecotrust does not review and approve stories prior to them being pitched.
- Ecotrust does not have ownership of stories, although the published or completed work can be repurposed for use on Ecotrust’s website or other materials with the fellow’s agreement.

Engagement:
Journalist and/or host news outlet will acknowledge journalist participation in the fellowship with minimum engagement of:
- Social media post announcing participation as fellow;
- Social media share of stories, alongside mention of fellowship; and
- Good-faith effort by fellow to discuss with editor inclusions of a mention of the fellowship in conjunction with supported stories, such as inclusion of reference to the fellowship in the journalist’s bio when stories are posted to media sites, mention of Ecotrust Rural Reporting Fellowship on-air, etc.

Ecotrust will announce fellowship, including clearly stating editorial independence through:
- Blog post announcing the new Rural Reporting Fellow;
- Social media posts announcing fellow;
- Social media posts sharing published stories alongside mention of fellowship;
- Linking published stories on website; and/or
- Publicizing event/s with fellow, as applicable.

The journalist will commit to two Ecotrust engagements, such as a presentation, panel discussion, public webinar, and/or donor event related to his or her reporting during the fellowship year. Timed with these events, the fellow may participate in one Ecotrust staff development activity, such as a meeting with Ecotrust’s Indigenous Fellows or a Lunch and Learn for staff.

To Apply:
- Provide a brief statement of your interest in the Rural Reporting Fellowship and your plans for reporting in 2020, should you be selected.
- If applicable, provide a brief description of the host news outlet and a brief message of interest from the publisher or editor-in-chief.
- Provide 5-7 clips related to the focus on this fellowship.
- Submit application materials to jobs@ecotrust.org by December 15, 2019.

Ecotrust will gladly provide reasonable accommodation to anyone whose specific disability prevents them from completing an application or participating in this recruitment process. Please reach out to request assistance.