CAES
The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station
Putting Science to Work for Society since 1875

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Postdoctoral Agricultural Scientist: Forest Soil Biogeochemistry

Department of Environmental Science and Forestry, The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station

Drs. Elisabeth Ward and Itamar Shabtai anticipate hiring a two-year postdoctoral scientist to lead a project investigating the impacts of beech leaf disease (BLD) on ectomycorrhizal communities and forest soil carbon dynamics. BLD is severely affecting the health of American beech in the Northeast. By reducing the photosynthetic capacity of impacted trees, BLD will likely alter ectomycorrhizal communities that rely on beech for carbon. Different taxa of ectomycorrhizal fungi can either increase or decrease soil carbon turnover. Changes in the functional composition of ectomycorrhizal communities in response to BLD could therefore affect soil carbon cycling and storage. This project leverages a network of experimental BLD treatment sites in the Northeast (CT, ME, NH) managed by the USDA Forest Service to assess how changes in the quantity and quality of organic inputs and/or the composition of ectomycorrhizal communities affect soil carbon dynamics. This is a collaborative project with Dr. Elena Karlsen-Ayala at the USDA Forest Service Northern Research Station office in Hamden, CT.

Details and Compensation: The postdoctoral scientist will be based out of the Department of Environmental Science and Forestry at CAES's New Haven campus. This is a full-time (35 hours/week) position that is funded for 2 years with the possibility of extension depending on available funding. Starting annual salary is $56,982 with competitive benefits (medical, dental, and pension), paid vacation, sick time, state holidays, and opportunities for professional development. Hours are typically 8:30 am to 4:30 pm with a 1-hr lunch break but may vary during the field season. The start date can be as early as June 1 but is flexible.

Duties: The postdoctoral scientist will coordinate all logistics and planning for the project. They will lead field and laboratory work with support and assistance from the PIs and their technicians and seasonal staff. They will analyze data, lead manuscripts, and present findings at conferences. This position will involve travel to field sites throughout New England (CT, NH, ME).

Required Qualifications: We seek applicants who are organized, efficient, dependable, and will take initiative and think creatively to improve the study. Specific qualifications include: A Ph.D. in forest ecology, soil biogeochemistry, microbial ecology or a closely related field; demonstrated field experience and the ability to perform physical labor and work safely in the forest in all weather conditions; exceptional written and oral communication skills and a scholarly publication record; demonstrated experience with data analysis in R or other coding software; a valid driver's license.

Preferred Qualifications: Experience identifying forest health issues and tree species in the Northeast; experience with soil sampling, laboratory assays, and fungal community analyses.

Application Instructions: Applicants should submit the following electronically in a single, consolidated PDF file to Dr. Elisabeth Ward (Elisabeth.Ward@ct.gov): **1)** A cover letter summarizing your qualifications and how they fit the position; **2)** a C.V.; **3)** contact information for three references along with a concise statement of their professional relationship to you; and **4)** a copy of university transcripts (official or unofficial). Review of applications will begin February 9 and continue until a suitable candidate is found.

The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station is the nation's first state Agricultural Experiment Station, founded in 1875. The main campus is located in New Haven, Connecticut. The CAES also encompasses a 75-acre research farm in Hamden, a satellite research facility and farm in East Windsor, and a research farm in Griswold. The CAES is a state-supported scientific research institution that investigates pests, pathogens, and diseases that damage trees and crops; analyzes food safety, water quality, and soil properties; studies the genetics and biochemistry of plants; and performs experiments to test new crops and the impacts of changing conditions on forests to improve the food, health, environment, and well-being of Connecticut residents.