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SCHOOL OF FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE SCIENCES

How the COVID-19 pandemic influenced immigrant labor in the forest industry M.S. Research Assistantship

College of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences, Auburn University

The H-2B guest worker program, implemented in 1986 by the DOL, is designated for temporary non-agricultural work for industries experiencing labor shortages. This important program allows 66,000 visas per year with periodic congressional expansions raising the number of available visas two to three-fold. The primary work done by H-2B workers in forestry is tree planting, as well as other labor-intensive forest operations, including pre-commercial thinning, selective herbicide applications, pine straw raking, boundary line painting and nursery production. Virtually all H-2B workers in forestry are men who work in crews, traveling together from place to place, working as hard as they can as most are paid piece rate.

In 2020 the onset of pandemic has raised number of questions for forest operations labor and the impacts on forestland owners. There is a lack of understanding of how the COVID 19 pandemic impacted the H2B labor force, their health, their ability to conduct forest management operations, and the impact on the forest industry. Example research questions for this project include:

- How did the COVID 19 pandemic influence the recruiting and supply of H2B labor in the forest industry?
- What were the additional costs to H2B workers and/or contractors a result of the pandemic?
- Did changes in H2B labor change or delay any landowner scheduled management practices?

Applicants should possess bachelor's degree in: Natural Resources Management, Forest Management, Conservation Social Sciences, or related social science or environmental field. Undergraduate research experience is preferred. Spanish skills are a plus. Applicants should have strong interpersonal skills and a strong independent work ethic. Peer reviewed publications are expected as a product of this research.

A stipend is available and pays \$18,000. The project will begin in May/June 2022 and last 2 years. A tuition waiver accompanies this assistantship. Details for application to the graduate school are available at: <http://www.grad.auburn.edu/> Review of applications will begin on **April 15st** and review will continue on a rolling basis until the position is filled.

Interested applicants should send a 1-page cover letter (outlining their qualifications for the project and how this specific social science position will further their career goals), resume, copies of transcripts and GRE scores (if available), and contact information for 2 references to: morsewc@auburn.edu
Your email should have the subject line: *MS application: COVID-19 pandemic and immigrant labor*

Additional information may be obtained by contacting one of the two co-advisors:

Dr. Wayde Morse at: morsewc@auburn.edu /Morse lab information: <https://morsecsslab.weebly.com/>
or Dr. Beau Broadbeck at: brodbam@auburn.edu

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