



The mission of The Nature Conservancy is to preserve the plants, animals and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive.

Colorado Native Awarded Grant from The Nature Conservancy and University of Rhode Island for Marine Conservation Research

NARRAGANSETT, RI — June 4, 2007 — The Nature Conservancy and the University of Rhode Island (URI) today announced that Kelly Starr Hanks, a native of Centennial, CO, will receive a \$20,000 grant over two years for marine conservation research. Hanks will be conducting a study to identify the locations and value of mangrove forests and salt ponds in the rapidly developing coastal areas of the British Virgin Islands.

For the second year, the Conservancy and URI have awarded grants to support students working in coastal and marine conservation science and policy in collaboration with URI faculty.

“These grants and the partnership between URI and the Conservancy is supporting the next generation of marine conservation scientists,” said Lynne Hale, director of the Conservancy’s [Global Marine Initiative](#). “As oceans and coasts continue to face increased threats, new and innovative thinking and research, such as what Hanks is pursuing, are needed to help protect our marine resources.”

The program provides a valuable collaboration said M. Beverly Swan, URI provost. “We are a research university. As such, we strive to involve students directly in research. This program is a model both of our goal and our accomplishments. We are extremely proud of these students.”

Hanks’ research of mangrove forests and salt ponds in the British Virgin Islands will be overseen by Dr. Graham Forrester and Dr. Lianna Jarecki. The forests and ponds play an important role in the quality of the islands’ overall ecosystem but because of their coastal location human development can pose sediment, nutrient and pollutant threats. On the island of Tortola, 85 percent of the original salt ponds have been filled in for construction or used as waste dumps.

“Accurate mapping and identification of the threats to mangroves will help managers prioritize sites for protection and mitigate future damage to preserve the quality and diversity of these coastal systems, including seagrass beds and coral reefs,” Hanks said in her abstract.

With more than 100 marine projects in 22 countries and all coastal U.S. states, The Nature

Conservancy focuses on marine conservation that achieves demonstrable results. Working with partners, the Conservancy creates lasting conservation results that benefit marine life, local communities and economies.

The Nature Conservancy is a leading conservation organization working around the world to protect ecologically important lands and waters for nature and people. To date, the Conservancy and its more than one million members have been responsible for the protection of more than 15 million acres in the United States and have helped preserve more than 102 million acres in Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific. [Visit The Nature Conservancy on the Web at www.nature.org](http://www.nature.org).

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