



Meet Alan Cai

Alan Cai, Ph.D. Student
Watershed Sciences
Colorado State University
Alan.cai@colostate.edu

Alan Cai is a Watershed Sciences PhD student at Colorado State University – Fort Collins in his first year. He holds a M.S. in Environmental Systems from the University of California, Merced. His research interests include remote sensing of freshwater ecosystems and water resources management. He previously researched the implementation of environmental flows at western United States hydropower facilities. He believes these research topics are well-aligned with UCOWR’s mission of developing interdisciplinary collaborations to address current water resource challenges. His other recent experience includes being a hydrological field technician for Trout Unlimited in the Sierra Nevada region of California.

“As our first student member of the Board of Directors, how do you plan to bring a student perspective to the organization, including one of our primary missions of planning and convening a national annual water resources conference?”

My main objective in this position would be to create relevant programming for and promote student engagement in the upcoming UCOWR/NIWR annual conference at my university, CSU-Fort Collins. I pledge to work with my advisor (Dr. John Tracy) in organizing student activities at the conference, providing support to him for the field trips he is organizing, and facilitating meetings between student attendees and CSU/Fort Collins water resources experts. I have previously attended research conferences and am familiar with what to communicate to student attendees about logistics for registration and networking, conference safety and inclusiveness, and other relevant topics. In mid-January, I proposed a number of ideas for activities to the UCOWR 2023 Conference Planning Committee, including lab tours, a water-focused trivia night at a brewery, a local hike, a graduate school/career-focused student panel, and a networking event with conference exhibitors, that were well-received.

Regarding other potential contributions to UCOWR, I would work on creating a list of undergraduate and graduate student opportunities (e.g., research traineeships, field camps, technician positions, graduate research assistantships, fellowships) sourced from UCOWR member schools. By putting this list on UCOWR’s website, students could better understand the range of opportunities for their advancement. I might also gauge interest among UCOWR member institutions in exchanging best practices for diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives specifically in a water resources context. I currently co-lead a graduate student-run evaluation of my home department’s DEI and professional development efforts and would be open to extending this kind of project by working with UCOWR.