

Leona Neftaliem

leonan@stanford.edu | Stanford, CA, USA | [Personal Website](#) | [LinkedIn](#) | [GitHub](#)

Education

Stanford University, Stanford, CA, USA

- Ph.D. Candidate in Environment and Resources Fall 2022 - Present
- Ongoing research:
 - *Towards a North American Urban Tree Spatial Dataset*
 - [*Community-Engaged Air Quality Monitoring of South Baltimore, Maryland*](#)
- Committee: Drs. Chris Field (Lead Advisor), Rob Jackson (Lead Advisor), and Nicole Ardoin

Oxford University, Oxford, England

Feb. 2024 - May 2024

- Course: Data Analysis in Ecology: Statistics for Ecologists & Field Biologists

George Washington University, Washington, D.C., USA

- B.S. Biology with honors; Minor: Sustainability Fall 2020
- Honors thesis: "How to Get Away with Decomposition: Sunlight driven decomposition of lignin in simulated wood" (Advisor: Dr. Amy Zanne)

Pertinent Experience

Climate Science Researcher, Suzie Hicks the Climate Chick

Sept. 2024 - Present

- Develop engaging educational content and curriculum to support foundational climate literacy for youth audiences
 - Featured on: [NPR, April 2025](#)
 - Awarded at the 2025 Climate Film Festival, recognizing excellence in climate-focused media

Biological Science Technician, Smithsonian Environmental Research Center

Jan. 2021 - July 2022

- Built and programmed remote sensor loggers to measure CO₂ data for [GENX](#) at the [Global Change Research Wetland](#)
- Supported several ongoing climate change experiments by building sensor and heating infrastructure, and managing data (projects [here](#))
- Co-advised a George Washington University undergraduate researcher, Rose Cheney

Undergraduate Research, Dr. Amy Zanne's Lab, George Washington University

Jan. 2018 - Dec. 2020

- Completed three independent research projects on the impact of solar radiation on wood decomposition and an undergraduate honors thesis

Teaching Assistantships

Graduate Teaching Assistant, Stanford University

Jan. 2024 - March 2024

- Course: Designing Environmental Research
- Taught causal inference methods for environmental research to first-year PhD students

Undergraduate Teaching Assistant, George Washington University

Aug. 2018 - June 2020

- Courses: Introductory Biology: Cells and Molecules lab and Introductory Biology 1112: The Biology of Organisms
- Taught cellular, molecular, ecological, and evolutionary concepts and fundamental lab skills to undergraduates
- Supported additional classroom activities through ensuring lab protocols were met, grading assignments, proctoring and reviewing exams, creating lesson plans and lecturing, and holding weekly office hours

Fellowships and Awards

E-I PER Research Grant (\$4,000)

2025

Stanford Doerr School of Sustainability Graduate Research Grant (\$1,800)

2025

Stanford Woods Institute Environmental Ventures Project (\$60,000)

2025 - Present

SPIRE Stanford Student Impact Fund Grant (\$6,000)

2025

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<i>Smithsonian 'Life on a Sustainable Planet' Research Award (Co-PI; \$75,000)</i>	2025 - Present
<i>Stanford Community Impact Award</i>	2024
<i>Smithsonian 'Life on a Sustainable Planet' Research Award (Co-PI; \$49,188)</i>	2023 - 2024
<i>Knight-Hennessy Scholar (\$306,000)</i>	2023 - Present
<i>National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship (\$138,000)</i>	2022 - Present
<i>Stanford Doerr School of Sustainability Dean's Graduate Scholar (\$100,000)</i>	2022 - Present
<i>Stanford EDGE Fellowship (\$12,800)</i>	2022 - Present
<i>GW Undergraduate Research Fellowship (\$5,000)</i>	2020
<i>GW Sigelman Undergraduate Research Enhancement Award (\$500)</i>	2020
<i>Harlan Undergraduate Summer Fellowship (\$5,000)</i>	2019

Posters and Presentations

- Neftaliem, L.**, Rich, R. L., Mady, R., Brown, D., LaGorga, L., Smith, T., Onyango, V., Felix, A., Field, C.B., Jackson, R.B. and Cawood, A., A Community-Engaged Approach to Air Quality Monitoring in South Baltimore. American Geophysical Union, New Orleans., December 2025.
- Felix, A. E., **Neftaliem, L.**, Field, C. B. Linking Past Redlining to Present-Day Environmental Inequities in South Baltimore. SURGE Symposium, Stanford, CA, August 2025.
- Mady, R., **Neftaliem, L.**, Smith, T., Brown, D., LaGorga, L., Lucchese, V., Quigley, L., Rich, R. L., Cawood, A. Building a community-owned air quality monitoring network in Baltimore, Maryland. Conference for Advancing Participatory Sciences, Portland, OR., May 2025.
- Neftaliem, L.**, Rich, R. L., Brown, D., LaGorga, L., Rosa-Rivera, C., Hedinger, A., Jackson, R. B., Cawood, A. Community-Engaged Air Quality Monitoring of South Baltimore, Maryland. American Geophysical Union, Washington, D.C., December 2024.
- LaGorga, L., Smith, T., **Neftaliem, L.**, Noyce, G. L., Rich, R. L. Comparison and Assessment of Low-Cost, DIY Arduino-Based CO₂ Measurement System with Instrument-Measured CO₂ Flux from Automated Chambers over Three Years in a Coastal Wetland. American Geophysical Union, Washington, D.C., December 2024.
- Neftaliem, L.**, Field, C. B., Jackson, R. B. Towards a North American Urban Tree Spatial Dataset: Leveraging Urban Tree Inventories from 30 Cities in North America. American Geophysical Union, San Francisco, CA, December 2023.
- Neftaliem, L.**, Rich, R. L., Noyce, G. L. Can a DIY Arduino-based system accurately measure CO₂ flux from automated chambers? American Geophysical Union, Chicago, IL, December 2022.
- Neftaliem, L.**, Rich, R. L., Noyce, G. L. Finer Temperature Measurements and GenX Sensors. Global Research Wetland Symposium, Smithsonian Environmental Research Center, Edgewater, MD, March 2021.
- Rosenfield, M. V., **Neftaliem, L.**, Rich, R. L., Zanne, A. E. Carbon in the Capital: DC Metro carbon dioxide monitoring in the COVID-19 era. American Geophysical Union, Remote, December 2020.
- Neftaliem, L.**, Rosenfield, M. V., Zanne, A. E. How to Get Away with Decomposition: Light driven decomposition on lignin in simulated wood. Honors Thesis Seminar, Remote, December 2020.
- Neftaliem, L.**, Rosenfield, M. V., Zanne, A. E. Simulated Wood: Lignin Photodegradation. Harlan Poster Session, Washington, D.C., August 2019.

Invited Speaking Engagements

- Neftaliem, L.**, Rich, R. L., Brown, D., LaGorga, L., Rosa-Rivera, C., Hedinger, A., Jackson, R. B., Cawood, A. Breathe Baltimore: Community-Engaged Air Quality Monitoring of South

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Baltimore, Maryland. D.C. Air Research Consortium, Department of Energy and Environment, Remote, February 7, 2025.

Neftaliem, L., Rich, R. L., Brown, D., LaGorga, L., Rosa-Rivera, C., Hedinger, A., Jackson, R. B., Cawood, A. Breathe Baltimore: Community-Engaged Air Quality Monitoring of South

Baltimore, Maryland. Baltimore Office of Sustainability, Remote, January 10, 2025.

Rosenfield, M. V., **Neftaliem, L.**, Rich, R. L., Zanne, A. E. The Techno-Ecosphere: Using novel technologies to understand carbon emissions and ecosystem function. Smithsonian Gardens, *Let's Talk Gardens* Webinar, Remote, June 24, 2021.

Rosenfield, M. V., **Neftaliem, L.**, Rich, R. L., Zanne, A. E. Carbon in the Capital: DC Metro carbon dioxide monitoring in the COVID-19 era. Smithsonian Gardens, Remote, October 30, 2020.

Rosenfield, M. V., **Neftaliem, L.**, Rich, R. L., Zanne, A. E. Carbon in the Capital: DC Metro carbon dioxide monitoring in the COVID-19 era. Co-lecture in COVID-19 and the Environment (Walsh School of Foreign Service), Georgetown University, Remote, October 28, 2020.

Publications

Neftaliem, L. (2024, October 23). *Breathing life into ghost towns: Harnessing the promise of €1 homes*. Knight-Hennessy Scholar Insights. [Link](#).

David J. Hayes, Stephen Ferruolo, David Haines, Katelyn McEvoy, **Leona Neftaliem**, Lisa Roberds, Siddharth Sachdeva, Celina Scott-Buechler, Angela Tsao, Katie Vogelheim, Brad Ward, Callie Walker, Benjamin Zehr, Measuring the Carbon (and Other) Benefits of Climate-Smart Forestry Practices (Policy Lab: Harvesting Climate Benefits from Agriculture and Forestry Practices (808Y); Teaching/Supervising Team: David J. Hayes). [Link](#).

Leadership, Volunteer, and Internship Experience

<i>Stanford Women's Community Center</i> , STEM Mentor	Oct. 2025 - Present
<i>Knight-Hennessy Scholars</i> , Admission Ambassador	Sept. 2025 - Present
<i>Stanford Sustainability Undergraduate Research Program</i> , Mentor	June 2025 - Aug. 2025
<i>Stanford Doerr School of Sustainability</i> , Recruitment Ambassador	Feb. 2025 - Present
<i>The Building Africa's Cities Summit</i> , Convener	Jan. 2025 - Present
<i>United Nations Special Rapporteur</i> , Consultant	April 2025
<i>OMG-YA Science Fiction Novel</i> , Researcher	Jan. 2024 - June 2025
Featured in: Knight-Hennessy Scholars KHeystone Projects, August 2024	
<i>Stanford Doerr School of Sustainability Leadership</i> , Peer Wellness Liaison	July 2023 - July 2025
<i>Earthtones Environmental Justice Art Festival</i> , Committee Member	Jan. 2023 - April 2023
<i>R Data Carpentries Workshop</i> , Helper	June 2022
<i>Eritrean Refugee Centre</i> , Mentor	Dec. 2020 - April 2021
<i>Ethio-Bridge</i> , Mentor	Dec. 2020 - April 2021
<i>Planned Parenthood of Metropolitan, Washington, D.C.</i> , Engagement Intern	June 2018 - Aug. 2018
<i>George Washington University Hospital</i> , Volunteer	Jan. 2018 - May 2018

Skills

Computer: R; Python; Arduino; Bash programming; CRBasic; Google Earth Engine; Jupyter Notebook; ArcGIS Pro; GitHub; EAGLE; LoggerNet; Microsoft Office

Languages: English (native), Tigrinya (native)

Research Interests

Urban ecosystem ecology; Ecosystem services; Environmental justice; Sense of place