My name is Sophie Wulfing. I am a Master’s student at the University of New Hampshire in quantitative marine ecology. My background is mostly in modeling, and I hope to apply these skills to a Fulbright Grant in Indonesia. Basically, I hope to use my experience in modeling to assess the status of small scale fisheries in the country.

Recently, fishers in Rupat Island off the coast of Sumatra have stated that dredging in the area has decimated stocks and jeopardized these fishers’ source of nutrition and income. They have petitioned President Joko Widodo to stop this dredging in order to preserve their livelihood. My plan is to conduct a stock assessment in the area through various methods, and this may depend on who I can find to be a sponsor, their resources, and what research is plausible in the area.

One method would be to conduct my own surveys, either employing local fishers in the area to help me take samples or acquiring a boat specifically for the project and collecting data myself and with other students. I could also collect data through local mobile fish vendors who typically drive from port to port to buy from small-scale fishers in the region. From them, I would record time at sea, location of fishing activity, number of fishers and total catch (i.e. species, number, and weights) in order to quantify how much is being harvested from these regions. My ultimate goal with the project is to create statistical models of how well fish populations in Rupat Island are faring, and how badly dredging in the area is altering fish population health. Due to time and resource limitations, I may not be able to collect all of the data needed on my own, and will try to couple with an NGO already working in the area in order to help them further their efforts, as well as see if they have any available data in this region.

I hope to connect with a University professor in the area not only to serve as an advisor on the research but also to provide information about the plausibility and usefulness of the project. My interests are in modeling data-deficient fisheries, so I am flexible in conducting a stock assessment in other regions of the country as well. This would depend on if I connect with an advisor who has expertise in other parts of the country where data collection is needed to understand ecosystem health. I would also love to connect with other students and take their help and advice in conducting these surveys, as well as learn from them about Indonesian culture and science. I teach the statistical program R at my school, and can provide similar help at whichever school I work with.

Thank you so much for your time, please feel free to email me at sophiewulfing@gmail.com.

Sophie