Joseph Gazing Wolf

September 28, 2025

Search Committee
Herbert Reich Chair of Natural Science
Deep Springs College
HC72 Box 45001
Dyer, NV 89010

Dear Members of the Search Committee,

I'm writing to express my enthusiastic interest in the Herbert Reich Chair of Natural Science beginning August 2026. Deep Springs' three pillars—academics, self-governance, and labor—mirror the way I was raised and the way I teach: ideas are tested in the field, community is a classroom, and responsibility is not theoretical. Over nearly four decades, I've served as a land steward, educator, and research leader across Indigenous, agricultural, conservation, government, and academic settings. I have 25 years of formal classroom teaching and more than 30 years of experiential, land-based education. My teaching is animated by a simple conviction: students learn best when they are seen, challenged, and invited to do real work that matters.

Your announcement calls for a teacher-scholar who engages students in laboratory and field studies, maintains the scientific laboratory and collections, and collaborates across the liberal arts in a small, self-reliant community. That is my home ground. I've designed and taught BIO 100 Introduction to Biology; BIO 320/321 Introduction to Ecology (with Lab); BIO 331 Animal Behavior; BIO 410 Field Methods in Conservation Biology & Ecology; BIO 423 Population & Community Ecology; PSYC 202 Research Methods; and PSYC 311 Introduction to Experimental Psychology, among others. Across these courses, I build iterative practice—field notebooks, data sheets, coding notebooks, and short analytical memos—so that students leave with calloused hands and clean code.

My concern for student learning is practical and personal. In small classes I pair close reading and problem sets with fieldwork, and I give fast, developmental feedback. We scaffold complex skills—experimental design, quantitative reasoning, and scientific writing—through cycles of proposal, pilot, critique, and revision. In labs and on the range I teach safety, humility, and care for one another. I mentor intensively, especially first-generation, rural, and underepresented students; many of my mentees co-author papers, present at conferences, and transfer to selective universities. Along the way, we treat Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Western science as complementary ways of knowing, learning how to ask better questions together.

Because Deep Springs is a small, committed, and self-reliant community, I invest as much care outside the classroom as within it. I have led and lived within working ranch and preserve operations—managing bison and cattle herds, irrigation systems, rotational grazing, range monitoring, equipment maintenance, and emergency protocols. Those experiences translate directly to your labor program and to course-embedded projects that contribute to the ranch and the valley. I'm comfortable sharing meals, joining work crews at dawn, advising student committees, and being present in the daily life of the College.

If invited to serve, I would maintain and enrich the lab and teaching collections. I would inventory equipment and specimens; refresh safety SOPs; develop a valley herbarium and insect reference collection; assemble soils, rocks, skulls, and plant specimens for natural-history practicums; and set up low-maintenance field stations for long-term monitoring (phenology cameras, soil-moisture sensors, and simple stream gauges). These assets would anchor a cycle of independent studies in which students build, maintain, and analyze datasets that future cohorts inherit.

Below are sample courses I could offer in the customary two-course/semester load (≤10 students), adapted to Deep Springs' location and to my existing syllabi. Each pairs academic rigor with hands-on, place-based learning and would rotate to ensure breadth:
• Field Ecology of Arid Lands (with Lab): ecology of the White Mountains and Deep Springs–Owens Valleys; transects, quadrats, exclosures; experimental design; analysis in R; teams establish a long-term plot network.
• Rangeland Ecology & Management (Conservation Focus): grazing systems, soils and water, forage dynamics; livestock-wildlife interactions; applied range monitoring tied to the ranch's decision cycle.
• Plants and Civilization: ethnobotany, agroecology, and Traditional Ecological Knowledge; students maintain a small teaching garden and curate herbarium vouchers.
• Animal Behavior: observational design, ethograms, and experimental tests using livestock and wildlife contexts; ethics and welfare.
• Field Methods in Conservation Biology & Ecology: GPS/GIS, UAV/remote sensing, camera traps, occupancy modeling, and science communication.
• Population & Community Ecology: from life tables to coexistence theory; students analyze datasets generated in Field Ecology and Rangeland courses.
• Introduction to Biology: a writing- and lab-intensive gateway across genetics, physiology, ecology, and evolution, emphasizing quantitative reasoning.
• Research Methods & Critical Thinking in the Natural Sciences: study design, measurement, uncertainty, and reproducible workflows across disciplines.

My teaching has been recognized with Outstanding Lecturer and Outstanding Graduate Teaching Awards. More importantly, my students—especially first-generation, rural, and underrepresented students—persist, transfer, and thrive. As a researcher (PI and collaborator), I have led or co-led more than twenty projects with approximately $6.8M in total funding, published peer-reviewed papers and book chapters, and given invited talks and keynotes. Students are woven through that work—as field leads, analysts, and co-authors—so that scholarship improves teaching and teaching fuels scholarship.

I'm also eager to collaborate with the Humanities and Social Science Chairs. Natural science at Deep Springs can braid beautifully with close reading, history, and political economy. I can imagine team-taught or co-sequenced offerings such as Science, Story, and Stewardship (field ecology + environmental history and ethics) or Water, Power, and Place in the Great Basin (hydrology + politics of infrastructure and land). In committee service—admissions, curriculum, or student life—I bring patient mentorship, high standards, and a steady temperament.

Thank you for your consideration. I would be honored to join Deep Springs as the Herbert Reich Chair of Natural Science and to help students translate curiosity into competence, and competence into service. I have included the requested materials and would welcome a conversation at your convenience.

With respect and enthusiasm,

Joseph Gazing Wolf, PhD
Executive Director, Heritage Lands Collective
Senior Global Futures Scientist, Arizona State University
Ready to relocate; available to begin August 2026.