Graduate Assistantship Position Available in the Department of Forestry at Mississippi State University

The Measurements and Spatial Technologies Lab in the Department of Forestry at Mississippi State University invites applications for a funded M.S. graduate assistantship. The selected student will work with Dr. Rajeev Bhattarai on landscape-level forest health monitoring using multi-source, multi-resolution remote sensing data.

Forests in Mississippi are critical to the state's economy, ecology, and community resilience. However, increasing threats from pest outbreaks (e.g., southern pine beetle) and invasive plant species (e.g., Cogongrass, Kudzu) pose significant risks to forest health and timber productivity. Early detection and large-scale monitoring are essential for timely intervention, yet traditional field- and aerial-based approaches are often costly and limited in scope. This project will develop scalable, remote sensing–based approaches to assess forest susceptibility and map disturbance extent and severity across Mississippi using satellite data and advanced machine learning methods.

We encourage creative, independent, and motivated applicants with interests in remote sensing, forestry, ecology, or geospatial analysis to apply. The M.S. assistantship is a two-year appointment and includes a $20,000 annual stipend, tuition waiver, and health insurance. The preferred start date is Summer 2026, with flexibility to join in Fall 2026.

Required Qualifications
Bachelor's degree in forestry, biology, ecology, geoscience, natural resource management, or a closely related field
Demonstrated excellence in written and oral English communication skills
Proficiency in GIS and remote sensing data analysis software (e.g., ArcGIS, QGIS, Google Earth Engine, or similar platforms)

Preferred Qualifications
Strong interest in problem-solving and data analysis
Experience or interest in computer programming (e.g., Python, R)
GRE scores (highly recommended)

Information about the Department of Forestry, Mississippi State University as well as admissions criteria can be found at https://www.forestry.msstate.edu/ and http://www.grad.msstate.edu/. Interested candidates should contact Dr. Rajeev Bhattarai by emailing a letter of interest, updated CV, undergraduate transcripts, and contact information for two references at rajeev.bhattarai@msstate.edu. Successful applicants will also be required to apply to the Graduate School at Mississippi State University. Review of applications will begin immediately and continue until the position is filled.

Mississippi State University is an equal opportunity employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, ethnicity, gender, religion, national origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, genetic information, pregnancy, gender identity, veteran status, or any other status protected by the law.