

Field Workshop 2027: Academic Program Overview

Field Workshop 2026: Designing for Adaptation in a Time of Prolonged Drought

Program details

In-person dates: July 12 - August 1, 2027

Location: Southern Colorado and northern New Mexico

Virtual sessions: Three preparatory meetings in April-June, a public webinar in September, and a closing meeting in November

Program fee: \$3,000, which covers tuition, housing, and most meals.

Information Session: November 17, 2026 -> [Registration](#)

Application deadline: December 17, 2026 -> [Application](#)

Curriculum Overview

Instructional Format

- Approximately 100 active instructional hours over the three-week field intensive, including structured seminars, field instruction, workshops, and guided synthesis sessions.
- Days are content-rich, vary by location, and include dedicated time for reflection. There is one unprogrammed day each week.
- Schedule note: In the event of disruptions such as wildfire or road closures, the schedule may be adapted.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the fellowship, participants will be able to:

1. Apply integrative research methods that connect scientific, design, policy, economic, and community knowledge.
2. Conduct place-based field inquiry using observation, listening, ethical engagement, and stakeholder mapping.
3. Describe key land and water dynamics of the Upper Rio Grande region, including watershed and aquifer systems, land and water use, and the governance structures shaping responses to change.
4. Work effectively in interdisciplinary teams to frame questions with regional partners and co-develop responses that account for ecological conditions, local knowledge, institutional constraints, and community needs.
5. Produce and present a partner-facing applied output, communicating across academic, professional, and community audiences.

Learning Modules

Module 1: Integrative inquiry and ways of knowing

Integrative research methodologies; systems thinking; observation and listening; working across disciplinary and knowledge traditions; narrative and storytelling as research and communication.

Module 2: Geologic foundations and regional landscapes

Deep-time landscape formation, headwaters dynamics, and geological processes shaping land and water systems across the San Luis Valley and Taos Plateau.

Module 3: Watershed, groundwater, and aquifer systems

Hydrology, groundwater recharge and depletion, and water movement and sharing across scales; basin conditions, competing demands, and water availability.

Module 4: Land, soil, and ecological change

Soil processes, revegetation, rangeland conditions, and land management; relationships among land use, ecological resilience, water availability, and livelihoods.

Module 5: Water governance, law, and policy

Institutions, legal frameworks, and policies shaping water allocation and management; governance responses to drought, groundwater decline, and regional change.

Module 6: Land tenure, livelihoods, and cultural identity

Land history and ownership, cultural attachments to place, and the social, economic, and political dimensions of land and water decisions.

Module 7: Acequia governance and communal systems

Indigenous and Hispano traditions of reciprocity; acequia governance, customary commons, and communal water management on the Taos Plateau; collective stewardship and decision-making.

Module 8: Working lands, rangelands, and regional economies

Ranching histories and practices, rangeland management under changing ecological and climatic conditions, land-based livelihoods, and economic pressures on working lands.

Module 9: Synthesis, integration, and communication

Integrating different forms of knowledge; narrative, visualization, and cross-audience communication; collaborative development, testing, and presentation of responses to partner questions.

Program Structure

The fellowship combines virtual preparation and follow-up with a three-week, place-based field intensive connecting fellows, regional partners, and diverse disciplinary and knowledge traditions.

Pre-Workshop (Virtual) | April–June 2027

Three virtual sessions introduce the region and integrative methods, build cohort connections, and prepare fellows for place-based inquiry.

In-Person Field Workshop | July 12–August 1, 2027

The workshop moves through three connected phases:

Phase 1: Transect

The cohort travels through the San Luis Valley and northern New Mexico's Taos Plateau for site visits, conversations, mapping, and hands-on learning, examining relationships among land, water, governance, livelihoods, and ecological change.

Phase 2: Synthesis

Three interdisciplinary teams investigate questions developed with regional partners, drawing on field observations, research, and local knowledge to develop grounded responses to regional challenges and opportunities.

Phase 3: Convergence

Teams refine their responses and integrate findings across subregions, with feedback from partners, faculty, and peers. The workshop culminates in a public symposium where fellows share their work and discuss its broader implications.

Post-Workshop (Virtual) | September–November 2027

Follow-up sessions bring fellows and partners together to share outcomes, consider potential applications, reflect on lessons, and identify opportunities for continued collaboration.

Deliverables and Completion Criteria

To complete the fellowship, each participant will:

1. Maintain a field notebook or learning journal documenting observations, stakeholder insights, questions, and systems maps.
2. Contribute to a team-based applied response developed with partner input. Typical formats include policy briefs, spatial analyses, maps, case studies, oral histories, photo essays, podcasts, design or planning concepts, and other creative storytelling outputs.
3. Participate in a presentation or sharing session where teams communicate their findings and responses to fellow participants, program partners, and relevant audiences.
4. Participate in collaborative synthesis and reflection across teams, considering how different forms of knowledge and perspectives inform responses to regional challenges.

Documentation WII can provide on request: detailed presenter roster, attendance verification, and a certificate of completion listing instructional/contact hours.

FAQs for University Administrators

What is the Wright-Ingraham Institute (WII)?

The [Wright-Ingraham Institute](#) is a private, nonprofit 501(c)(3) education and research organization established in Colorado in 1970 by architect Elizabeth Wright Ingraham. WII's head office is located in New York, and the Institute delivers field-based education and research programs in the American West and elsewhere. Field Workshop 2026 builds on WII's over 50-year legacy of field-based education that links science, design, and community knowledge.

How is the program supported?

Field Workshop 2026 is supported through grants and charitable contributions (which cover ~90% of the full cost of participation). WII's regional programs have been supported by grants, private and foundation support, and a small endowment.

Is this a legitimate, structured program (not travel/tourism)?

Yes. The fellowship has a defined curriculum, expert instruction, required participation, and concrete deliverables. It includes approximately 100 active instructional hours over three weeks (structured sessions, field instruction, and guided synthesis work).

Is this for academic credit?

At your institution's discretion. While Field Workshop does not award credit directly, universities may award credit or recognize participation as fulfilling an internship, independent study, or other program requirement. We're happy to provide documentation to support these arrangements.

Who participates?

Fellows are graduate students and early-career professionals from diverse disciplines, and cohorts include participants from diverse geographic backgrounds.

What does the program fee cover?

The \$3,000 program fee covers tuition, housing, and most meals during the three-week program.

What is not covered by the fee?

Travel to/from the program region (and any incidental personal expenses not included above) are the participant's responsibility.

Who should we contact to verify details or request documents?

Please contact Frida Foberg, the Wright-Ingraham Institute Field Workshop program director:
frida@wright-ingraham.org