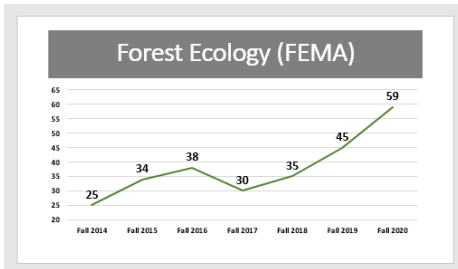


Increased Enrollment for Forest Ecology and Management

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09/03/2020



Increase in enrollment shown over time. Credit: Shelly Kotynek

Forests cover roughly 30 percent of Earth's land surface, just over 4 billion hectares. Though forests may vary from one another, they all play a vital role in the ecosystem. Forests provide species habitat, clean water, carbon storage, decreased soil erosion, climate control, and oxygen. They support economies by providing wood products and fuels. As human population and the wildland urban interface continue to grow, so does the need for forest management. Forest management allows for hazardous fuel reduction, maintenance of forest health, eradication of invasive insects and pathogens, and ecological restoration. It ensures that forests will be around for generations to come.

Utah State University (USU) offers a major that focuses on the management and ecology of forests. Through this program, students gain the knowledge required to properly manage forests. Since 2017, USU has seen a steady increase in enrollment in the [Forest Ecology and Management \(FEMA\)](#) major. Since 2014, there has been an overall growth, with only one year showing a decline. While multiple factors contribute to this growth, the addition of three faculty members (Dr. Jim Lutz, Dr. Larissa Yocom, Dr. Justin DeRose) and their efforts to increase awareness and generate excitement in this field cannot go unnoticed.