

Postdoc position: U.S.-wide estimation of land value and conservation cost

The PLACES lab at Boston University (BU) is offering an NSF-funded position for a postdoctoral researcher or research scientist with a strong skillset in spatiotemporal statistics, machine learning, or causal inference, and an interest in land conservation policy in the United States.

The successful candidate will contribute to the development of U.S.-wide, parcel-level estimates of land value and the cost of long-term conservation (land purchase, easements)*. Products will support policy analyses and decision-making processes of academic, federal, and non-profit stakeholders interested in identifying effective and equitable land use choices under the federal administration's current initiative to protect 30% of the U.S. by 2030. The research will be funded under NSF's Human-Environment & Geographical Sciences program.

The researcher will have the last opportunity to work with a unique and fascinating dataset that is scheduled to expire on Sept 30, 2023: geospatial data of 150 million U.S. properties and sales with a wide range of social and environmental characteristics (placeslab.org/dictionary). Research priorities will be defined jointly. Creative extensions are welcome.

The ideal candidate will have:

- A PhD (or similar experience) in economics, statistics, data science, geography, environmental science, or a similar field with a strong quantitative research profile.
- Prior experience with geospatial statistics, machine learning, and/or econometrics (in particular causal inference from observational data).
- An emerging publication record in peer-reviewed journals.
- Interest in understanding land conservation policy in the United States.

Knowledge in the following domains will be an asset (but not expected):

- Geospatial packages in Python (geopandas, rasterio, etc.)
- Parallelized computing (Linux, SunGrid).
- Principles of land and easement valuation.

The position starts as soon as possible, ideally not after Sept 2022. The initial contract duration will be 18 months. Remote work is an option. Continuation of this research with other data is contingent on the success of grants to which the candidate can contribute. BU offers a competitive salary (\$62K) and benefits package.

Interested applicants should contact Christoph Nolte (chnolte@bu.edu) with their CV, a letter of interest that includes a statement of fit with the position, publications, and contact information of 2-3 reference letter writers. Review of applications will occur on a **rolling basis** until the position is filled. For updates on the status of this search, visit: placeslab.org/postdoc.

BU is an equal opportunity employer and all qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability status, protected veteran status, or any other characteristic protected by law.

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* For more information, visit placeslab.org/fmv_usa or consult the following articles:

Nolte (2020) High-resolution land value maps reveal underestimation of conservation cost in the United States. PNAS ([link](#))

Nolte et al. (2021) Studying the impacts of environmental amenities and hazards with nationwide property data: best data practices for interpretable and reproducible analyses. SSRN ([link](#))