Science Societies

Turning science into policy: An interview with Dr. Beau Badon

By Renee Spencer

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Beau Badon, the 2025–2026 Congressional Science Fellow for ASA, CSSA, and SSSA.

Each year, ASA, CSSA, and SSSA select a Ph.D.-level Society member to spend a year in Washington, DC, working for a member of Congress or a congressional committee as a Congressional Science Fellow. In this article, the 2025–2026 Congressional Science Fellow, Dr. Beau Badon, shares how his experience working for Sen. Michael Bennet (D) of Colorado has shaped his career and broadened his understanding of science in policy.

Applications for the 2026–2027 Congressional Science Fellowship are open through April 30. Learn more.

Each year, ASA, CSSA, and SSSA select a Ph.D.-level Society member to spend a year in Washington, DC, working for a member of Congress or a congressional committee as a Congressional Science Fellow. The fellowship offers a unique opportunity for a Society member to apply their scientific knowledge to federal policymaking and experience the legislative process firsthand.

In this article, the 2025–2026 Congressional Science Fellow, Dr. Beau Badon, shares how his experience working for Sen. Michael Bennet (D) of Colorado has shaped his career and broadened his understanding of science in policy.

When one door closes, another opens

After graduating from Virginia Tech with a Ph.D. in Crop and Soil Environmental Science in December 2024, Badon planned to join the USDA-ARS in the National Sedimentation Laboratory. But, when the 2025 federal hiring freeze scrapped the project, he found himself at an unexpected crossroads. Rather than dwelling on the setback, he looked for new professional avenues. That is when he came across the Congressional Science Fellowship opportunity.

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“I had this feeling that I could either sit around and complain or I could, to invoke Teddy Roosevelt, ‘be the man in the arena and throw my hat in the ring,’” recalls Badon.

Badon had always been drawn to science policy, particularly issues related to public lands and wildlife, but also staying informed on agricultural policy. Yet, as a researcher, he never saw a clear path to getting involved in the policy world. The Congressional Science Fellowship became that bridge—an opportunity to merge his academic background, research experience, and policy interests in a meaningful, impactful way.

Applying scientific knowledge to agricultural policy

In Sen. Bennet's office, Badon helps translate science into executable policy plans, using his scientific expertise to inform and improve Colorado agricultural policy decisions. This includes gaining a fuller understanding of the state's agricultural issues, talking to stakeholders, and synthesizing insights to create policy recommendations for Sen. Bennet to utilize on farm bill reforms and edits. On any given day, he might be drafting letters to federal agencies, briefs and memos for the Senator, or co-sponsor requests for bills, among a multitude of other responsibilities.



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Primarily, Badon's work focuses on private land conservation at the intersection of wildlife, agriculture, and water quality. The overarching goal is to make federal policy more practical and efficient for the state's producers, farmers, and landowners. The next phase of his fellowship plan involves developing marker bills and amendments ready to be included in the Senate's version of the farm bill.

Importance of communication and participation

Badon's ability to build connections has been invaluable in his current role. His southern upbringing, paired with years of collaborating with farmers throughout master's and Ph.D. studies, enables him to better comprehend opposing viewpoints, understand differing experiences, form trustworthy connections, and approach issues from a unique perspective. These qualities have created a path to clearer and more honest communication across the aisle and beyond.



Beau Badon standing in a Mississippi Delta cover crop field during his master's research trials. Photo courtesy of Beau Badon.

"I feel like there's just a level of trust because I'm from a similar background," he explains, reflecting on the dynamics of bipartisan negotiations.

He also recalls his interaction with a farmer who spoke to Western state offices, including Colorado, during a congressional fly-in. While chatting at the reception, the farmer mentioned he felt as though Badon was the only person he spoke to in DC who truly understood farming. While endeared by the comment, Badon feels this interaction highlights a key issue—the need for more scientists and people who understand agriculture to be involved in the policy space.

"I think scientists are afraid to mix science with politics, but it's okay to mix science with policy. Politics and policy aren't synonymous with each other … now is when we need to be speaking up and showing that science is important, it's valuable, and it needs to be involved in policymaking."

Looking forward

When the fellowship concludes, Badon hopes to continue working in the science policy realm, whether it be continuing work in DC or pursuing other policy-focused roles.

Whatever comes next, he is grateful for the professional development and connections the fellowship has provided, and the lasting impact it has made on his career journey.

“It’s been an opportunity to go in a different direction. This fellowship has, I believe, completely changed the trajectory of my career and my life.”

Badon encourages Society members who are curious about science policy to take advantage of opportunities such as Congressional Visit Day, webinars, the Congressional Science Fellowship, and more. He believes these programs can open doors, build skills, and empower more scientists to contribute to the policy space.

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