

Careers in wildland weed research and management (Thursday October 2, 2008)

Discussion leader: Chris Christofferson

Note taker: Heather Schneider, UC Riverside/Cal-IPC Student Chapter

This discussion group will provide an informal venue for questions, answers, and the exchange of ideas about the future of careers in wildland weed work. This session will complement the more formal panel discussion scheduled for Friday at 1:30. Many of Friday's panelists will be present in a more approachable, small-group setting. This group is suitable for aspiring weed workers, for natural resource managers of all sorts, and for academics (both students and teachers).

How can you find jobs and make connections?

- join job list serves
- usajobs.org
- self-advertise
- be persistent
- don't be afraid to call an agency you would like to work at, even if they do not have any jobs posted.
- meet people and build your own career → many times, it's who you know
- network!
- Cal-IPC Student Chapter is planning to post jobs on their future website
- be specific when talking about your interests, people don't like wildcards
- serendipity

What are employers looking for when they interview potential job candidates?

- Generally
 - people skills are as important as technical skills
 - flexibility
 - willingness to try new things
 - volunteer experience – either where you want to work or somewhere else
 - SCA experience is good and there is no age limit
 - internships
 - take the state exams and find out what you need to know
- GANDA (Garcia and Associates, consulting firm):
 - flexibility increases marketability
 - diverse background
 - job applications are often seasonal, but can lead to hiring if it goes well
- Private sector:
 - each firm has its own culture, figure out whether or not you will fit in
 - seasonal work is good for both sides because the employee and employer can test each other out and see if it's a good match
- Consulting:
 - job ads often have a long list of what they're looking for in an applicant, but you don't always have to have it all
- State/Federal:

- applicants should have an answer for every quality listed in a job ad, even if it is minimal, do not leave any sections blank
- a lot of experience volunteering or with internships
- grant writing skills are important → emphasize this
- a longer resume is better, include every detail you can, even driver's license and Microsoft Office skills
- know people in the agency
- it is hard to get a state job
- Forest Service:
 - repeat information whenever it is appropriate, applications can get split up
- The Nature Conservancy:
 - now hiring more policy experienced people
 - in the past, they hired many fresh, applied people
 - skill sets are highly variable, depending on the position
 - no structured checklist for applicant qualities, unlike the government
 - few applicants meet all of the requirements in the job ad
 - applicants should meet many or most of the requirements in a job ad
 - entrepreneurship
 - flexibility and willingness to learn new things
 - can-do attitude

What are some differences between Forest Service, The Nature Conservancy, and consulting jobs?

- working for the Forest Service, there is a very set schedule of duties
- working for consulting firms can be more flexible depending on the company and what the job is at that time
 - sometimes there is a lot of traveling and sometimes not
 - you have to 'chase contracts'
 - the work varies from year to year
 - there are many different opportunities within consulting and the work can change as life situations change

Other notes

- look for opportunities available to students that will not be available once you finish school
- a lot of people working for the state and forest service will be retiring in the next 5-10 years, so there may be a lot of job openings
- there is a hiring freeze now due to budgets
- CNPS is a resource for the state exam information
- Santa Monica Mountains has a new seasonal ranger program
- if you have parks service or land management experience, you'll often get an interview
- not getting hired doesn't mean you never will → keep trying
- SCA (Student Conservation Association) is a good entry way into federal and national park jobs

- Forest Service, NPS, and BLM have student employment programs where students can work when they are not in school
- when a student applies for a job with NPS, the application is sent directly to the person they want to work for
- state service is not as rough as federal
- UC Davis has a new program through the ecology program
 - PhD with an emphasis on conservation and management
 - trains students for a conservation career, not academia
 - 1st year – 3 courses
 - 2nd year – group project 1 year long with an agency or non-profit
 - students do the dissertation work with an agency
 - contact Sarah Haskinson or Marit Wilkerson if interested
- Question:
 - Is it more important to be well rounded or have good GRE scores when applying to grad school?
 - depends on the school
 - talking to the professor you want to work with is the most important
- NorCal Botanists offers a student scholarship for botany students
- the Forest Service has a big impact on the health of society by enacting change and working in many different areas
- if you have funding for a project, you can leverage it and get matching funds from other groups to get the work done