

This summer I interned with the U.S. Forest Service in Murphy, NC. I worked for Nantahala National Forest as the forest management intern. Located in the far west corner of North Carolina in the southern Appalachian Mountains, Nantahala National Forest is one of four National Forests in the state and is comprised of over 525,000 acres of mixed pine-hardwood forest. It is the largest National Forest in North Carolina and was established in 1920 by an act of Congress, known as the Weeks Act, which allowed the government to buy privately owned land that had been depleted. Like many National Forests in the eastern United States, Nantahala National Forest is a patchwork of land spread over a large area. Generally the Forest owns many of the mountainous ridge-tops while the lower river valleys consist of towns and privately owned properties. The Forest is split into three Ranger Districts: The Tusquitee, the Cheoah, and the Nantahala. The names of the districts, and the forest itself, come from the Cherokee language as this area was inhabited by many Cherokee tribes prior to the Indian Removal Act of 1830. I worked primarily on the Tusquitee Ranger District, but was able to do field work in all three of the districts. My internship coordinator, Steverson Moffat C'86, is the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance officer for the Forest, and his office is in Murphy. NEPA is a 1970 federal law, that has since expanded, which mandates that the government must consider all the environmental effects of any project it undertakes and inform the public of their possible outcomes. Since the Forest Service takes an active role on forest management, any time the Forest wants to conduct a timber sale, build a road or a boat launch on a lake, or do any other type of activity it must analyze the consequences of that action on the soil and water quality, archaeological value, and on other aspects of environmental integrity.

My office work included drafting scoping letters, which are brief preliminary notices of a proposed project, as well as decision memos, categorical exclusion reports, and basic GIS data input. Those concerned by a project are given a time period where they can object for whatever reason if they do not like a project. At the start of the internship, I was told I would be working on a project creating an encyclopedic inventory of all activities that the Forest Service does within a half mile of either side of the Trail of Tears that is on Nantahala owned property. However, after a few weeks of going through the special use atlases and making note of their location, the project was cancelled by the District Ranger. While it would have been nice to have a completed body of work as a result of my summer internship, this decision allowed me more time in the field and a chance to see more of the forest. I was able to go out with the Forest Fisheries & Wildlife biologist and conduct cross sectional measurements to build a J-hook structure which aimed to prevent road erosion. I also inspected timber sale sites to make sure they were following protocol and using best management practices (BMPs) and helped collect tree inventory data to learn about which forested age class was most susceptible to southern pine beetle. However most of my fieldwork was conducted with the forest archeologist and his intern. This work mostly included driving to a remote area in the forest to check out reported sites that had the possibility of qualifying as either a State or Tribal historic heritage sites. Everyone I worked with in the Forest Service was nice and a pleasure to work with. They were all willing to teach me and expose to me in some way the inner workings of the Forest Service.

Overall, I think this was a positive internship experience. While I am unsure if I want to continue to pursue a career in the Forest Service, it did allow me to see the

benefits of working for the Federal Government. From talking with a younger employee it can be difficult to find a permanent job with the Forest Service, especially with only a bachelor's degree, but it seems that between the quality of people you work with, the time off, and (for the most part) the non-stressful work atmosphere would be reason enough to choose a career with them. This being said, the internship included a lot of far distance driving and slow days in the office due to the slower summer months. On a personal level, I feel like I took on a lot more responsibilities than I ever have in the past. It was the first time I was living by myself in an unfamiliar location and I had to find a place to live, cook, and at times it was very isolating. After studying abroad in a mid sized city with great public transportation, it was a dramatic shift in lifestyle that did present some challenges. I took the opportunity to live in a beautiful place and work in the woods, but really it was more paperwork and bureaucracy than I expected. It was great working with Steverson and learning more about the policies that allow the Forest Service to practice sustainable forestry, and for a time I was considering going into environmental law, but I feel that I would want to work more on larger projects and not in a career drafting legal justifications for construction projects.

I am very grateful to my donor for the generous contribution allowing me to support myself while explore this career path. I would like to extend my thanks to Steverson Moffat for coordinating the internship, and to Sewanee's Career and Leadership Development office for helping me get the internship.