1-1-2001

My Experience as Park Ranger at Lake Red Rock

Jessica Grell
Iowa State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/amesforester

Part of the Forest Sciences Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/amesforester/vol88/iss1/7

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Ames Forester by an authorized editor of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact digirep@iastate.edu.
My Experience as Park Ranger at Lake Red Rock

By Jessica Grell
Senior in Forest Ecosystem Management

In December of 1999, I decided to apply for a co-op position working for the Army Corps of Engineers at Lake Red Rock. Looking at the job description, it included all the skills I needed for the “real world” (prescribed burning, timber cruising, etc.), and it sounded fun (boat patrol, dam tours). The interview was scheduled for the next week, and when I arrived it was nothing like I expected. All my previous interviews had been one on one, this was a panel of about three people asking me some very difficult questions about tree planting, silvicultural practices, and many other aspects of which I knew little about. Even though I was sweating profusely, I attempted to answer the questions honestly, to the best of my knowledge, or tell them that I didn’t know the answer. A week later I was given the word that I was hired and I was excited, the only downside was moving again.

In the summer of 2000, I started my co-op with Lake Red Rock and the first couple days consisted of ranger training. In ranger training we learned the rules of the Army Corps of Engineers (Title 36), the do’s and don’ts of the job, how to assist visitors, dress code, and ranger logs. A ranger log is a piece of paper that you carry with you, usually when you’re patrolling the lake. You would write the area that you were located in and the time that you were there. The rangers who were patrolling the next day could read it and know if there were any problems in a specific area or campsite. Even though my main duty was patrolling, I also cruised timber. At the Lake Red Rock office is a Natural Resource Inventory System (NRIS) that contains information on different “segments” of land around the lake. A “segment” would be walked through to find out what type of trees are in it, how may trees, and what changes have happened to it. This information would be put into a book, so someone could know what type of work was done to the segment (prescribed burning, pesticides applied, etc.), or any other type of information, they could find it in a glance.

My boss also left me in charge of identifying diseases and insects of trees. If one of the rangers noticed a tree that seemed to be dying, I was sent to investigate the cause. I would proceed to the tree, look at the...
leaves, bark and other aspects, and leave the rest up to research. Sometimes I would search the Internet, look through books, or perhaps take a sample of the tree to the USDA office for identification. Once the culprit was found, I would write up a report or memo on the disease or insect. This memo included where the pest was found, what type of tree it was located on/in, and what possible solutions would exterminate it. The memo was sent out to the staff for a final decision on actions to be taken and put in a book for further reference. The other oncoming pest problem that I dealt with was the Gypsy Moth. In a study to find areas where the Gypsy Moths were located, orange boxes containing the male Gypsy Moth pheromone were put up around the lake. These box locations were marked by GPS (Global Positioning System) and checked three times during two months for the Gypsy Moth. The data on these boxes were sent to the USDA office, so they could put together a report on all the data recorded in the State of Iowa.

During my 8-month period at Lake Red Rock, I performed other duties as well. These duties included mowing permits, visitor assistance, surveying, reading wells, and giving dam tours. It was definitely a good experience, because I was able to learn many different skills in the forestry profession, meet new people, and have fun. My advice to everyone is to get out in the “real world” before finishing college, try something new, and who knows, you might learn something and have fun at the same time. Who would have thought that you could do that?