

Internship at the Modoc National Forest

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Executive Summary

My experience here at the Modoc has been great. I enjoyed my time here in Alturas. The best times I had were going out in the field and navigating through the Forest to get an assignment done. One of the first assignments that I was dealt was monitoring timber sale areas and conducting best management practice (BMP) forms. Once the BMP forms were filled out and turned in, the water rights that are owned by the Modoc National Forest had to be reported on. I was put to enter the water rights data into an online system provided by the state waterboard. Later two hydrologist technicians came down to the Modoc from Shasta Trinity National Forest to perform pebble counts on the Lassen Creek. This consisted of counting the rocks within the stream and testing the water's conductivity and turbidity. After that, I had the chance to work alongside the heritage department. I received some archeological experience joining the heritage team. Then the old hydrologist had an assignment for my partner and I to complete. It consisted of walking through the devil's garden of the Modoc and looking for water channels to photograph and report on what we found there at these steams. Finally, I had the opportunity to visit the new horse corrals that the Modoc designed and built themselves. At the corrals, I was able to help feed the wild horses and replace the mesh wire along the corral fencing. I also had the chance to go out with the engineering department and shadow the head engineer while he did some bridge inspections.

Project Objectives

One of the main objectives was gaining experience during the summer that I spent at the Modoc National Forest. I learned how things work in the office and how they work outside in the field. My time here has influenced me in thinking about joining the forest service as a career choice. I did enjoy working in the hydrology department. Another objective was getting the Modoc National Forest caught up in their paperwork. For example, they were behind in the water rights reporting so my partner and I spent 62 hours total entering the necessary data into the website provided to maintain those rights until the next year comes around. We entered 956 out of the 1564 water rights that needed to be reported on. The BMP monitoring was required to ensure that timber sale operations did not interfere with water bodies and harm those waters or nearby designated areas. It was also to ensure that certain trails and roads were not being polluted with machinery fuels or oils. My partner and I had to organize around the office, storage space, and make sure all the new equipment that was ordered to be recorded and accounted for.

Project Approach

To achieve these goals, my advisor Greg Moon, ensured that we had what we needed such as the correct contacts to communicate with if we had any questions. We were given a rig to travel around the forest. When we had the paperwork to do, we filled out as much as we could and then would contact Amy Smith from the timber department for the right information and answers. We were given a tour of the office and were told where to go for resources. I was shown around certain parts of the forest, the popular parts and parts where I would be working so I could be familiar with where I was going. Before going out in the field we researched what needed to be done and made sure to fill out as much as the paperwork that we could, so we could come back when finished and fill in the data that was needed.

Project Outcomes

The work done by the hydrology interns was successful. We brought the department up to date when it came to enroll new projects, reporting the water rights, terminating projects, and summarizing the projects that we have done here. I learned how to fill out and report on the water rights that the Modoc owns. I was taught how to monitor a timber sale site. There are certain rules that the work crew must follow such as staying in certain trails only and being 50 ft from any aquatic management zone. In heritage, I did archaeology work, now I know what to look for that would qualify a site to become a heritage zone, which makes it off limits to any timber sales and work activity. When I went out with the engineering supervisor, I learned how he conducted the bridge inspections. I was shown what to look for to make sure each bridge is up to date and secure.

Conclusions

I want to keep my career options and opportunities open, but I really enjoyed working with the Forest Service. I can see myself getting hired and working for the federal government. I had the opportunity to come to a new place and discover parts of a great forest known as the Modoc. The BMPs and Pebble counts was a great experience and was fun work in the field. I was informed that the work that was done was on a GS-12 level. It was independent work and as an Intern we had to learn how to communicate with colleagues around us to get the job done. We filed several papers that needed to be signed by the forest supervisor and returned to the waterboard management. I enjoyed meeting new people in the workspace and in Alturas.