



Working for the Great Outdoors

Soil Scientist

If you're interested in soil and plant relationships, environmental issues, site productivity, soil classification and mapping, water quality, reclamation, land resource allocation and management activities, a career as a soil scientist with the Forest Service may be of interest to you. From the applied science of National Forest System management of Research, Forest Service soil scientists play an important role in the management of your national Forests.

Soil scientists in the Forest Service work in all types of environments – from offices to mountains, grassland to forests: Forest Service Soil Scientists work in a full range of geographical locations spanning the United States.

The Work Environment

Today's Forest Service soil scientists are involved in complex and interrelated natural resource issues involving ecosystem management, biological diversity and other important land management issues. Soil Scientists with the Forest Service work in concert with rangeland management specialists, foresters, botanists, engineers, hydrologists, and numerous other individuals to seek and understand the relationships between soils, plant communities, habitat types, ecosystems and land management activities.

As a soil scientist with the Forest Service, you may be involved in a wide variety of natural resource projects and activities. These may include such things as:

- Conducting soil and plant surveys
- Working on various reclamation projects
- Measuring human impacts in wilderness areas
- Evaluating the impacts of timber harvesting, livestock grazing, mining, oil & gas exploration or other land use activities.
- Conducting soil investigations

- Determining soil stabilization measures
- Analyzing the impacts of wildlife and prescribed fire
- Identifying soil protection and restoration measures
- Developing land management plans

Career Paths and Requirements

Soil scientists are hired at many different grade levels. College graduates may be hired at the GS-5 or GS-7 grade level. They spend their first year or two in training and developmental positions, and then may be promoted to the GS-9 grade level. Others with advanced degrees and experience may be hired at higher grade levels, and there is substantial opportunity for advancement! To begin a career as a soil scientist with the Forest Service, you must meet one of the following requirements:

Degree: soil science or a closely related discipline that included 30 semester hours or equivalent in biological, physical, or earth science, with a minimum of 15 semester hours in such subjects as soil genesis, pedology, soil chemistry, soil physics, and soil fertility.

A combination of education and experience with courses equivalent to a major in soil science or a related discipline that included at least 30 semester hours in the biological, physical, or earth sciences. At least 15 of these semester hours must have been in the areas specified in one of the above, plus appropriate experience or additional education.

These qualification requirements have been summarized for convenience. Full details are available at www.USAJobs.gov or the www.opm.gov subject index under "Qualifications."

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