

Career Chat with a Marine Biologist

Meet Donna Schroeder, a **Marine Biologist** with the Minerals Management Service (MMS), U.S. Department of the Interior, in Camarillo, California. Donna earned an undergraduate degree from the University of Tampa and a graduate degree from the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Career Currents (CC): Hi, Donna. Tell us about your job.

Donna: I work with industry, academia, local government agencies and the public to understand and minimize the impact of the oil and gas industry on the environment. My specialty is in fish and fisheries issues.

CC: Why did you choose to work in this industry?

Donna: I chose to work in the oil and gas industry because I found it to be intellectually stimulating and because I enjoy the people with whom I work.

CC: What subjects or courses were instrumental in helping you gain your current position?

Donna: The ability to write well is valued in many professions, including science-related careers. If you can express a complex idea clearly to others, you will be very successful in life. Therefore, I would say writing classes were very useful to me.

CC: Would you follow the same career path again?

Donna: Absolutely, I would choose the same career path. I love my job!

CC: What opportunities have you had in your career?

Donna: I have traveled all over the world and been involved in some pretty exciting research projects.

CC: What challenges do you face in the industry?

Donna: I have experienced virtually no difficulties with industry in the U.S., but sometimes it is difficult to obtain information from overseas industries.

CC: What are some benefits to working in this industry?

Donna: There is a definite "can do" attitude in the oil and gas industry, which I find very beneficial since this allows a great deal of creativity to be expressed. Additionally, the earning potential is very good.

CC: What is a typical day of work like for you?

Donna: Every day is different! Some days I can be found out in the field diving using either scuba gear or a small submarine. Conducting field work is a regular job task for both environmental studies and inspections. Some days I

interact with staff from other agencies, members of industry, or academics, so I attend various meetings on a regular basis. Some of the most intellectually interesting aspects of my job are when I work as part of a team of **Analysts** (from both industry and government) that figure out how to get a job done with the least amount of environmental impact.

CC: What are the most rewarding, and most surprising, parts of your job?

Donna: The most rewarding part is completing a difficult task or project. The most surprising aspect is the variety of people I meet.

CC: How does your job interact with or affect the public?

Donna: I interact with the public quite a bit since many are interested in offshore oil and gas. Most of my job-related tasks are to listen to their concerns, and try to address them in any project I am working on.

CC: What do you expect to be doing in 5-10 years?

Donna: I expect to still be an analyst for the government, but will be working on different projects than the ones I am working on today.

CC: What is the most exciting technological tool you have used or helped develop?

Donna: This has to be a small research submarine (called a submersible) that we use to conduct surveys around the deep portions of offshore platforms.

CC: What advice can you give to a young person considering a career in the oil and gas industry?

Donna: I would advise students to try out a lot of different jobs or projects while they are young, and to view every experience, whether good or bad, as a learning opportunity. You never know what skills you might learn that will come in handy later on in life.

Below, Donna Schroeder enjoys diving in a submersible.

