

Steve Harvey Interview with Dr. Benjamin Tuggle, Southwest Regional Director, USFWS

Steve Harvey: The Steve and Marjory Harvey Foundation, which is my wife and I, we've got a new partnership this year for the first time ever and it's with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. You know I love to fish. I almost went over there and sat in the same chair with this dude. Almost set in his lap and told him what I wanted for next Christmas. So this is a great thing for me. Joining us is the Southwest Regional Director of the US Fish and Wildlife Service and we're pleased to have him join us for the first time. Please welcome to the show, Dr. Benjamin Tuggle. For those of us who aren't familiar with this organization, tell us briefly about the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Dr. Tuggle: Well the US Fish and Wildlife Service is the preeminent conservation organization in the world actually when it comes to the conservation of plants, animals and their habitats in the United States. What people don't realize is, in the US we are the envy of the world as it relates to our natural resources. And so we are enjoy, one of the premier and primary agencies in charge of protecting it.

Steve: What does this do for the American people? What does it benefit the American people?

Tuggle: It's about the environment, Steve I think more than anything else. When I was a kid, I took for granted that I was outside. And these kids are now indoors doing their videogames and things like that. It's a lot of work that's been done, that when kids go outside, their attention deficit goes away. They have a chance to be creative, they have a chance to exercise. The obesity in this country is one that we have to deal with. So the Service is concerned for two reasons: that we invest in young people, because I'm 58 years old, I'm going to retire. I need young people to replace me that have the same kind of stewardship and heritage relationship with our natural resources, so that we can have them for future generations.

Steve: So is that one of the reasons that you guys are committed to a program like this?

Tuggle: Absolutely. I think the other reason that I am personally committed is that there are not as many minority representatives in the natural resource careers. And these are legitimate jobs and the demographics of this country are changing and until we get the same level of representation in these kinds of jobs, we're going to have a problem in terms of the heritage longterm.

Steve: The Fish and Wildlife Services, you guys have some youth jobs available?

Tuggle: We do.

Steve: What are the types of jobs that are available, and how can we get more info about these jobs?

Tuggle: The primary program that we use is the Youth Conservation Corps. These are kids that normally are about 15 to 18, 19 years old, still in high school, and we hire them on our refuges, United States National Wildlife Refuges. We hire them at our fish hatcheries, we hire them for our other programs and they get outside and they actually work with us.

Steve: Dr. Tuggle, you hang on because we'll come back. I want you to tell them how they can be a part of some of these jobs that are available to young people. [break]

Steve: We got Dr. Benjamin Tuggle here, who is the regional director of, the Southwest regional director of the US Fish and Wildlife Service. We were talking about some of the wildlife youth jobs that are available. Let's go over some of those jobs again.

Tuggle: Be happy to. Well, the primary job, if you're talking about kids that are still in high school is our youth conservation corps. And every year the Fish and Wildlife Service puts out a notice, and normally those jobs are available when they're close to our facilities, but we try to hire kids from the inner city. The problem is the distance between where they live and the job available. So it's a little bit limited in that regard. But we also hire college kids, and the Office of Personnel Management is coming out with a new program called Pathways, and we hire freshman, sophomores and juniors into the FWS. And the old program used to be called the SCEP program which is the student experience something something I don't know. The bottom line is it wasn't my idea and they're changing it so it doesn't matter. But the key here is if the students qualify, that means that they work for the Service for two years, and when they graduate they can come work for the Service non-competitively. So the Service will actually offer them jobs. It's sort of like doing an internship. And so you work for the Service, you get an idea about what we do, you decide that you like it and we bring you on board. And we're very interested in young people.

Steve: I mean it's (????) Like you said, you're looking at leaving one day. You'd like to have the next generation, young people, get involved in fish and wildlife. It's so important to young people today. I can't tell you young people. I can't tell you the joy that these boys have when they catch a fish. I can't tell you how it makes you set there and wait on the casting process over and over just for that little two bumps when he first hit and you snatch and then the fight is on. And then the catch is release is a great pond. That's all we do on my ranch is catch and release except in the catfish pond. ... And the Fish and Wildlife today are working with the boys on the fishing, and they're going to teach them how to clean the catfish, filet a catfish, and then we're going to fry the catfish... If you want more information about the Fish and Wildlife Services, about the youth jobs available and what types of jobs are available go to www.fws.gov/jobs. Ya'll go there today and check out some of these jobs your kids can involved in. And get them out of your house for a while and make your kids go outside.