



Volunteer, Stipends, and Internships – Resource Management, Interpretation, and Education

Geoscientists-in-the-Parks (GIP) – <http://www.nature.nps.gov/geology/gip/>

Three month to one-year paid positions in parks and central offices for undergraduate and graduate students, professors, professionals, and retired professionals. GIP program is run in collaboration with NPS partners including GSA GeoCorps America™ Program (<http://www.geosociety.org/geocorps>), AWG (<http://www.awg.org/about/gip.html>), and NAGT (<http://nagt.org/nagt/programs/GTIP.html>). Participants receive a \$2,500 to \$2,750 stipend for each 3 months of work. Longer-term (6 mo. to one-year) guest scientist positions have higher stipends. Park provides housing or housing allowance.

Volunteer in Parks (VIP) – <http://www.nps.gov/volunteer/>

Wide range of positions for U.S. citizens with specific expertise. Volunteer positions receive reimbursement for expenses such as food, mileage, gas, and training. Park usually provides housing if the volunteer works a minimum of 30 hrs per week. Often a minimum of 8 weeks work is required. Other websites for volunteer opportunities are: <http://www.takepride.gov/index.html> and <http://www.usafreedomcorps.gov/>

International Volunteers in Parks – <http://www.nps.gov/oia/topics/ivip/ivip.htm>

Program is for non-U.S. citizens who are interested in volunteering for a national park in the U.S. Positions open for college or university students, persons who work for another country's park agency, or have a background in environmental fields. NPS selects candidates who meet visa and immigration requirements, have the needed educational and professional background, and have the best potential to share his/her experiences with colleagues and scholars when they return to their home countries.

Student Conservation Corps (SCA) – <http://www.thesca.org/>

Nonprofit organization that engages high school, undergraduate and graduate school students through internships, conservation jobs, and crew experiences to conduct resource management, historic preservation, cultural resources and conservation programs for the purpose of training, career development and education. SCA places volunteers in more than 350 park units and NPS offices each year. Wide range of positions with specific expertise requirements. 3-to-12 month internship opportunities. Living and travel expenses, insurance, housing, and education awards are provided to interns.

AmeriCorps – <http://www.americorps.org/>

Network of local, state, and national service programs that connects more than 70,000 Americans each year to meet our country's critical needs in the environment, education, health, and public safety. Positions are full or part time for 10- to 12-months. Upon completion of service, full-time members receive a \$4,725 education award to pay for college, graduate school, or to pay back qualified student loans. Participants receive health insurance, training, and student loan deferment. Many also receive a modest living allowance while working for AmeriCorps.

United We Serve – <http://www.americorps.org/>

Nationwide service initiative that will help meet growing social needs resulting from the economic downturn. Online resource for finding volunteer opportunities in your community, but also creating your own volunteer opportunities.

Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) – <https://www.pmf.opm.gov/HProgramOverview.aspx>

Program for outstanding graduate, law, and doctoral-level students. Assignments may involve public policy and administration, domestic or international issues, information technology, engineering, law, financial management, and many other fields in support of public service programs. Appointments are made for an initial period of 2 years, but may be extended for up to 1 additional year. PMF vacancy announcement is advertised on <http://www.usajobs.opm.gov/> in October of each year.

Sabbatical in the Parks – <http://www.nature.nps.gov/Sabbaticals/>

NPS assists in arranging faculty sabbaticals to conduct research and other scholarly activity in national parks (non-funded; park housing may be provided). Eligible faculty members are those from four-year colleges and universities in the United States who have successfully competed for sabbaticals according to the procedures of his/her institution.

Research Opportunities

NPS Research Permit and Reporting System – <http://science.nature.nps.gov/research/ac/ResearchIndex>

Website lists park's research needs and requirements for applying for scientific research and collection permits.

Research Learning Centers (RLCs) – <http://www.nature.nps.gov/learningcenters/>

RLCs are public/private partnerships created to facilitate research efforts and provide educational opportunities. RLCs involve a wide range of people and organizations including researchers, universities, educators, and community groups. One of the primary goals of the RLCs is to attract non-NPS scientists to conduct research in national parks.

Cooperative Ecosystem Study Units – <http://www.cesu.psu.edu/>

Partnership between federal agencies and academic and research institutions that was established to provide research, technical assistance, and education to resource and environmental managers. Natural, cultural, and social sciences are included. There are 18 CESUs covering the United States.

Sabbatical in the Parks Program – <http://www.nature.nps.gov/Sabbaticals/>

NPS staff will help find opportunities, but research funding is typically not available.

Paid Positions – Seasonal, Temporary, and Permanent Positions

- All government vacancy announcements are posted on **USAJOBS** at: <http://www.usajobs.opm.gov/> or call 1-478-757-3000 or TDD 1-478-744-2299.
- Seasonal employment: <http://www.nps.gov/personnel/seasonal.htm>.
- Student jobs: <http://www.studentjobs.gov/>
- NPS careers information: <http://www.nps.gov/personnel/>
- Federal pay scales: <http://www.opm.gov/oca/>
- Federal job qualification standards: <http://www.opm.gov/qualifications/sec-iii/a/num-ndx.htm>
- OPM is the federal authority for federal hires, but each agency's hiring practices may vary. If you need additional information, call a personnel specialist in the agency (or region) where you plan to apply.

Other Helpful Information

- General career information can be found on a number of NPS websites, including: <http://www.nature.nps.gov/helpyourparks/workinparks.htm> and <http://data2.itc.nps.gov/hafe/training/careers.cfm>
- Workforce Recruitment Program for persons with disabilities can be found at: <https://wrp.gov/AboutPre.do>
- Application requirements vary. Please read each job announcement carefully.
- In many cases, positions are noted as being open to "all sources," which means that you do not have to be a federal employee to apply for the position.
- Announcements often require that you prove you are a U.S. citizen.
- When running out of room on any part of a government form, simply note "see attached". On the additional sheet, number and title the "box" for the additional information. Add your name and position announcement number on the top of additional sheets.
- If you are applying for a seasonal job through a centralized seasonal hiring system, be aware you may be required to apply directly to the park. Seasonal jobs are very competitive, particularly at larger, well-known parks. The number of applicants is usually far greater than the positions that are available.
- Opportunities within the NPS may be sponsored in whole or in part by a partner organization, which may have job requirements specific to their organization. Opportunities may or may not include park housing. If housing is included it may be shared, bunk house, or dorm-type settings. Parks may have RV sites available.

Information about specific NPS sites can be found at: <http://www.nps.gov/>.

Student Educational Employment Program

More and more, the National Park Service is hiring students through the Student Trainee Employment Program (STEP) and the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP). The STEP provides maximum flexibility to both students and managers because the work does not have to be related to the student's academic or career goals. The SCEP, however, provides work experience that is directly related to the student's academic program and career goals. If you would like more information on the STEP and SCEP, please visit <https://www.opm.gov/employ/students/intro.asp>

These programs, more than any others, help students network and begin their federal careers. National parks are increasingly using these hiring methods to find summer and part-time employees. To qualify, you must meet your school's definition of a "student in good standing." These positions are not advertised. See <http://www.opm.gov> and contact the park(s) to find out if STEP or SCEP opportunities are available.

Your best bet in getting a STEP or SCEP position is to:

Conduct Research

- Decide which parks you would like to work in and make a prioritized list.
 - All national park units are listed at: <http://www.nps.gov/>
 - Information about geologic parks can be found at: <http://www.nature.nps.gov/geology/>
- Consider writing a paper about some aspect of a park that you are interested in, as this will give you background about the park, and perhaps create an opportunity to interview a park specialist or manager (i.e., an opportunity to network).
- Familiarize yourself with the NPS mission. Go to: <http://www.nps.gov/aboutus/index.htm> and click on "Mission".
- Find out why the park was established.
- Decide what type of job(s) you are interested in pursuing (see last item on this page). While duties vary from park to park, the following is a rule of thumb regarding heads of park divisions:
 - Chief of Resource Management – manages natural, and possibly cultural resources, facilitates research in the park
 - Chief of Interpretation – manages all education and outreach activities
 - Chief of Maintenance – manages infrastructure and associated environmental compliance
 - Chief Ranger – manages all law enforcement, including environmental violations

Contact the Park

- Either visit, call, and/or write to the appropriate person in the park. A personal visit shows the most interest. A call may create a strong connection. Writing is more distant, but shows your ability to put things in to words.
- Call the park. Phone numbers are listed on each park's website. Go to: <http://www.nps.gov/>, go to the park's website and click on "Contact Us" to get each park's contact information. Ask for the name, email address and phone number of the person you want to reach (e.g., ask for the name, phone number, and email of the park's Chief of Resource Management).
- During your conversation with the park:
 - Let the chief know that you are a student and that you will be continuing school after the summer.
 - Let the chief know that you are interested in a summer or part-time position through the STEP or SCEP program, and would like to talk about this.
 - Ask if there are internship or STEP or SCEP opportunities in the park.
 - Emphasize that you are very interested in working for the NPS / park.
 - Briefly tell the chief what interests you about his/her park.
 - Note the variety of courses you have taken, including geology, biology, ecology, hydrology, GIS, public speaking, etc.
 - State that you are responsible, describe your level of interest in any particular or all projects, whether you are in "good standing" at your school, and note your qualifications and ability to work well with others.
 - If you are willing to work in any job in the park just to get your foot in the door, let the person you are speaking with know that.

Complete an Application and Submit it Before the Due Date

See the next page for tips on how to improve your chance of getting hired.

Improving Your Chances of Getting Hired

Get the degree(s)

- As with most professional jobs, it is likely that a higher degree will increase your chances of getting the job you desire.
- Are you considering different degree options? Look at what the NPS is doing in resource management and interpretation/education. For example, there is currently a growing emphasis on computer skills such as GIS analysis, inventory and monitoring, ecosystem health, watersheds, coastal geomorphology, restoration, and human influences on resources (including geologic processes). NPS mainstays are interpretation (informal education), community and resource planning, and recreation.
- Multiple degrees also increase the spectrum of marketable skills that you have. Depending on the position that you are seeking, this may increase your ability to get and do the job. By combining degrees such as geology / biology, geology / communications, or geology / law enforcement, you will often find you are eligible to apply for more NPS positions.

Get the experience

The importance of related on-the-job experience cannot be emphasized enough. It is essential to get experience in your field of expertise and to work with the general public, various land-managing agencies, and organizations. If you do not have the necessary experience you may want to consider volunteering for an agency or organization. Volunteering is an excellent way to network. This is also an opportunity to ask permanent employees how they got their “permanent status” and you’ll likely discover numerous “ways to get your foot in the door.” Include your volunteer experiences and internships on your resume, both of which indicate that you are willing to go above and beyond standard expectations.

Be open to various jobs and places

Read the OPM job standards (see <http://www.opm.gov>). Check the announcements for common NPS positions. NPS does not have many “geologist” positions. Your dream job may have a different title such as physical scientist, natural resource specialist, environmental protection specialist, GIS specialist, or ecologist. The title “park ranger” may also interest you, but be aware that this title covers two very different kinds of jobs: - interpreters (park guides and education specialists) or protection specialists (law enforcement). While these are usually separate positions, sometimes these are combined in to one position. Please read the job announcements and qualifications carefully because they vary from job to job.

Focus on the application

- Be as succinct as possible, but include all pertinent information.
- For paid positions, describe your past and current positions - include several paragraphs describing each position.
- Fill out the required Knowledge, Skills & Abilities (KSAs), which are often associated with “permanent” rather than seasonal or volunteer positions. These are short (1/2 to one-page) essays on specific topics that are listed in each vacancy announcement. Make sure to address all of the items covered in each KSA. Besides summarizing your skills and knowledge, KSAs are an excellent way for the person hiring you to determine your communication and writing skills. Make sure and spell check your application!
- Don’t limit the list of skills in your application to academic skills. Parks often need people with many skills, including: operating 4-wheel drive vehicles, ATVs, or boats; mountain biking; horseback riding; backpacking; skiing; snow shoeing; swimming; first aid, CPR, SCUBA, EMT, or wildland fire fighting (Red Card certification); expertise in GIS and GPS; teaching or presenting information to all levels of the general public, including experience communicating scientific information to non-scientists, managers, and technical experts, etc. Also list job related skills on your application (e.g., oral / written foreign language skills, computer software/hardware, tools, machinery, typing speed); current job related certificates and licenses; and job related honors, awards, and special accomplishments (e.g., publications, memberships in professional or honor societies, leadership activities, public speaking, and performance awards).
- For paid positions, there are several applications that may be accepted. See the acceptable Office of Personnel Management (OPM) forms at: <http://www.opm.gov/forms/html/appn.htm>.
- Include exact dates of your previous employment, instead of simply stating the month & year.
- Ask yourself if your application reflects your knowledge and how dynamic and personable you are. Emphasize what makes you the person the selecting official wants to hire. You are likely competing with many people for a job that will require a great deal of teamwork. One applicant referred to this as “the fun-factor.” This may not be entirely accurate, but because it reflects the ability to “connect with the general public,” it may be partially correct!

Be persistent in your job search

Apply for all of the positions that you qualify for and in which you are interested. Some positions may have 2000 applicants, while others may only have a few applicants. The NPS selecting official will only know the number of applicants for a given position after the application deadline closes.

Good luck and we hope to see you in the National Parks!