



## 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 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/opia/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 offers conservation internships and summer trail crew opportunities to thousands of people each year. SCA is focused on developing conservation and community leaders and restoring, protecting, and preserving America's public lands. Wide range of positions with specific expertise requirements. 3-to-12 month internship opportunities. Living and travel expenses, insurance, housing, and Americorps 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 annual living allowance.

### 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. Positions are advertised on <http://www.usajobs.opm.gov/> in November/December 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 institutions of higher education in the United States who have successfully competed for sabbaticals according to the procedures of their institution.

### 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 17 CESUs covering the United States.

## Research Opportunities

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### 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 collecting permits.

### Research Learning Centers – <http://www.nature.nps.gov/learningcenters/>

RLCs are public/private partnerships that involve a wide range of people and organizations including researchers, universities, educators, and community groups to facilitate research efforts and provide educational opportunities. 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 to provide research, technical assistance, and education to land management agencies.

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

NPS staff will help find opportunities, but no funding is available.

## Paid Positions – Seasonal, Temporary, and Permanent Positions

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- 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 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

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- 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://wfp.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. The number of applicants is usually far greater than the positions available every year, particularly at larger, well-known parks.
- 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

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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 nature of 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 resources, facilitates research
  - Chief of Interpretation – manages all public and education outreach
  - 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/>, 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 how interested you are 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

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## Get the degree(s)

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

## Get the experience

The importance of related experience cannot be emphasized enough. Experience in your field of expertise and in working with the general public, various land-managing agencies, and various organizations is essential. If you do not have the experience or need to expand what you have, you may want to consider volunteering for any 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”; you’ll likely discover numerous “ways to get your foot in the door.” Even volunteer positions can be competitive. Include your volunteer experiences on your resume - noting that you were a volunteer usually indicates that you 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. Look for these positions, but you may also find your dream job has a different title: physical scientist, natural resource specialist, environmental protection specialist, GIS specialist, or ecologist. The title “park ranger” may also be of special interest, 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 carefully; they vary greatly.

## Focus on the application

- Be as succinct as possible, but include all pertinent information.
- For paid positions, describe your past and current positions, writing a half page to a page is common.
- Fill out the required Knowledge, Skills & Abilities (KSAs), which are often associated with “permanent” rather than seasonal or volunteer positions. These are the short (half page to one page) essays on specific topics that may be identified in a vacancy announcement. Make sure to address all of the items listed in each KSA. Besides summarizing your skills and knowledge, KSAs are the best indicators (to selecting officials) of your communication/writing skills.
- 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; relating scientific information to laypersons, managers, and experts, etc. Also list job related skills on your application (e.g., other languages, computer software/hardware, tools, machinery, typing speed); job related certificates and licenses (current only); 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, a number of application formats 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 employment (vs. simply stating month & year).
- Ask yourself if your application reflects both your knowledge and “how dynamic and personable” you are. Emphasize what makes you the person the selecting official would want to hire. You are likely competing with many people for a job that will require a great deal of cooperative work. 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!

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