Program Overview

The Geoscientists-in-the-Parks Program places geoscientists in NPS units for three months to one year to assist with resource management, research, interpretation, and education projects. Participants in the program gain outstanding field experience, build their resumes, and provide essential geoscience assistance to parks.

Jenda Johnson combined her masters degree in volcanology and her career as a videographer to help Hawaii Volcanoes National Park document its volcanology. The park shows this video to the general public as well as to new park personnel.

The National Park Service, Geologic Resources Division (GRD) created the Geoscientists-in-the-Parks (GIP) Program and began placing geoscientists in parks in 1996. The program responds to requests by park and central office staff for short-term assistance with geologic research, resource management, inventory, monitoring, and interpretive projects. Participants in the GIP program enable the National Park Service to complete geoscience projects that would not be feasible without their help. The majority of the GIP positions each year are filled through the Geological Society of America's (GSA) GeoCorps™ America Program. Additional GIPs are also placed through GRD partnerships with the National Association of Geoscience Teachers, the Association for Women Geoscientists, and the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, and others.

GIP Projects

The Geoscientists-in-the-Parks (GIP) Program is multi-disciplinary. The level of expertise and education required for participation varies based on the project. Past GIPs have been college students, professors, or geoscientists that are currently working, on sabbatical, or retired.

Projects may require the following expertise:

- Environmental geology
- Quaternary geology
- Geomorphology
- Hydrogeology
- Paleontology
- Cave and karst science
- Stratigraphy
- Volcanology
- Glaciology
- Soils and geochemistry
- Disturbed lands restoration
- Geoscience education

Adam Willett found a creative and rewarding experience helping visitors to understand the geology of Grand Canyon National Park.

Park projects may include:

- Assessing geologic hazards
- Geologic mapping
- Summarizing geologic research for park staff
- Assisting in paleontological inventories and field surveys
- Reconstructing the geologic history of the park
- Preparing field guides and geologic overviews
- Leading geologic interpretive talks for park visitors

The Process

Bret Buskirk examined fossils at Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument.

Park staff submit requests for geoscience assistance through the GeoCorps™ America on-line system. The GIP coordinator ranks and selects the projects for completion the following season. Positions are advertised by the Geological Society of America and the most qualified applicants are selected by park staff. Most GIP positions occur during the summer months, however many new fall-winter positions have been added to the program. Long-term Guest Scientist positions may occur any time during the year. GIPs are paid a $2,750 stipend for each 3 months of work and are provided housing (or a housing allowance) for the duration of the project. Guest Scientists may receive a higher stipend, based on level of expertise required for the project.

Applying for a position

The majority of GIP positions are advertised on the GSA GeoCorps™ America website: **www.geosociety.org/geocorps**. Information about these and other GIP opportunities is also provided on the NPS GIP website: **www.nature.nps.gov/geology/gip**.

Erin Tainer surveyed streams in Mount Rainier National Park to help assess flooding and debris flow hazards.

GIP positions are advertised during the winter for spring-summer positions, and during the summer for fall-winter positions. Any United States citizen with a background in the geosciences may apply for a GIP position. Occasionally there are opportunities for international geoscientists to work in national parks.

Profiles of Former GIPs

John Neff spent a summer working on the paleontological inventory for Denali National Park. John and fellow GIP, Melissa Lindholm, discovered many new fossil sites including a previously undocumented hadrosaur trackway. John's experience at Denali has helped prepare him for a career conducting geoscience research in remote areas and under difficult conditions.

Kristin Frederick studied the complex ground and surface water flow systems inside Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve. She also assisted the park geologist in collecting dune movement data. Kristin plans to continue her studies in hydrogeology and says her experience at Great Sand Dunes helped her determine "that hydrogeology is the right field for me".

Matthew Dettinger played a lead role in developing Coronado National Monument's Cave Management Plan. Matthew scoured the land searching for cave and karst features, documented cave vandalism, and even contributed to geologic interpretation on the monument's website. Matthew states, "It has been a wonderful summer and I cannot think of a way I would have rather spent it."

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http://www.nature.nps.gov/geology/gip

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Natural Resource Program Center

GIP Partners

- Geological Society of America
  (GeoCorps™ America Program)
- National Association of Geoscience Teachers
- Association for Women Geoscientists
- American Indian Higher Education Consortium

Emily Gurney helped assess landslide risks in Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve.

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