

# TOP 10 TIPS TO A JOB IN NATURAL RESOURCES

Excerpt taken from the complete “A How-To Guide for Pursuing a Career in Natural Resources” 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition  
Access at: [www.GetOutdoorsColorado.org/CareerGuide](http://www.GetOutdoorsColorado.org/CareerGuide)

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- 1. Flexibility is very important, especially early in your career.**

Chances are you may need to move to a different part of the state or even a different part of the country to get an entry-level job that allows you to get the experience you need to reach your long-term goals. Similarly, you may need to take an entry-level position that you aren't particularly passionate about just to get your foot in the door at an agency where you eventually want to work as a professional. For example, many US Forest Service employees start out working as campground employees, working at the front desk, cleaning bathrooms or maintaining the facilities before they are hired as permanent or even seasonal technical staff. If you can, try not to look at the pay or glory of the job but rather at its potential.

*Read more about this in Chapters Two, Three and Four.*
  - 2. If you are a current college student or recent college graduate, apply to the US Pathways Program.**

This is a federal government program specifically designed to help guide youth into careers with the Federal Government at all types of agencies. You have a better chance at getting into a career with the Federal Government through the Pathways Program than through the regular competitive process. So, take advantage of this opportunity while you can!

*Read more about this in Chapter Three.*
  - 3. One of the most important things you can do is build relationships and network.**

No matter what your personality, be bold! Step outside of your comfort zone and meet new people in positions and at organizations in which you are interested. Volunteer, join a professional society, attend job fairs, reconnect with your professors and alumni, stop by a local office - you never know who you will meet, who they may know and where your network will take you.

*Read more about this in Chapter Three.*
  - 4. Build good communication skills.**

Few natural resource jobs actually involve working alone in the middle of the forest. In most jobs, you will need to work closely with others, including landowners, politicians, partners and co-workers. Build both good written and verbal communication skills and include these on all of your resumes.

*Read more about this in Chapters Two and Three.*
  - 5. It's easier to get a job if you already have one.**

So, be open to part-time positions and internships that will help fill the current time on your resume and keep you in contact with people and issues in the natural resource field. In many agencies, seasonal positions are the best way to get a permanent position so be prepared that you may not get a full-time permanent job right out of college.

*Read more about this in Chapter Three and Four.*
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- 6.** **Get up to speed on the job duties that you don't already know.** Read position descriptions that interest you and if you don't feel qualified or keep submitting unsuccessful applications, find out where the gaps are in your qualifications and fill those by reading textbooks, taking classes, or getting another degree.  
*Read more about this in Chapter Three.*
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- 7.** **Your resume for a government job should look different from your resume for a private or non-profit job.** For any job application, you want to tailor your resume to the duties and qualifications listed in the position announcement. Government agencies, in particular, have strict requirements for meeting the qualifications listed on their job announcements. For example, if the job requires one year of specialized experience in counting birds, on your resume you need to include one year of experience counting birds. This means 40 hours a week for 52 weeks, not part-time for a year-and-a-half or full-time for 51 weeks. Read each qualification carefully and support it *exactly* with experience on your resume.  
*Read more about this in Chapter Three.*
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- 8.** **Recent college graduates should look for GS-5 positions with the Federal Government.** Many youth and entry-level candidates are unsure of which positions they qualify for with the Federal Government. Every government agency uses a code called a "General Series" or "GS" code for the level of its positions based on education and experience. New graduates with no experience should realistically look at position announcements with a GS-5 code.  
*Read more about this in Chapter Three.*
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- 9.** **If you are a veteran or have a disability, your chances of getting a job with the federal government are very good.** The Federal Government employs the greatest percentage of veterans and persons with disabilities. If you are a veteran or person with disabilities, the Federal Government wants to help you get a good job and make a sustainable living. Underscoring this is a number of special government programs to increase the chances of veterans and people with disabilities to get federal government jobs.  
*Read more about this in Chapter Three.*
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- 10.** **Find an agency that fits your passion.** All natural resource agencies are not the same. Even within the federal, state or local government, different agencies have different missions and cultures. Take some time exploring the jobs, people and places where each agency works and focus on getting a job at an agency that most closely matches your own ethics and interests.  
*Read more about this in Chapter Three and Four.*
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- BONUS: You can make a living doing what you love.** Depending on your education, experience and the career you choose, natural resource professionals make anywhere from \$22,000 to more than \$140,000 a year. So, be patient, be persistent, and soon you will begin moving up the career ladder yourself.  
*Read more about this in Chapter Two.*
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