Recreation Resource Management

The United States is unique within the international community with respect to the value it places on recreation; the US devotes more of its public lands to recreational uses than any other country. These natural areas require thoughtful management and care to retain and restore their ecological integrity and recreational appeal in a sustainable manner, and it is Recreation Resource Management students who are taught how to do this.

The RRM program at OSU prepares students to meet the challenges of providing quality recreation opportunities to visitors while simultaneously managing the natural resource where the activities occur. Students study a variety of essential topics such as recreation behavior, planning and management, communication skills, the ideology and practicality of wilderness management, resource economics, resource analysis, resource policy, ecology, conservation, and more. All of these subjects, in combination with the baccalaureate core, create a comprehensive and holistic foundation of recreation resource management knowledge that prepares students to rise to real-life challenges and become successful in their future careers.

In addition to the pith of the degree, RRM students also choose a minimum of one option or minor to complement their degree. This option or minor allows students to specialize a bit in an area that interests them, and the choices are numerous with 17 different options or minors to choose from. A total of 9 options are currently available for students to choose from:

- Cultural Resource Management
- Environmental Resource Interpretation
- Forest Resources
- Law Enforcement
- Park Landscapes
- Public Policy
- Resource Planning
- Sociology
- Tourism

Students may also choose from 8 approved minors:

- Business Administration
- Entrepreneurship
- Fisheries and Wildlife
- Forest Management
- Natural Resources
- Philosophy
- Range Resources
- Resource Economics

After earning their degree in RRM, most students become agency recreation managers, agency planners, consultants, guides, rangers, naturalists, and more. Whichever of these positions you may want, your studies in RRM will be an important stepping stone to it.
As an educator, Jo embodies some of the profession’s most sought-after qualities. She provides rigorous courses that push students to a higher caliber of excellence and professionalism and she is also one of the friendliest faculty at the college. The complementary nature between high expectations and a casual atmosphere leads many students to consider her among their best teachers, if not the best. In fact, Jo has won the Xi Sigma Pi “Julie Kliewer” Excellence in Mentoring Award for 2010 and 2012, voted on by students in the Xi Sigma Pi Forestry Honor Society.

Jo originally earned an A.A. in Chemistry and worked in New Jersey conducting research on agricultural chemicals. Eventually, she decided to change her career and earned a B.S. in Wildland Recreation Management at the University of Idaho in 1984 and a Ph.D. in Resource Recreation in 1994, arriving at OSU three years later after teaching at the University of Maine. When asked why she switched careers, Jo told us, “The opportunity to switch gears and engage in social science was very appealing. People hold varied opinions, they change their minds, and their behavior can be difficult to predict, which makes studying people in leisure settings challenging and satisfying.”

Qualitative and quantitative inquiry into natural resource-based recreation and tourism is Jo’s specialty at the College. In addition to research with her former student Dr. Josh Baur, Jo also teaches three courses each year: Wilderness Management, Recreation Resource Planning, and Research Methods in Social Science. Each of her courses are designed and well known for their emphasis on critical thinking, analytical skills, and communication, preparing students for graduate studies and professional careers after they graduate. For Jo, the greatest part of teaching here is, as she says, “great students!”

For students, Jo had a bit of advice on employment during and after college. She encourages students to work summer jobs for government agencies, NGOs, and private companies to determine where they fit best, and to develop and maintain a network of contacts that can help you find the perfect job. Quality experiences and a strong network of contacts are vital to expanding your range of opportunities and, as Jo notes, graduates who have prior work experience at a company usually have a higher initial salary. Overall, it’s important to experience all the opportunities available to RRM students and not pigeon-hole yourself in one area.
Whether you’re a Natural Resources (NR), Forest Management (FM), or Recreation Resource Management (RRM) undergraduate, if you have advising questions or needs, Laurie Holst is your go-to person. Laurie has been at the College of Forestry since the winter of 2010, advising RRM students and newly-admitted NR students. Before this, she advised students from the Department of Art within the College of Liberal Arts from 2008 to 2010. When asked about the difference in advising between the two colleges, Laurie told us, “It was different only in the curriculum—all students have similar questions and concerns no matter what their major is.”

Just recently, she has also become the advisor of all FM students in the College. With 330 students now under her guidance, Laurie only feels the pressure around peak advising times, such as registration periods, and has found new ways to help each student create a plan for their academic future that fits their needs.

“My advising has been helped by the MyDegrees system,” says Laurie, “[It] makes keeping on top of information so much easier.”

Though some people may view this as more work, for Laurie it provides her with better tools to do what she loves. “My favorite aspect of advising is giving young adults the information they need to make good decisions for themselves,” she explains, “I believe my role as an academic advisor is to pave the way and then guide students in the right direction. Everything else is up to them!"

Laurie especially enjoys the unique types of students she advises at the College of Forestry. “The students in RRM are awesome!” she exclaims, “They are adventurous, outdoorsy, fun, and a joy to work with.” In addition to the students, the RRM faculty, such as Jo Tynon and Mark Needham, also help create an great workplace. As Laurie puts it, “This combination of cool students and cool instructors makes the RRM program an advisor’s dream.”

Advising isn’t the only thing that interests Laurie. Outside of her job at the College, she enjoys hiking, jogging, hot-room yoga, playing piano, and spending lots of time with her husband, son, and her Chihuahua-Shi Tzu mix, Buckles.

And for any students interested in RRM, Laurie has this to say: “I would advise them to become involved with opportunities within the College of Forestry, research the types of jobs they would like to get into, and keep on top of all things academic related. Also, hike those trails!! Miles and miles of trails... “

Laurie Holst

Laurie enjoys traveling in her free time, pictured above in Bandon, Oregon. (Photo: Chuck Holst)

Laurie enjoys some new snow at the Virginia Lakes in the Sierra Nevadas. (Photo: Chuck Holst)

Laurie enjoys some new snow at the Virginia Lakes in the Sierra Nevadas. (Photo: Chuck Holst)
Sara Lynch

Commonly known as “the lady who likes mushrooms,” Sara Lynch is one of the exemplary Recreation Resource Management (RRM) students at the College of Forestry. Aside from her love for mushrooms and fungi, Sara is also passionate about recreation opportunities. Originally hailing from Cape Cod, Massachusetts, Sara spent much of her time enjoying the relatively small number of quality trails. “Sometimes I would have to drive more than three hours to find a good trail; it was definitely not as easy as it is in Oregon,” she tells us. During her time in Massachusetts, a classmate of Sara’s, originally from Astoria, Oregon, moved back home and had Sara come visit. It was from that experience on the Pacific Coast that Sara knew she loved Oregon.

In 2002, Sara moved to Oregon permanently and worked in the travel and tourism industry around Cannon Beach for six years until 2008, when a friend suggested she come to OSU to learn to be a trail guide due to her love of hiking (they were on a hike when the suggestion arose, even). After seriously considering the prospect, Sara enrolled in the RRM program and quickly proved to be one of our best students.

The RRM program has been an excellent fit for her, Sara explained, because of the fusion of forestry and recreation management it teaches to students. And it isn’t limited to the traditional ideas most people hold about recreation personnel, which Sara describes as “wearing a Smokey the Bear hat and leading trail groups.” Sara now sees the larger perspective of recreation management, that of an interface between human society and natural resources and as a place to collect yourself. Developing and maintaining this relationship in a healthy and sustainable fashion is now what drives Sara in her pursuits. Of special importance to her is the need for kids, our future generation, to become involved in outdoor recreation and begin building these important relationships with the natural world.

Sara has already begun to encourage this in the local community through her work at the Finley Wildlife Refuge, some 16 miles south of Corvallis on Highway 99W. Sara has helped run the Junior Ranger Camp at the refuge for young people interested in nature, as well performing all manner of tasks to help enrich the recreational and educational opportunities at the refuge. In her 500+ hours of volunteer work, Sara has maintained trails, combated invasive species, spent time as naturalist trail rover, run educational workshops, completed sign inventories, and planted various trees and flowers.

On top of her studies and volunteer work, Sara spends a lot of time hiking and seeking out new species of plants and mushrooms to identify. “I always bring my camera, and if I don’t know what something is, I’ll take a picture and identify it later at home,” she tells us. This continuous intake of knowledge of new species has made Sara somewhat of an informal local mushroom expert within the college. Yet, there are still many species out there she is still excited to learn about.

Her final words to us were those of advice for anyone considering the RRM degree: “Number one, you’ll never know unless you try, and number two, don’t engage in anything with a finite expectation for the end result. College is an unfolding experience where you may learn about something new that entirely changes your direction and plans. Luckily, the College of Forestry is full of good people who will support you.”

Sara Lynch spends much of her time for mushrooms in the forests of the Pacific Northwest; in this picture, she has found a Stropharia mushroom. (Photo: Genevieve Harman)
Located just north of Corvallis, the McDonald-Dunn Forest is a great place for students and community members to get outside and explore Oregon’s natural beauty. The Forests host miles of trails, open to hikers, bikers, and horseback riders.

Ryan Brown, the College Forests Recreation Manager, will soon be implementing two recreation planning efforts—one project will focus on user group outreach, and the other will focus on interpretation and design. Recreation planning is a process that helps managers and organizations decide how best to meet recreation needs for the community. One way to make sure that a recreation plan is successful is to begin with specific goals—once everyone involved knows what the goals are, they can work together to try to achieve those goals.

The main goals for recreation at the College Forests are:

1. To provide high quality opportunities for visitors
2. To protect forest resources, including ongoing and new research, natural and cultural resources, and forest management operations
3. To reduce conflicts between different types of users
4. To facilitate learning about forestry and the forest environment both for students and community members
5. To create a financially sustainable recreation program
6. To continue building a positive relationship with the Corvallis community

Who makes these planning decisions? Ryan hopes to involve community members, and OSU students and faculty. The planning team will get input from all types of recreation users. To provide for quality recreation opportunities, visitors will have the chance to tell...
planners their ideas about the future of recreation on the College Forests. “We would like to know what opportunities they are looking for regarding trails, as well as what they would like to learn during their time on the Forest. We will use this information in combination with considerations regarding other needs of the Forests (such as research and timber management) to develop our plans,” she says.

The planning process will also be a good learning opportunity for students. “We are very interested in integrating students from other colleges within the university into our projects to find the best ways to share ideas and skills. And of course, we want to provide opportunities for College of Forestry students to be involved in some real-life problem solving and planning. Students will be involved in all stages of the planning process,” Ryan tells us.

How long will planning take? Ryan says that the process will occur in several phases. “In 2013, we will develop an interpretive plan to help guide future interpretive products and efforts. We will also work with visitors to identify their interests, and start evaluating ideas for making the recreation program more sustainable. In 2014, we will begin implementation of some interpretive projects and develop a more comprehensive recreation management plan based off of the results of our 2013 work,” she explains.

Ryan is also excited about a new project with Greenbelt Land Trust developing a searchable trails website that includes all trails open to the public in Benton County. “Potential visitors could go on this website, search for any type of trail (like family friendly, or equestrian) and would be provided with a listing of opportunities. We are currently providing information for this project on the trails in the McDonald and Dunn Forests, and we should expect to see the website live sometime in 2013.”

Each of these projects—the trails website, user group outreach planning, and interpretation planning—will help provide better recreation opportunities on the College Forests.

If you are interested in visiting the McDonald-Dunn Forest, visit their website for current conditions and a map of the open trails. For more information about recreation at the OSU College Forests, contact recreation manager Ryan Brown at ryan.brown@oregonstate.edu or (541) 737-6702.

If you want to help out, you can become a College Forests volunteer! Volunteers help out with trail maintenance, invasive species removal, trail patrol, and landscaping throughout McDonald-Dunn Forest and the Arboretum. Volunteering is a great way to get out in nature, get to know our forests, and give back to the community. For more information about the volunteer program, contact Doug Pereira, volunteer coordinator, at collegeforestsvolunteer@oregonstate.edu or (541) 737-6702.
The New Associate Deans

Recently, three new Associate Dean positions were created and filled with eager, knowledgeable, and ambitious professors, and we’ve created a brief overview of each new Associate Dean to help you get acquainted!

John Bliss  

Associate Dean of Graduate & International Programs

John Bliss is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where he earned a Ph.D. in Forestry in 1988. He teaches several graduate level courses that focus on the social aspects of forestry. He also collaborates with graduate students on essentially all of his research which examines private forest policy and forest-based rural development. Dr. Bliss has also been involved extensively with Starker programs, such as the Starker Program Research Family, the Elizabeth Starker Cameron Demonstration Forest, and more.

James Johnson  

Associate Dean of Outreach & Engagement

James Johnson is a graduate of Virginia Tech, earning his Ph.D. in 1981. James (also known as Jim) focuses his efforts mainly on the OSU Extension Service, providing support and new methods for helping local communities with resource problems across the state. Outside of work, Dr. Johnson enjoys camping, backpacking, hiking, skiing, hunting, fishing, reading, and traveling.

Randy Rosenberger  

Associate Dean of Undergraduate Programs

Randy Rosenberger is a graduate of Colorado State University, earning his Ph.D. in Agricultural and Resource Economics in 1996. He teaches two graduate-level natural resource economics courses and researches environmental and resource economics, non-market valuation, recreation economics, and benefit transfer. He has worked on the Recreation Use Values Database, Meta-Analysis of Economics Research Network, and a NOAA project that studies the economic effects of habitat restoration.