

1. Current hometown (where you are currently living):

Lakewood, CO

2. Job and employer (your title and which park or NPS unit you work at):

National Park Service, Interior Regions 6, 7, and 8. Chief of Interpretation and Education. I serve over 90 parks in the west.

3. Share more about your work – what it entails, aspects that are especially challenging or enjoyable:

My job is to provide support for parks and leadership around the professions of interpretation, education, youth engagement and employment, and volunteerism. We collaborate with other program areas to help parks with solutions to complex challenges. We also work with our regional leadership and the Washington D.C. leadership to help with national projects, themes, or needs. I love that my job puts me in service to others and I have the chance to build connections, support the profession, and help parks when they need it. I also really find a lot of joy in celebrating all the good work they are doing to engage our communities, partners, and public in having high quality and engaging experiences. We support over 90 programs, parks, seashores, historic sites, preserves, and large national parks in our office. Although our team is quite small, we work hard to leverage support for parks.

4. Community work, family – other projects you're involved in outside of your job:

We are currently installing solar panels on our house and supporting our neighborhood in exploring solar as well. As the tax credits step down, we are helping to get the word out. We have a large garden, three rescue pets, and an 8-year-old daughter.

5. Graduate School:

Lesley University, Masters in Science Education 2007

6. COA senior project:

I can't recall the title, but it was something along the lines of "Complexity in Nature: Fractals in Nature". It was a paper on fractals and mathematical properties found in nature with 9 original oil paintings to match. Think the spiral in a nautilus shell, pinecones, and the self-similar replication of pattern found in a fern frond. The project was with Ernie McMullen for the oil paintings studies and Dave Feldman for the math.

7. COA internship:

I worked as an intern at the now retired Kelmscott Rare Breeds Farm and Foundation in Lincolnville, ME. C.J. Walke was the farm manager at the time and a fantastic leader and great guide. I can still shear sheep if needed in a pinch. I still use many of the techniques I learned on the farm today in my own garden.

8. Human ecology in action – in what ways does your background in human ecology influence your work with the Park Service?

Daily. I actually have moments at least once a week where I reflect on how COA prepared me for the path I'm on right now. National parks are challenged and fortunate to have a mission that strives for preservation, education, and conservation while doing it all in service to the American people and our international communities. I feel exceptionally lucky to be able to serve our partners, communities and stakeholders toward shared stewardship.

9. What classes, internships, or experiences at COA helped prepare you for or sparked your interest in working in national parks?

I took a wide range of classes from Quantum Mechanics to 19th Century Women's Literature. I think the varied approach to coursework built a strong foundation that I can tap any time I need it. I also have to give credit to the COA staff. I was a student worker in the Development Office and they were the kindest, most supportive team I've ever worked with. The skills I learned around partnerships and donor cultivation have helped me get to where I am today. To get experience, I started out working for the State of Maine at Fort Knox State Historic Site in Prospect, Maine. I was a seasonal ranger giving school tours, supporting fee collection, working with partners, and mowing and maintaining the fort. I found that opportunity my senior year after many attempts to work in Acadia. I got some good advice from an Acadia ranger who told me to just get some experience, start somewhere, and see if I liked it. I loved it so much I joined the Student Conservation Association as an intern at Bandelier National Monument that summer after graduation.

10. A COA experience that was particularly significant or memorable – this could be a course, an adventure, an aspect of life in the COA or MDI community, etc.

I think I would highlight my experience with the Development Office here.

11. Considerations for prospective students – what do you think a student who might apply to COA should know?

COA affords you so many advantages. The skills to consider other perspectives, articulate your reasoning, check your biases, and build community will carry you into any path you seek to explore. Also, I learned to continue to evolve and grow. The seed as a lifelong learner will serve you well.

12. Considerations for current students – what do you think a student who might want to work for the National Park Service should know?

The National Park Service has many different career fields available- interpretation and education, facilities support, landscape architects, cultural and natural resource preservation, compliance work, administration, and leadership. The NPS also employs professional series of botanists, engineers, ecologists, planners, and more. I think it helps to build your federal resume in USAJobs and apply with a willingness to try a new location or even a smaller national park unit to start. Applicants often want to apply to Yellowstone or Grand Canyon, but there are over 400 parks and programs that would love to support your growth and career advancement. There are also many youth internship opportunities with partners to work in parks. In Bar Harbor, Friends of Acadia often offers volunteer opportunities and internships.