

BLACK FACES IN GREEN SPACES: THE JOURNEYS OF BLACK PROFESSIONALS IN GREEN CAREERS



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PLT is an initiative of SFI 



The Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) envisions a world that values and benefits from sustainably managed forests.

www.forests.org



Project Learning Tree (PLT) is committed to advancing environmental education, forest literacy, and green career pathways, using trees and forests as windows on the world.

www.plt.org



The mission of Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS) is to promote academic and professional advancement by empowering minorities in agriculture, natural resources, and related sciences. Here, you have a valuable voice, and your participation matters.

www.manrrs.org

LETTER OF INTENT

On August 2, 2021, Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS) and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the intention of ensuring that Black Americans have greater opportunities for rewarding careers in the forest and conservation sector. This book, highlighting the many contributions of Black Americans to the forest and conservation sector, is the first product of this partnership. A 2019 U.S. Census Survey found that [fewer than 3%](#) of foresters and conservation scientists identify as Black American (Moore, 2019). Possible contributing factors to this appalling statistic are the general lack of awareness of this discipline among communities of color and the lack of awareness of the many contributions made by communities of color.

By releasing *Black Faces in Green Spaces: The Journeys of Black Professionals in Green Careers*, we hope to make youth aware of the many jobs in the forest and conservation sector and advance this sector. We also hope to advance the conversation within the sector by sharing many inspiring stories from historical and current environmental heroes.

We followed an inclusive development process, beginning by creating an advisory committee of Black American professionals in the forest and conservation sector who oversaw the entire process. We used Black-owned businesses for consulting, designing, developing content, and photography to help close the wealth gap that is often felt by the Black community. The name of the guide pays homage to a Black author, Dr. Carolyn Finney, who authored the book *Black Faces, White Spaces: Reimagining the Relationship of African Americans to the Great Outdoors*.

While we are extremely pleased with the outcome of this project, this guide is just the beginning of our work together. We are committed to increasing the percentage of forestry and conservation professionals who identify as Black (currently fewer than 3%). We will work hard to be intentional, authentic, and transparent in our efforts as we review our accomplishments.

Finally, we would be remiss if we did not acknowledge the many contributions of Black people, from slavery to present day, in the field of forestry and conservation. During the colonial era in the United States, many enslaved Black Americans in the South helped to establish the national economy, and over time, Black Americans have worked a range of roles in forestry, from scientists and stewards of forest land to forestry practitioners. This is of significance because “we must acknowledge that much of what we know of this country today, including its culture, economic growth, and development throughout history and across time, has been made possible by enslaved Africans and their ascendants who suffered the horror of transatlantic trafficking of their people, chattel slavery, and Jim Crow. We are indebted to their labor sacrifice, and we must acknowledge the tremors of that violence throughout the generations and the resulting impact that can still be felt and witnessed today” (Stewart, 2021).

This partnership between SFI and MANRRS is just the beginning of the many ways that we can inspire Black American youth. Through the continuation of our efforts, we can help with the diversification of the forest and conservation sector.



Kathy Abusow
President & CEO, SFI



Mia Farrell
Past President, MANRRS



Marcus Bernard
President, MANRRS

Stewart, T. (2021, March 1). On Labor Acknowledgements and Honoring the Sacrifice of Black Americans. *Diverse Issues in Higher Education*. Retrieved December 29, 2021, from <https://www.diverseeducation.com/demographics/african-american/article/15108677/>

FOREWORD

When I was appointed as the 20th—and first African American—Chief of the Forest Service, an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, after a 43-year career in conservation, I was reminded that “when much is given, much is required.” My family values were deeply rooted in the pursuit of excellence and the belief that we are obligated to pass it on and extend a helping hand. My experiences as a Black man in the Forest Service who has achieved this rank may provide inspiration to others, especially communities that have not always felt welcome on public lands. This personal commitment, coupled with Forest Service hiring priorities to achieve a more representative, inclusive, and thriving workforce, present a unique opportunity to share my story in support of this new resource.

As a youth and young man growing up in Bastrop, Louisiana, I never imagined that I would one day become responsible for the entirety of our country’s national forests and grasslands. While studying law at Southern University, which was my intended pursuit, I stumbled on an outreach notice for a forestry co-op program. I was intrigued by the fact that there would be opportunities to travel as a student. It wasn’t long before the potential for law school was in the rearview mirror and my professional trajectory shifted to forestry and natural resources. With a degree in plant and soil science, I started my career as an intern for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in North Dakota.

Transitioning from a safe and supportive community that was nurturing and a true village to a new environment, new job, and new community was exciting and challenging. These experiences were very different from how I experienced the world in my developmental years, but because of that safety net in my developmental years, I was prepared to embrace new opportunities with enthusiasm. Meeting new people and learning about the importance of protecting and conserving natural resources opened a new world to me. I feel blessed and am so grateful that I stumbled on that flyer all those years ago.

It is an honor to reflect on my career and share my story in *Black Faces in Green Spaces: The Journeys of Black Professionals in Green Careers*. The stories are important because just like me, many of them never considered that careers in natural resources and conservation were for them. I am hopeful that their experiences will inspire you to consider how you too can make a difference.

Your voice is vital to the future health of our land, people, communities, and planet. My journey and those of the many people highlighted herein are proof that opportunities for Black Americans abound in the forest and natural resources sector.

As you learn about these different journeys, you might start to consider:

- **Who are you?**
- **What inspires you?**
- **How can you be a catalyst for positive change in your own community?**

Our ability to sustain public lands and natural resources for future generations is contingent upon building a workforce that represents America’s rich diversity and advocacy for more cohesive public lands management practices in rural, suburban, and urban landscapes and communities.

There are many organizations like the Sustainable Forestry Initiative, and Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences that are creating pathways for emerging professionals and others to become involved in this work. *Black Faces in Green Spaces: The Journeys of Black Professionals in Green Careers* is a good start to learn more about how you can start your career and make a difference for future generations.

Enjoy the reflections enclosed herewith and best wishes for a rewarding career journey!



RANDY MOORE

Chief of the U.S. Department of
Agriculture’s Forest Service

BLACK PROFESSIONALS IN GREEN CAREERS

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A BRIEF HISTORY OF BLACK AMERICANS IN FORESTRY

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“From the very beginning of European exploration in the New World, Black Africans have participated in every phase of the exploration, settlement, and development of North America.”

- Hendricks and Lewis, 2006

COLONIAL AMERICA (1500s–1776)

In colonial America, enslaved people cleared much of the forests in the South for agricultural needs, like cotton, and lived connected to the land and forests where they were kept.

They used their knowledge of the forests to survive and often to escape. Many runaway slaves hid in the forests and even established colonies in the woods of many southern states.

EARLY AMERICA (1776–1900)

After the Civil War, Black Americans' relationship with the forests changed. Terrorist organizations that opposed Black freedom used the forest to mask their movements, and forests became a venue for lynching.

In the 19th century, as farming proved to be increasingly unprofitable, Black Americans found alternative sources of employment in the forests. Black Americans used forests for sustenance and herbal medicine, and they were also key places for worship, spirituality, and escape.

MODERN AMERICA (1900–Present)

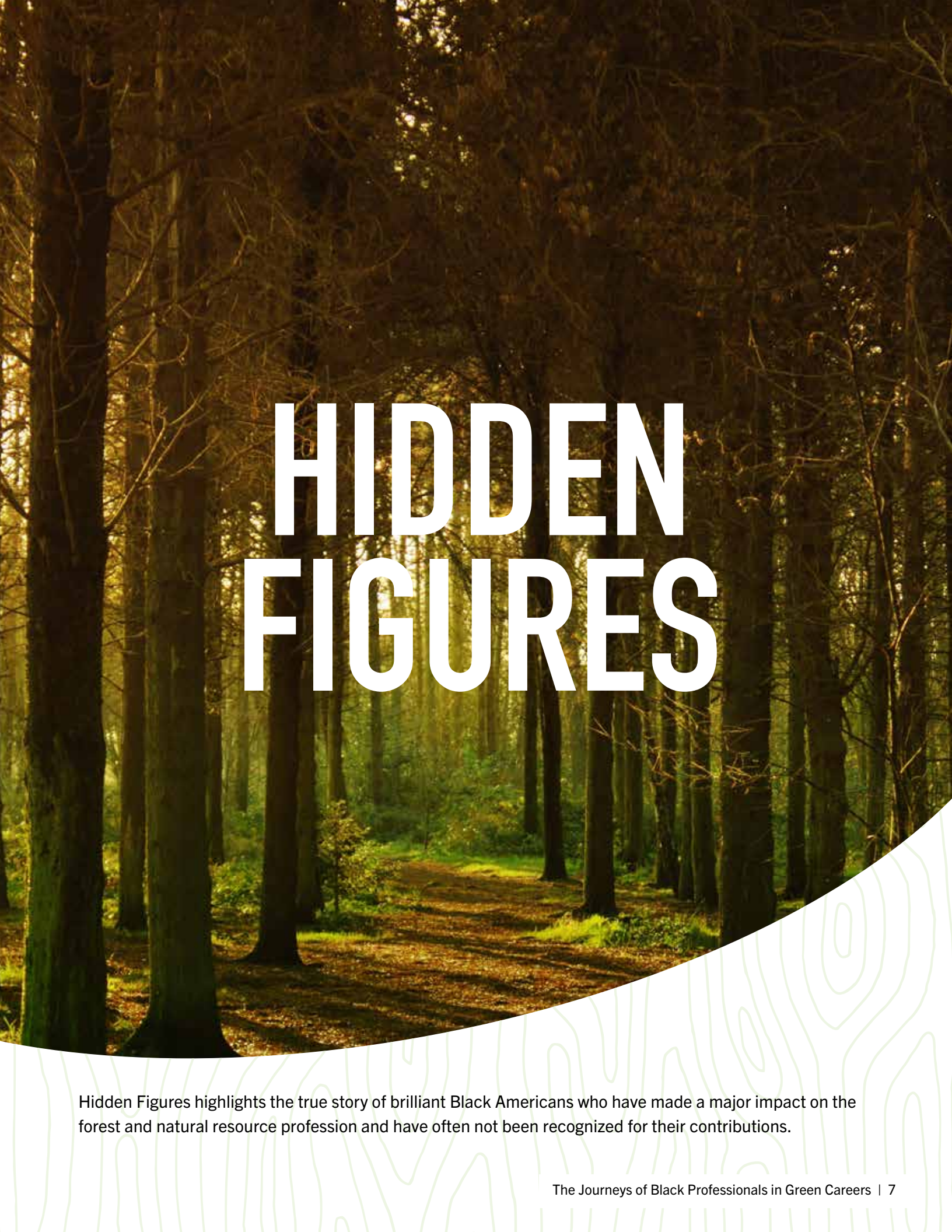
In the 1900s, Black people made up 25% of the forest sector workforce, and during the Great Depression, young Black men carried out much-needed conservation work on national forests and other public lands.

After WWII and during the height of the American segregation era, Black students were dissuaded from considering careers in forestry and agriculture. Today, the forest sector continues to struggle with workforce diversity, as a recent U.S. Census Survey found that fewer than 3% of foresters and conservation scientists identify as African American (Moore, 2019).

Throughout history, Black people have shown consistent resiliency and a love for nature that is ingrained in their culture. Regardless of where you live, you can be a part of building a resilient environment and making a difference.

Hendricks, R. L., & Lewis, J. G. (2006). A Brief History of African Americans and Forests. Retrieved February 3, 2022, from <https://foresthistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/A-Brief-History-of-African-Americans-and-Forests.pdf>

Moore, A. (2019, September 3). Creating a More Diverse Workforce in Forestry. College of Natural Resources News. Retrieved March 10, 2022, from <https://cnr.ncsu.edu/news/2019/09/diversity-in-forestry/>

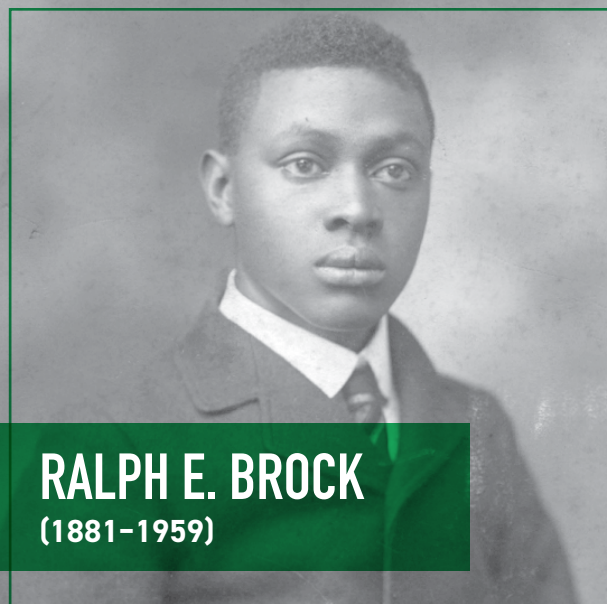


HIDDEN FIGURES

Hidden Figures highlights the true story of brilliant Black Americans who have made a major impact on the forest and natural resource profession and have often not been recognized for their contributions.

HIDDEN FIGURES

© Penn State Mont Alto Library Archives



RALPH E. BROCK
(1881–1959)

Ralph E. Brock is considered the first African-American forester, graduating in 1906 from Pennsylvania State Forest Academy in Mont Alto.



HATTIE CARTHAN
(1900–1984)

Hattie Carthan was a community activist and environmentalist and was instrumental in improving the quality of life of the Brooklyn, New York community of Bedford-Stuyvesant.

Identification of item, 1979; Hattie Carthan collection, BCMS.0077, Box 5; Brooklyn Public Library, Center for Brooklyn History.

Photo donated by Bernice Green to the Brooklyn Public Library. Photographer unknown

© Photo credit NPS



BETTY SOSKIN
(1921–)

Betty Soskin retired as a park ranger with the National Park Service at 100 years old; she was the oldest park ranger serving the United States.



MELODY MOBLEY
(1958–)

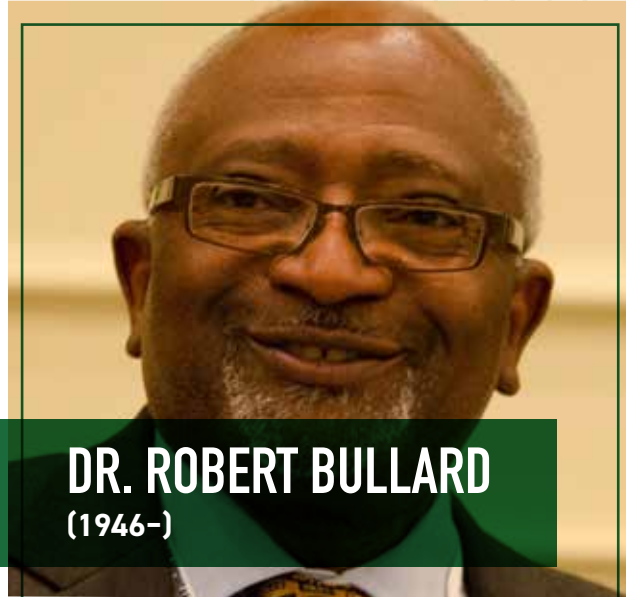
Melody Mobley is the first Black female professional forester hired by the USDA Forest Service.

© Photo by Kirth Bobb



COLONEL CHARLES YOUNG
(1864–1922)

Colonel Charles Young was the first Black National Park superintendent. Beginning in 1899, under his leadership, the Buffalo Soldiers, some of the very first park rangers, played a critical role in protecting and creating the infrastructure for places like Yosemite National Park.



DR. ROBERT BULLARD
(1946–)

Dr. Robert Bullard, “*father of the environmental justice movement*,” is known for his work highlighting pollution in minority communities and speaking up against environmental racism.



BEREA “BURRIE” CORBETT
(1879–1963)

Burrie Corbett is known for being one of the largest Black landowners of his time. In the 1930s he turned \$40 worth of gold coins into a 1,300-acre tobacco farm in Cedar Grove, where he used his revenue from farming to create the first school for Black youth, to found a community center for at-risk teens, and to establish the local church. To date he is still considered one of the largest Black landowners.



DORCETA TAYLOR
(1957–)

Dorceta Taylor is one of the leading experts in the field of institutional diversity and workforce dynamics in the environmental sector. She published an influential report in 2014 entitled *The State of Diversity in Environmental Organizations: Mainstream NGOs, Foundations, and Government Agencies*.

FORESTS = HEALTH



“Because no matter who we are or where we come from, we’re all entitled to the basic human rights of clean air to breathe, clean water to drink, and healthy land to call home.”

- Martin Luther King, Jr.

DOES EVERYONE HAVE ACCESS TO CLEAN AIR?

Did you know that, according to the author Van Newkirk, more than half of the people who live close to hazardous waste are people of color? This means that people of color are more likely than others to die of environmental causes, such as lead poisoning, asthma, and extreme heat-related illnesses.

Also, did you know that, according to a recent study, nearly all emissions caused disproportionate exposures for people of color, on average, as well as separately for Black, Hispanic and Asian people? “Black people were exposed to higher-than-average concentrations from all major emissions groups... The disparities were seen nationally, as well as at the state level, across income levels and across the urban-rural divide” (*The New York Times*, 2021).

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), “Black and African American individuals are projected to face higher impacts of climate change... compared to all other demographic groups” (EPA, 2021).

If clean air is a necessity to live, **why doesn't everyone have access to it?** There are numerous reasons, including historic environmental injustices.

Environmental Protection Agency. (2021, September 2). EPA Report Shows Disproportionate Impacts of Climate Change on Socially Vulnerable Populations in the United States. EPA. Retrieved February 3, 2022, from <https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-report-shows-disproportionate-impacts-climate-change-socially-vulnerable>

Maantay, J. (2002). Mapping Environmental Injustices: Pitfalls and Potential of Geographic Information Systems in Assessing Environmental Health and Equity. Environmental Health Perspectives References

Tabuchi, H., & Popovich, N. (2021, April 28). People of Color Breathe More Hazardous Air. The Sources Are Everywhere. The New York Times. Retrieved February 3, 2022, from <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/28/climate/air-pollution-minorities.html>

Environmental injustice is the disproportionate exposure of communities of color and the poor to pollution, and the effects of this pollution on health and environment, as well as the unequal environmental protection and environmental quality provided through laws, regulations, governmental programs, enforcement, and policies (Maantay, 2002).

So, **how do we clean our air, take care of our environment and provide environmental equity¹?** Look inside and outside for the color **green**. Green plants, especially trees, are our neighborhood air purifiers. They take care of us, and we, in turn, must take care of them. Educating ourselves about environmental racism and elevating the voices of impacted communities can promote change in communities that are being **systemically impacted by environmental racism²** and that have a deficit of green plants.

Do you see green spaces in your neighborhood? Do you see people like you working in green spaces? For many of you, the answer may be no. But the reality is that Black people have been pioneers who have led and developed our natural resources as farmers, foresters, and conservationists in America for centuries.

As you read this guide, reflect on the history of the importance of Black Americans in forestry but also take the opportunity to learn more about what you can do moving forward to make a difference in your own community.



“Let your path become your blueprint, while listening to other pathmakers.”

- Dr. Thomas RaShad Easley

¹ Environmental equity: According to the EPA, environmental equity can be broken down into two categories—fair treatment and meaningful involvement. Fair treatment means that no single sect of the population should be disproportionately affected by environmental crises as a result of laws or policies. Meaningful involvement means that groups can offer input regarding decisions that affect their health or their environment. This involvement also means that their input will be taken seriously and considered when making said decisions. Additionally, lawmakers will actively seek feedback from affected communities.

² Environmental racism: Whether by conscious design or institutional neglect, actions and decisions that result in the disproportionate exposure of people of color to environmental hazards and environmental health burdens constitute environmental racism.



BLACK PROFESSIONALS IN GREEN CAREERS

The following 22 Black professionals featured in the guide provide impactful stories and describe their journeys into their green careers.

Each profile features:

- Their introduction to the forest and green jobs sector
- The challenges they overcame
- The importance of mentorship in helping to mold their trajectory
- Advice for future job seekers

SFI/PLT and MANRRS encourage you to engage, explore, and experience your own green career path.

MEET

JASMINE BROWN

**DOCTORAL STUDENT IN THE
DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY**

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

10 YEARS' EXPERIENCE



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*SFI Conference Presenter,
PLT Trained*



MANRRS Student Member

Jasmine's Story:

THE FUTURE OF FORESTRY

MEETING FORESTRY

Jasmine loved her yard growing up in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Her passion for forestry was sparked one day when something surprised her: "I came home from school one day and the tree was missing. It was cut down and all I saw was a pile of wood chips. And from then on, I just started asking more questions about my natural environment. Where do trees go when they're no longer standing in front of your house? What happens to them? Who's using the wood?"

Jasmine knew she wanted to work outdoors in the environmental sector, but not always with trees: "In my freshman year I had to pick a concentration, and I did not like any of the options... I said, 'Is there something else I can do with nature?' And they were like, 'Yeah, have you thought about trees?' And I said, 'No, but I'm willing to try.' I ended up just taking forestry that day and loved my forestry classes! I didn't look back."

"I ended up just taking forestry that day and loved my forestry classes! I didn't look back."



MENTORSHIP IS CRITICAL

Jasmine notes several formal and informal mentors in her career. At Oregon State University, she highlights her MANRRS advisor, Wanda Crannell, who supported her through graduate school. At the Society of American Foresters, Jasmine was connected to Wilhelmina Bratton and Rachel Reyna through the Diversity Scholars Program. Less directly, she highlights Black professionals who inspire and encourage her every day, like Beatra Wilson (see Page 84), Sam Cook (see Page 20), Terry Baker (see Page 16), and Thomas Easley.

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

Jasmine notes the challenges that come with being “not only Black, but also a female in the woods.” She also talks about the role of identity and importance of representation. “Being the only Black woman has had me question my sense of belonging and my sense of success, because if I’m not seeing someone who looks like me in that position, who’s the department chair, who’s the president of the professional society, how can I know that’s something I can do or I can attain?”

CAREER PATHWAY

- Hometown
Bridgeport, Connecticut
- First point of entry into forestry
Chose Forestry as her concentration as a freshman in college
- First job
Forestry Intern, Plum Creek Timber
- 2015
Graduated from University of Connecticut, Bachelor of Science Natural Resources
- 2015–2017
Forest Technician, Enterprise Program, USDA Forest Service
- 2019
Oregon Museum of Science and Industry, Science Communication Fellowship
- 2019–2020
Maryland Forestry Foundation, Mel Noland Fellowship for the Natural Resources Careers Camp
- 2020
Graduated from Oregon State University, Master of Science Forest Ecosystems & Society
- 2018–2020
Biological Trainee, USDA, Pathways Intern, Umatilla National Forest, Forest Service
- Present
Doctoral Student in Forestry at Michigan State University



“

Jasmine's

ADVICE TO THE FUTURE GENERATION

OF BLACK AMERICAN GREEN JOB SEEKERS:

Own your story

“Realize that there's power in your story, and that there is power in only YOU being able to tell that story.”

Get experience

“I struggled with thinking about what to do next. So, I was able to answer some of those questions by doing different summer jobs. Even if it was something where you did a summer job, and you didn't like it, at least you know that's an option you don't want to pursue.”

Get involved

“As an undergraduate student, the Society of American Foresters and MANRRS have many opportunities. Knowing you can be networking with the leaders of your field over coffee was something I just could have never perceived.”



MEET

TERRY BAKER

CEO

SOCIETY OF AMERICAN
FORESTERS

22 YEARS' EXPERIENCE



PLT is an initiative of SFI



*SFI-MANRRS Advisory
Committee, SFI Board of
Directors, PLT Green Mentor -
Mentor, PLT Partner*



MANRRS Student Member

Terry's Story: **FIGHTING FOR THE FUTURE OF FORESTRY**

MEETING FORESTRY

On his grandfather's farm, Terry gained a love and appreciation for nature: "After school and during the summers, my brother and I would help him with various things, from taking care of chickens to planting and harvesting crops until the sun went down. On Saturday mornings, he would take us fishing in local ponds, lakes, and rivers. Helping him grow various things for family and friends, like potatoes and corn, was a source of pride and fun."

"Helping him grow various things for family and friends, like potatoes and corn, was a source of pride and fun."

Terry describes his entry into forestry as "random chance," but his interests led him in that direction: "As I was preparing for college, I wasn't sure what I might do. I was looking at a few different things and, in that process, I filled out a few information cards for universities about some of my interests and some things I liked. I received a phone call in the middle of the night from a USDA Forest Service liaison/recruiter at Florida A&M University (FAMU). He was a lead for their Multicultural Workforce Strategic Initiative program focused on bringing diversity into forestry and natural resources. I said I was interested, and he said that he was willing to give me an opportunity to work for the summer, and after I was accepted to FAMU as a student, I would then be enrolled in the program."

Terry started with the USDA Forest Service that summer and kicked off a long and impactful career in forestry.



MENTORSHIP IS CRITICAL

The recruiter who called Terry, Ted Willis, also served as a mentor, helping Terry navigate the Forest Service and the forest and natural resources sectors. His colleagues in the field also serve as mentors, advisors, and inspirations, including former Chief of the Forest Service Vicki Christiansen and the current Chief Randy Moore. More than anything, they contributed their time: “I feel fortunate that folks were willing to take their time with me. That definitely has helped shape me as a leader because I make that same effort to make time for others as they’re trying to navigate what their career and opportunities are.”

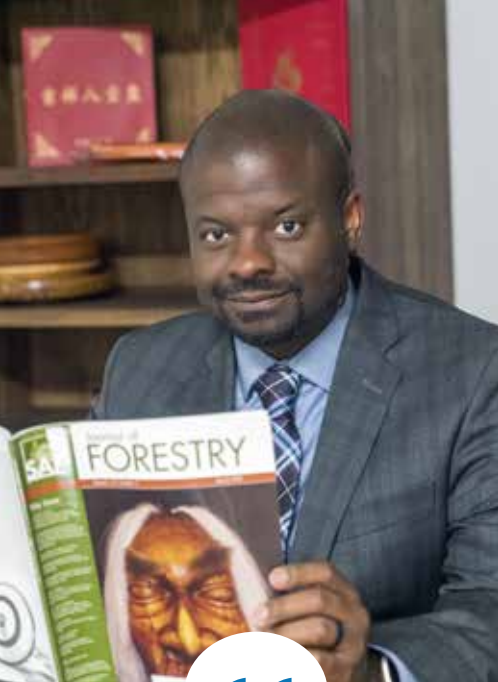
OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

The lack of diversity has been a huge challenge to people in the forestry field, especially Black people. This has become one of Terry’s passions in the field. He recalls his own experiences with coworkers questioning his intentions: “They questioned whether I was truly committed to the work or if I was just stepping into certain roles, for the sake of stair-stepping in my career. Was I really committed to being in the place where I was working?”

It was a challenge, but you don’t quit when you love something, and Terry loves his work and believes in the future. “Finding ways to navigate and work through those situations gives you the understanding to be able to help folks who walk into those same situations after you. They need someone to help them understand and realize they are not crazy and that there are moments where you’ve got to take care of yourself. That comes from experience and being able to help lift folks up.”

CAREER PATHWAY

- Hometown
Marianna, Florida
- First point of entry into forestry, 1999–2003
Summer Forestry Technician, Florida National Forests
- 2004
Graduated from Florida A&M University (HBCU), Bachelor of Arts Agricultural Sciences
- 2004
Graduated from University of Florida, Bachelor of Arts Forest Services and Conservation
- 2004
Forester, Apalachicola National Forest
- 2005
Legislative Assistant, USDA Forest Service National Office
- 2007–2009
Graduated from Yale University, Master of Forestry
- 2004–2018
USDA Forest Service
 - 2005–2009 **Forester, National Forests**
 - 2009–2010 **Supervisory Forester**
 - 2010–2011 **District Ranger, Nebraska National Forests**
 - 2011–2017 **District Ranger, Willamette National Forest**
 - 2017–2018 **Deputy Forest Supervisor, Arapaho & Roosevelt National Forests & Pawnee National Grassland**
- 2018–Present
CEO/EVP, Society of American Foresters



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Terry's

ADVICE TO THE FUTURE GENERATION

OF BLACK AMERICAN GREEN JOB SEEKERS:

Be open to new experiences

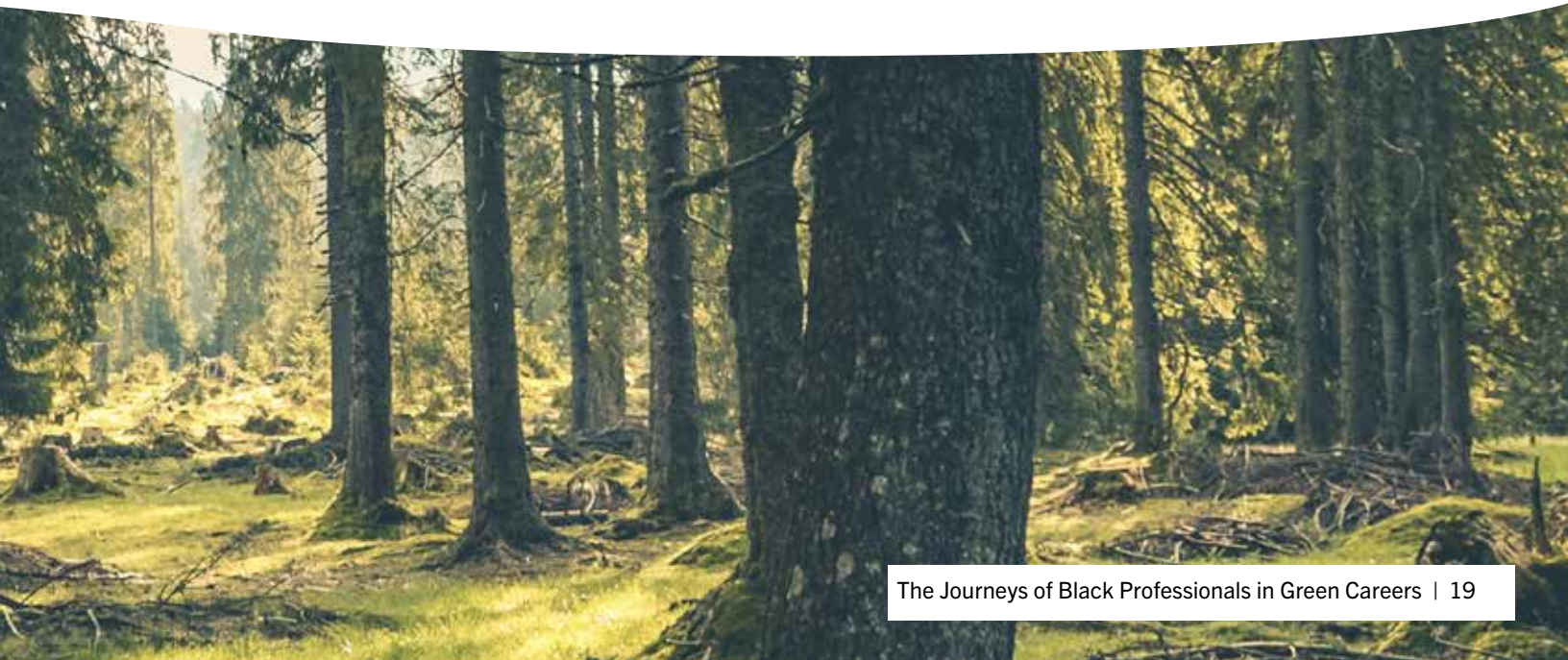
“Being able and willing to travel and to engage not only with units within an organization, but also with partnering organizations, is really, really critical.”

Get to know people and how they work

“Being politically savvy is key in understanding and navigating personalities and organizations to be successful and to showcase your value and your work.”

Be a team player

“The ability to work with others is just a core component of what we do.”



MEET

SAM COOK

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF FOREST
ASSETS, VP OF THE NATURAL
RESOURCES FOUNDATION

NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF NATURAL RESOURCES

40 YEARS' EXPERIENCE



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SFI-MANRRS Advisory Committee,
SFI Resources Committee, SFI
Implementation Committee



MANRRS Partner

Sam's Story:

YOUR NETWORK IS YOUR NET WORTH

MEETING FORESTRY

Forestry is in Sam's DNA: "Growing up in Linden, Alabama, I was always in the woods: Boy Scouts, Future Farmers of America, Extension. I just loved getting outside!"

Sam's dad worked for a paper mill when he was growing up, and his brother worked in the sawmill business at WestRock, but he had no knowledge that the wood that was growing on the land was used to produce those products that were coming out of the mill. He saw the technical skills but was not aware of the many career paths in forestry.

MENTORSHIP IS CRITICAL

"I was [first] mentored by Walter Davis, who was our shop teacher at the time...But he also was a coach [and] the Boy Scouts Master. He later became a principal and I followed him the entire time I was in school. My mother pretty much gave me to him because, I quote her, 'I want you to not make my boy a sissy and put him out there and let him learn what it means to be a man.' My dad was busy working three to four jobs, and she was doing her work and raising the family. So, no one really had the time to give us, what you call that mentor relationship, and he was the reason I kind of got where I am."



*"I just loved
getting outside!"*

Sam found the career pathway he wanted to pursue at a co-op position with International Paper Company. “I really got exposed to three different elements that forestry had to offer: one with the government, one with the academic internal sector of forestry, then the other was with private industry.”

“I’ve had many mentors, including Walter Davis, and Larry Jervis, from when I attended NC State University, who was the forest manager and faculty. Then there was my first boss, Bob Beason at International Paper. It was never what I would call a formal relationship, but we were able to talk about things that have improved my career.”

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

The harsh reality is that Sam faced many challenges as a Black man in America. When he entered an industry where there were few Black males, his skin color made him stand out. “Getting over people that were racists, working in certain environments that did not see me for who I am as a person, nor wanting to provide the respect that allowed me to grow in a way that I needed to grow. I faced challenges every single day. But I also had to put on this armor to get beyond that and not let that break me down. So, I learned to stay positive all the time. People always say, ‘You are always smiling, you always seem happy.’”

Still, no matter what, Sam perseveres. “But I have never seen what I’m seeing today: people taking the time to work together, looking at resources, looking at solid change versus just facial change. And so that’s probably given me another spark of life to say, ‘I want to stay doing what I’m doing.’ And I’m literally seeing Black students go through college, getting a job and becoming successful in this field.”

CAREER PATHWAY

- Hometown
Linden, Alabama
- First point of entry into forestry
Forestry Program at Tuskegee University (HBCU)
- 1979–1981
Attended Tuskegee University: A.S. Forestry Management
- First job, 1979
Forest Technician, USDA Forest Service
- 1981–1984
Graduated from North Carolina State University, Bachelor of Science Forestry
- 1984
Co-Op Forestry Position, International Paper
- 1993–2007
International Paper
 - 1993 **Supply Chain Manager**
 - 1993–1996 **Forester**
 - 1996–1999 **Forest Supervisor**
 - 1999–2002 **Forest Manager**
 - 2002–2004 **Lumber Mill Manager**
 - 2004–2007 **Eastern Region Fiber Supply Regional Manager**
- 2007–2008
Project Manager/Forest Manager, Roanoke Land Development
- 2007–2013 & Present
Consulting Forester and Business Development Consultant, SC Foundations
- 2013–2016
Director, Sustainable Forestry, Center for Heirs’ Property Preservation
- 2016–Present
Executive Director of Forest Assets, VP of the Natural Resources Foundation, NC State University



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Sam's **ADVICE TO THE FUTURE GENERATION OF BLACK AMERICAN GREEN JOB SEEKERS:**

Find your 'in'

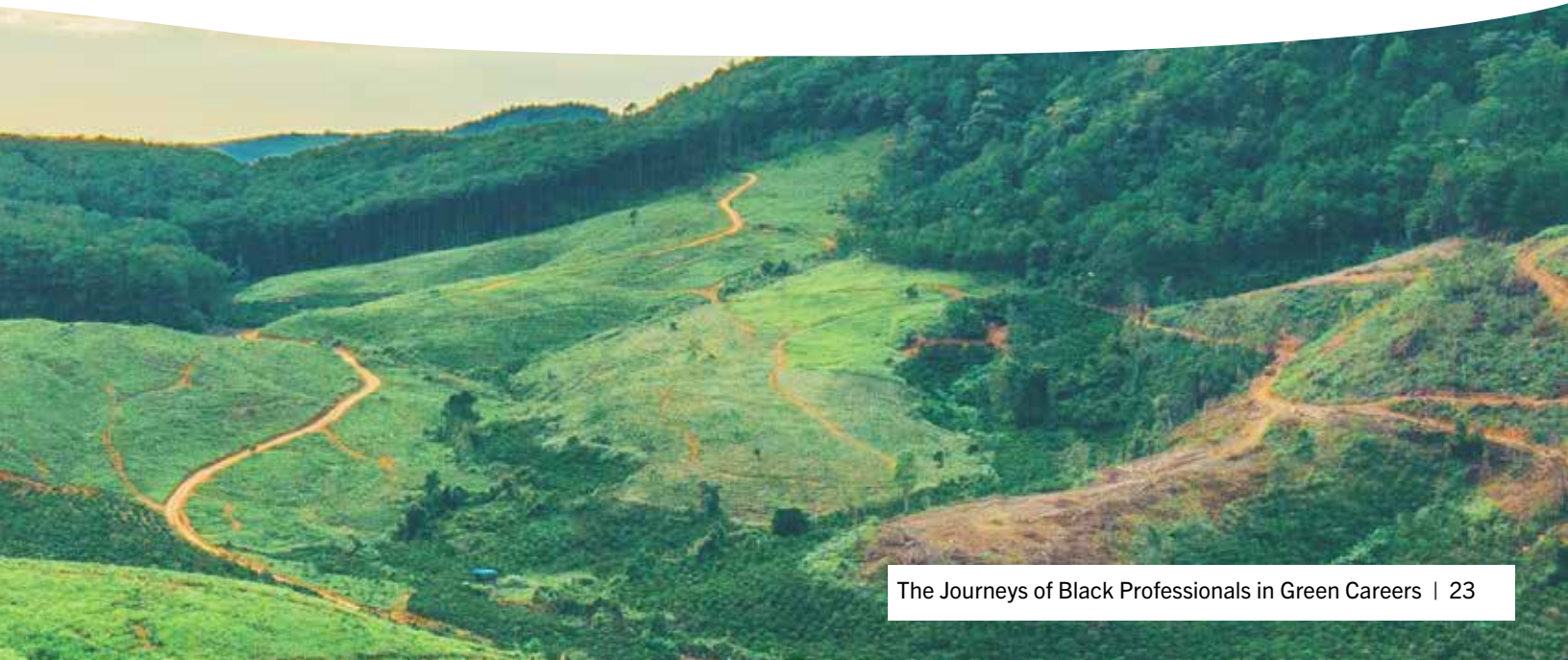
“There [are] many opportunities in different green job sectors that can allow you to use your skills in a way that I had no idea was offered or available to us until I got into it. Now I can shed light on the view that shows you that there's a pathway.”

Embrace leadership

“You need to be a people person. You also need to be a person of your word: whatever you say you're going to do, you work your hardest to try to do it! You need to be able to help people. So, you should always be mentoring others to be a replacement.”

Be a team player

“Look for people who are interested in taking your job, because it gives you the freedom to go get other stuff done, and to help bring others along the way forward with you. And I have lived by that from 1993 to where I am today.”



MEET

ALEX SINGLETON

FIBER SUPPLY MANAGER

INTERNATIONAL PAPER

31 YEARS' EXPERIENCE



PLT is an initiative of SFI



*SFI Implementation
Committee Chair, SFI-certified
organization, PLT Trained*



*MANRRS Conference
Participant*

Alex's Story: **NATURE BOY**

MEETING FORESTRY

Alex has always had a passion for the outdoors: “Some of my fondest early memories were of me going fishing with my grandmother as a toddler.” He loved hunting (especially squirrels), and working the farm: “During the day, I would ask, ‘Daddy! Let’s go plow with the mule.’ So, he would have me in the little boots he bought me, which made me feel like a little man, as I would walk alongside my dad holding onto the handles of the plow while he was plowing in the gardens and fields for my grandparents.”

Even though his family worked in the forest products industry, he describes his entry into forestry as “happenstance.” He came from a family of loggers on his mother’s side, and after a series of fortunate events, Alex’s father managed to get a job in a paper mill as a skilled worker. Later, one of his father’s coworkers shared information with Alex about the forestry career and gave him information about a scholarship program with a local forestry company called Westvaco. Then in Spanish class, he learned that his teacher was married to the soon-to-be Vice President for the Timberland division of Westvaco and that scholarship was his idea! He toured the facility and grounds, saw the timber harvesting and the deer running and never looked back: “I believe my life would be completely different because that was my only touch point to natural resources as a profession.”

“Some of my fondest early memories were of me going fishing with my grandmother as a toddler.”



MENTORSHIP IS CRITICAL

For Alex, his managers served as his primary mentors, starting with the one who recruited him into forestry: Casey Canonge. He also notes several other managers who taught him valuable skills like coaching, mentoring, networking, overcoming challenges, and more beyond being a good forester.

CAREER PATHWAY

- Hometown
Charleston, South Carolina
- First point of entry into forestry
Westvaco Scholarship Program
- First job: 1990–1991
Forester, Andrews, SC
- 1991–1995
District Supervisor and Staff, Westvaco
- 1995–2013
District Forester and Harvest Manager, MeadWestvaco
- 2013–2016
Senior Resource Forester, Wood Buyer, Plum Creek Timber/Weyerhaeuser
- 2016–Present
Fiber Specialist, and Fiber Supply Manager, International Paper



“

Alex's

ADVICE TO THE FUTURE GENERATION

OF BLACK AMERICAN GREEN JOB SEEKERS:

Get involved in STEAM

(science, technology,
engineering, arts, math)

“Science, math, art, and technology have been in play in my career from the beginning.”

Be a self-starter

“You have to be able to go out and execute without somebody telling you that you need to do X, Y, Z. So, the ability to operate independently and the ability to deal with ambiguity can be big, especially when you're working in roles where somebody is not constantly standing over you.”

Learn to roll with the punches

“On a weekend, you can have one tropical storm come through and completely upset the applecart! You go from being full on forest inventories to within a few days being empty. Understand those systems and be able to deal with the stress that comes along with that dynamic environment.”

Build communication skills

“Public speaking and communication skills are important for the field of forestry and natural resources.”

Build problem- solving skills

“You have to be able to solve problems on the fly routinely, so those training and educational opportunities that strengthen problem-solving skills are very important.”



MEET

TRAVIS PERRY

TERRITORY MANAGER

WEYERHAEUSER

23 YEARS' EXPERIENCE



SUSTAINABLE
FORESTRY
INITIATIVE
SFI-00001



PROJECT
LEARNING
TREE
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MANRRS Student Member

Travis' Story:

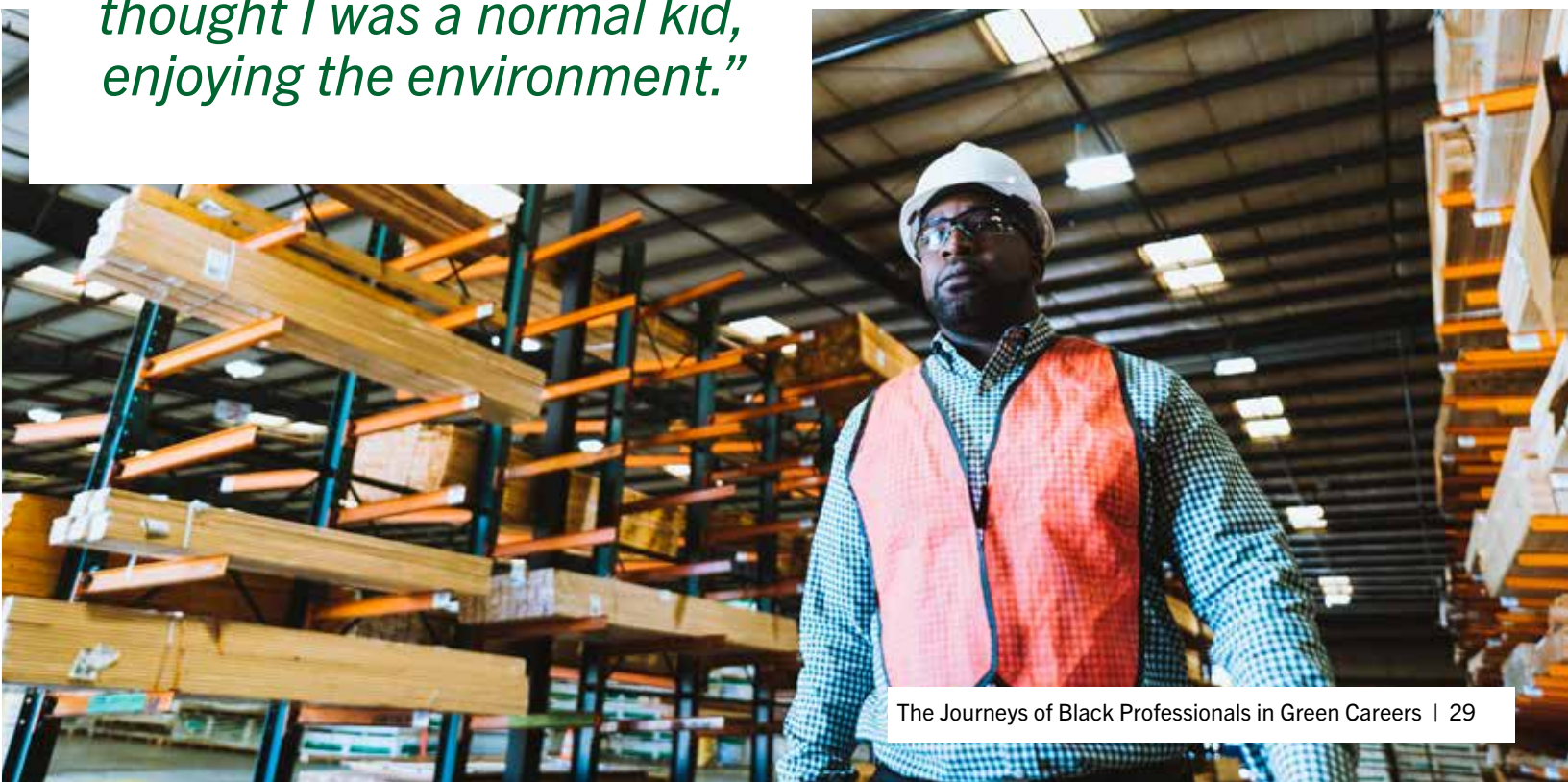
LISTEN WITH YOUR HEART

MEETING FORESTRY

Forestry was all around Travis in his rural hometown of Charleston, South Carolina: “We had a forestry company that worked around us, and I routinely saw log trucks doing forest activities. So, as I got older, I didn’t realize that I had a love for nature. I just thought I was a normal kid, enjoying the environment. I would say as a young kid growing up in a rural environment, it was quite natural for me to spend much of my time playing in the forest.”

Travis first got involved in forestry when he attended a camp run by Alex Singleton (page 24): Alex created a Natural Resources Career Camp for minority high school students to get them exposed to careers in natural resources. “I began participating in my ninth-grade summer. I really enjoyed it and I spent time with them doing a lot of forest activities. He spent time allowing us to tour mills and also engaging with professionals to learn more about careers in forestry.” His experiences in the camp encouraged Travis to pursue forestry as his career.

“I didn’t realize that I had a love for nature. I just thought I was a normal kid, enjoying the environment.”



MENTORSHIP IS CRITICAL

Mentors have played a critical role shaping Travis' journey through forestry. First is his father, whom he says encouraged him to pursue his passion and help "make it make sense." In addition, Alex Singleton mentored Travis from a young age as a part of the Natural Resources Career Camp, where he also met his colleague and mentor Marceez Mitchell, who had a huge impact on Travis' career: "When I was a freshman at Clemson, Marceez helped me get an internship within International Paper in Mississippi. He also encouraged me to always be willing to get out of my comfort zone and to grow—he told me to think about what I was going to be doing in 10 years. The encouragement he gave allowed me to think ahead."

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

Like so many of his peers, Travis experienced challenges being the only Black person in class or at work. "Imagine when I was the only Black guy in class, and I didn't show up for class! They would know and ask, 'Where is Travis?' Or in a meeting or classroom and you get ready to answer a question, everyone would look wanting to know what I had to say."

But Travis would not let those moments distract him from his goals: "I did a really good job of staying focused on my goals and eliminating noise. My feelings of inadequacy, or just feelings of loneliness, I looked at it less as challenges and more as opportunities for me to have more time to study, more time to focus on my goals, and less distractions. I feel like some situations might have come up, and I probably just blocked it out as noise."

CAREER PATHWAY

- Hometown
Charleston, South Carolina
- First point of entry into forestry
Natural Resources Career Camp for minority high school students
- 2004
Intern, International Paper
- 2006
Intern, Weyerhaeuser Company
- 2007
Graduated from Clemson University, Bachelor of Science Forest Resource Management
- 2007–2011
Forester, Weyerhaeuser
- 2009–2013
Recreation Land Use and Development Manager, Weyerhaeuser
- 2012
Graduated from East Carolina University, Master of Business Administration
- 2015–2018
Market Development Manager, Weyerhaeuser
- 2018–Present
Territory Manager, Weyerhaeuser



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Travis’

ADVICE TO THE FUTURE GENERATION

OF BLACK AMERICAN GREEN JOB SEEKERS:

Build interpersonal skills

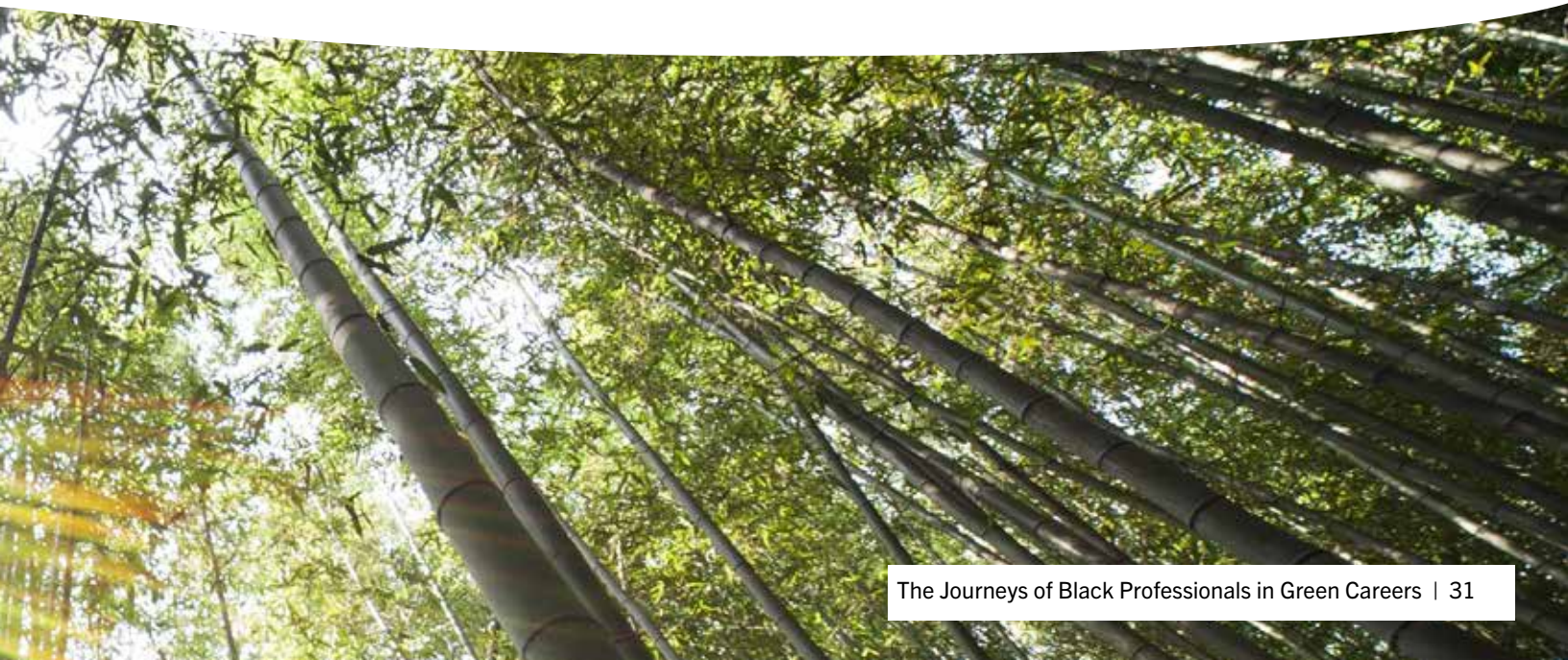
“Listen well, engage with people, find the need behind the need and how your resources may be able to fill that gap for that person, individual, or company. That’s the key skill people need more than anything else.”

Go outside

“Feel comfortable outside in nature.”

Find educational opportunities

“I recommend for young students to consider some of the community colleges, especially with forestry, because they’re really good at getting you prepared. Key training that I think many of them need is basic math skills, critical thinking, and strategic planning.”



MEET

BRANDI COLANDER

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT AND
CHIEF SUSTAINABILITY OFFICER

ENVIVA

21 YEARS' EXPERIENCE



SUSTAINABLE
FORESTRY
INITIATIVE

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LEARNING
TREE



SFI-MANRRS Advisory Committee

Brandi's Story: **SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE CITIES**

STEPPING INTO NATURAL RESOURCES

Brandi's love for the outdoors was nurtured by her parents: "On Sundays after church, we would go home and change clothes. Then my dad would bring us to the reservation in New Jersey to expose us to nature. We were just exploring, and he would show us bear tracks, owl pellets, and different types of trees. It gave me a real appreciation for the great outdoors. It's something that I didn't realize were seeds being sown, and over time, I continue to grow and be sustained by my curiosity around natural resources and the environment."

Brandi's entrance into the sector came from an entirely different field: the law. "I was an attorney for an air and energy program in New York. I was hired to help them work on scaling energy efficiency using decoupling as a mechanism, which is really a fancy way of helping utility companies reduce their demand using energy efficiency practices. It really was a dream job!"



MENTORSHIP IS CRITICAL

Brandi highlights the influence of Dianne Dillon Ridgely on her life and career: “She was one of the first people of color that I knew of in a corporate board member role. It got me thinking, what do they do? What does it mean to be a board member? What does it mean to have visibility, to have that perch to offer your experiences? What I love about Dianne is that she is an incredible narrator and storyteller which draws people in and allows them to engage. She is unconventional and affirming and does the work. She commands your attention, but not in a forceful way at all.”

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

Brandi works in a very fast-paced environment that values big-picture thinking, which can be overwhelming. As a result, she has had to make some tough decisions to value herself: “One of the things worth considering is whether or not you feel like your contributions and talents are being acknowledged. I think it’s completely okay to decide that’s no longer how you want to dedicate your time and energy. Life is short and what you do in the dash matters. Grant yourself permission to leave if it makes the most sense for you because there will always be another place where your time and talents are going to make a world of difference.”

CAREER PATHWAY

- Hometown
Virginia
- First point of entry into forestry
Nature walks with father in New Jersey
- Graduated from University of Virginia**
- Graduated from Yale University**
- Graduated from Vermont Law School**
- Lawyer, National Resources Defense Council Air and Energy Program**
- Deputy General Counsel, White House Council on Environmental Quality**
- Deputy Assistant Secretary, U.S. Department of Interior**
- Chief Sustainability Officer, WestRock**
- Chair of Board of Directors, DC Green Bank**
- Senior Vice President and Chief Sustainability Officer, Enviva**





“

Brandi's **ADVICE TO THE FUTURE GENERATION OF BLACK AMERICAN GREEN JOB SEEKERS:**

Believe in yourself

“Trust your gut. Spend your time and energy in spaces where you can grow.”

Follow your interest

“The moment you really identify something that makes you light up, that curiosity will sustain you in all ways. I believe reward follows as you improve your craft.”

Continue to learn

“The pace of change is swift. Be willing to evolve, grow, and remain a student, even as you cultivate an expertise.”



MEET

LYDIA KIDANE

COORDINATOR,
EDUCATION PROGRAMS

SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY INITIATIVE
8 YEARS' EXPERIENCE



SUSTAINABLE
FORESTRY
INITIATIVE

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PROJECT
LEARNING
TREE

SFI Staff
PLT Green Mentor - Mentor



MANRRS Student Member,
Graduate Student Advisor

Lydia's Story: **JUST TRY**

MEETING FORESTRY

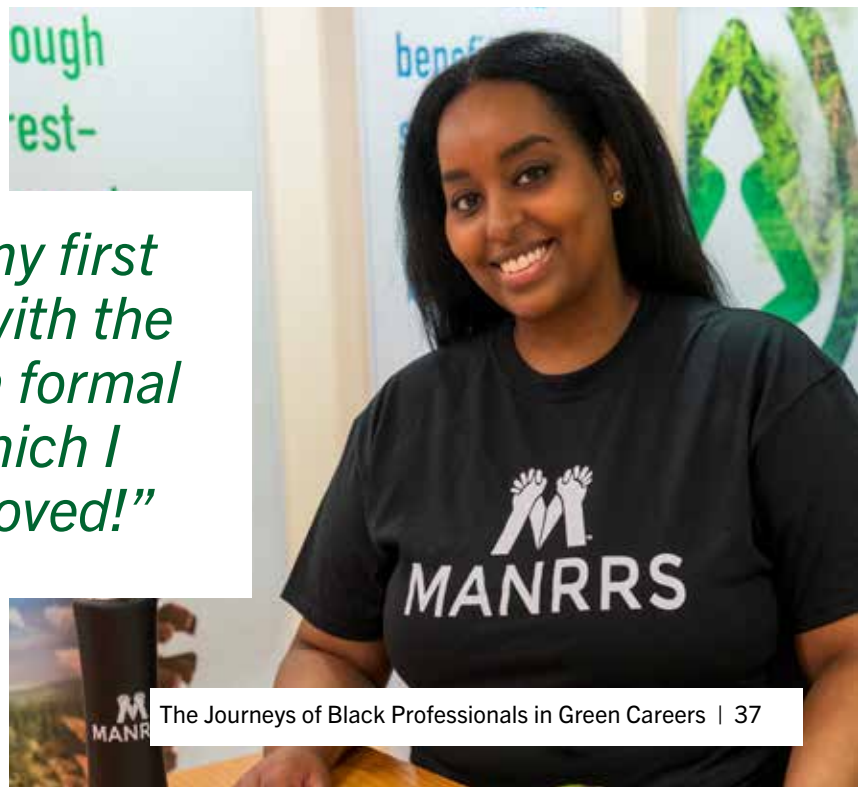
Lydia was born in Hartford, Connecticut, the child of Eritrean refugees. She was not exposed to many green spaces; in fact, it was not until middle school that she would experience the great outdoors.

"We were given an opportunity to participate in an outdoor classroom program, which was a program where they take you to the woods, and you stay for almost a week. They have educators who take you on nature walks and teach you all about the outdoors."

She fell in love with it all quickly. "That was the first time I ever dissected an animal! It was a pig's eye. We were a bunch of kids who had never been to the woods, never been to the forest and had just been out around the neighborhood. That was my first experience with the outdoors in a formal setting, which I absolutely loved!"

After many twists and turns and trying many paths, Lydia would eventually find her groove in arboriculture. "I initially attended college after high school but dropped out after my first two years. I thought majoring in civil engineering was the required path to work in the environmental sector, but it just wasn't working out for me." After dropping out of college, she started working at a native plant nursery in Virginia and later, became an arborist assistant at a tree care company. "I would sign up for classes at the local community college here and there and eventually learned through my work experience that working in sustainability was my passion and that this is the path!" After several years, she completed a bachelor's in urban sustainability at the University of the District of Columbia.

"That was my first experience with the outdoors in a formal setting, which I absolutely loved!"



MENTORSHIP IS CRITICAL

Working in a field without a lot of people who look like her, Lydia initially found it difficult to find mentors: “I didn’t know anyone who worked in forestry or any type of environmental career for quite some time. I felt alone in my struggle to find my way to a career in this field.”

As an undergraduate student at the University of the District of Columbia, she found mentorship and guidance in one of her professors, Dr. Libby Jewett. “Dr. Jewett took the time to have conversations with me about my educational and career goals and would introduce me to many individuals working in meteorology, climate change mitigation, and so much more. It was an experience that continues to have a major impact in my life.”

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

Early in her career, Lydia recalls that it was a big challenge being the only Black woman in her workspace. “My office had about 40 employees, and there were only four women, and I was the only woman of color and the youngest employee many times. It would get uncomfortable; sometimes there’d be inappropriate conversations and comments made, and I didn’t feel like I was in an atmosphere where I could do anything about it.”

Through hard work and perseverance, Lydia built her skills and achieved personal and professional goals. “I don’t want to let my challenges dictate my passion. I want my passions to triumph over my challenges. I think my resiliency stems from my family. They overcame so much for me to have the opportunity to set and achieve my own goals. And because of this I’m always gonna try, always try.” Her parents always remind her, “The future is bright here!”

CAREER PATHWAY

Hometown

Hartford, Connecticut

First point of entry into forestry, 2003

Middle school after-school program

First job, 2014–2018

Native Plant Nursery Associate, Nature by Design

2015–2020

Arborist Assistant, SavATree

2020

Graduated from University of the District of Columbia (HBCU), Bachelor of Arts Urban Sustainability

Present

Education Programs Coordinator, Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI)

Completing Professional Science Master’s (PSM) in Water Resources Management at University of the District of Columbia (HBCU)





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Lydia's

ADVICE TO THE FUTURE GENERATION

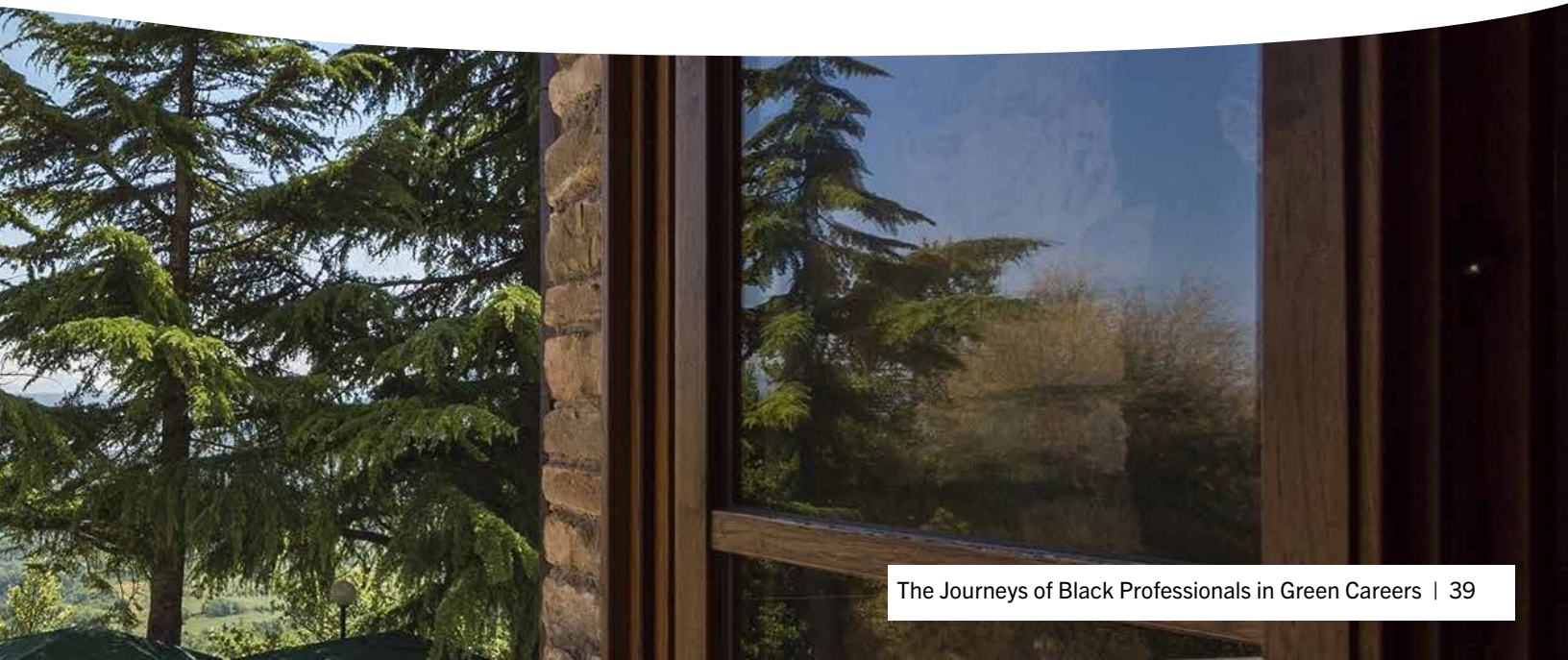
OF BLACK AMERICAN GREEN JOB SEEKERS:

**You don't have to
love being outside
to love working in
a green job**

“There are so many types of careers that don't require you to be outside!”

**Try everything
once**

“You never know what you'll love unless you put yourself out there.”



A portrait of Alex Smith, a Black man with a beard and glasses, wearing a blue denim shirt over a grey t-shirt. He is standing outdoors with a green wall and a wooden fence in the background. A large green semi-transparent rectangle is on the left side of the image, containing text. The bottom right corner of the image has a white wavy pattern.

MEET

ALEX SMITH

ENTREPRENEUR, CEO

DIVISION STREET LANDSCAPING
15 YEARS' EXPERIENCE

Alex's Story:

THE BLESSINGS IN THE LESSONS

GETTING “TO THE GREEN”

Alex has always had a love for nature and working with his hands. Growing up in Baltimore, Alex's greatest pastime was tramping through the woods and creeks in Leakin Park, catching frogs and tadpoles and taking them home as pets. But Alex's road into the green jobs industry was not what some would expect: “When I was 18 years old, I was sentenced to 30 years in prison. And while in prison, me and a few guys helped start a horticulture program.” The program, which was one of his first jobs in the sector, was successful: “The program has since spread to other prisons in the state of Maryland,” and Alex became a Certified Master Gardener while there. After his release, he took a job in construction and learned about the difference between soil and dirt. This fascinated him, and he eventually took courses in horticulture and started his own business: Division Street Landscaping in Baltimore.

Today, Alex brings a unique perspective on installing, maintaining, and improving our cities' green spaces. He prides himself on being a Baltimore native who appreciates the landscape and is committed to ensuring that it looks beautiful and prospers, and is cared for by professionals of the highest integrity.



“I persist because I am successful and I’m not apologetic for my successes.”

MENTORSHIP IS CRITICAL

All success requires support. Alex's business success comes from hard work, knowledge-building, and giving back: "Beatra Wilson (page 84) has really been an inspiration to me because she has made me look at things in a much, much broader perspective than I used to. She introduced me to concepts that I had never thought about before. She is definitely someone that I look up to in this field, as well as Bryant Smith, the Executive Director of the Baltimore Tree Trust. I look up to him because of the history that he has with the USDA Forest Service, with running the forestry department here in Baltimore City, and having the guts to be on those different outposts."

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

Alex has overcome many challenges, including a lack of respect from business owners who don't look like him and don't consider him as a business peer: "As a Black business owner, people don't always have the confidence in you to do the work. And they don't often give you the same leeway to fail as they might others. I come with value and sometimes that value is tied to my color."

Still, despite the challenges and setbacks, Alex is successful and fulfilled: "I persist because I am successful and I'm not apologetic for my successes. I have a GED and a prison record but my mother told me a long time ago that some of us are fortunate to do what we love to do—and the rest of us have to make enough money so that we can do what we love when we are not at work! I get to do both!"

CAREER PATHWAY

- Hometown
Baltimore, Maryland
- First point of entry into forestry
Outdoor activities in Leakin Park and Boy Scouts during childhood
- GED obtained while in Maryland State Prison**
- Certified Master Gardener achieved through horticulture program in Maryland State Prison**
- Various construction jobs around City of Baltimore**
- Director of Operations, Baltimore Tree Trust**
- 2017–Present
Owner and Operator of Division Street Landscaping
- 2021
Launch of Division Street Learning Academy through Changemaker Challenge grants from United Way of Central Maryland



“

Alex's

ADVICE TO THE FUTURE GENERATION

OF BLACK AMERICAN GREEN JOB SEEKERS:

**Have
integrity**

“If you don't have personal integrity, you can't have professional integrity. Integrity, to me, is what makes you not walk off the site if you're not completely happy with it.”

**Get
experience
where you
can**

“YouTube is a great way to find out about anything you want, so I would say that would be a good way for young people to find information about ways to understand nature better. Getting on-the-job training like my Division Street Learning Academy is another way to get some experience.”



MEET

CHRISTOPHER DAVIDSON

VICE PRESIDENT, SUSTAINABILITY

WESTROCK

33 YEARS' EXPERIENCE



SUSTAINABLE
FORESTRY
INITIATIVE
SFI-60001



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MANRRS Conference
Participant

Chris' Story:

FROM THE MOUNTAINS TO THE FORESTS

MEETING FORESTRY

Chris always knew he wanted to be outside and do something non-traditional. He loved exploring the hills above his home in Kingston, Jamaica, and fishing with his dad. He learned about forestry in high school: "I actually became interested in forestry through a career event that was held at the U.S. Embassy in Kingston. My mother took me to it, and one of the informational brochures had a short description of the field of forestry. I thought it was interesting, and my father helped me to get a summer job with the Jamaican Forestry Department. I spent the summer working up in the Blue Mountains on an experimental logging crew, and that really was the beginning of my journey." Chris later went on to school to study forestry and started his career in Lake Butler, Florida, working for Nekoosa Packaging as a land management forester responsible for about 44,000 acres of land.

"I spent the summer working up in the Blue Mountains."



MENTORSHIP IS CRITICAL

Chris highlights two important mentors in his professional life: Aleesa Blum, his former manager at International Paper, and Sam Cook (see page 20), his former classmate, colleague, and friend. Both were role models from whom he has learned how to be a better person, professional, and leader.

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

Chris says his biggest professional challenge was becoming comfortable with change: “The success and the opportunities that I’ve had often required me to move. I’ve moved seven times in my career, which was challenging not only from a business perspective but also for my family. But I’ve grown and learned a lot by being willing to take on those new challenges.” Chris highlights the need to step outside our comfort zones, learn new things, and learn from others. This has helped him greatly in his career. In his work over the last 33 years, he’s been asked to develop new programs and strategies, participate in building out new parts of his organization, work on strategy, and more.

CAREER PATHWAY

- Hometown
London, England
- First point of entry into forestry
Career event at U.S. Embassy in Jamaica
- First job
Summer job at the Jamaican Forestry Department
- 1989–1991
Forester with Nekoosa Packaging and Georgia Pacific
- 1991–1997
Research Assistant at Virginia Tech
- 1997–2000
Research and Development Manager, Champion International
- 2000–2012
Multiple roles at International Paper
- 2012–2015
Multiple roles at MeadWestvaco
- 2015–2022
Director, Corporate Sustainability, WestRock
- 2022–Present
Vice President, Sustainability, WestRock



“

Chris’

ADVICE TO THE FUTURE GENERATION

OF BLACK AMERICAN GREEN JOB SEEKERS:

**Deal with
problems
head on**

“Determine what is actually going on. First, see if there’s a way to resolve it, but if there is no way to resolve it with the person you’re speaking to, don’t be afraid to take it to a higher level.”

**Get all the
experience
you can**

“We have young people who have done co-ops with two different companies, which gives them an opportunity to experience different organizational cultures and see how different companies work. There are also lots of organizations indirectly connected to our industry that have internship or volunteer opportunities. I think those are great ways to start off.”



A woman, Nichole Mchenry, is shown from the waist up, wearing a light-colored short-sleeved button-down shirt with a gold badge on the left chest, dark trousers, and a tan wide-brimmed hat. She is standing outdoors on a paved path next to a grassy area. In the background, there are green trees and a small white building with a dark roof. The image is partially covered by a green overlay on the left side where the text is located.

MEET

NICHOLE MCHENRY

RELEVANCY, DIVERSITY AND
INCLUSION PROGRAM MANAGER

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

30 YEARS' EXPERIENCE

Nichole's Story: **A FIELD FIT FOR LIFE**

MEETING CONSERVATION

Nichole, like many people, didn't realize early on that she wanted a career in conservation. "I have a better love for nature now as opposed to when I was growing up. I remember spending time outside with my sister and neighbors. We jumped rope and played hide and seek. I also remember spending time at Cahokia Mounds, which are prehistoric burial mounds. We enjoyed spending time at the mounds. I didn't realize the historic significance of the site until I began working for the National Park Service. My appreciation of the outdoors has grown a lot since starting my career."

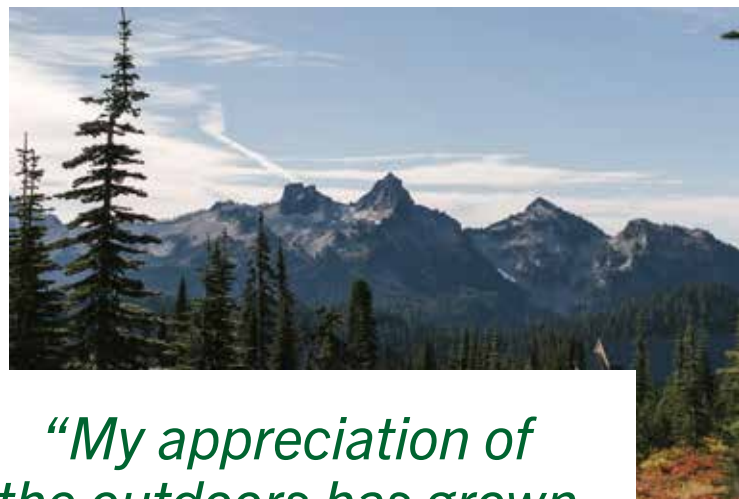
Nichole's entry into conservation and natural resources came about after a conversation with her mother: "I was in college, and I called my mother, and we were just having a basic conversation. And she asked me what I was doing for the summer. I didn't know; I said, 'I'm coming home to hang out with my friends.' My mother said, 'No, you need to get a job.'"

Nichole's mother's "no" motivated her: "I went to the Career Services Office and learned that the National Park Service was coming to do a career fair. I got my documents together to meet with the National Park Service. I was initially offered a position at Thomas Edison National Historical Park but ultimately started my career at Abraham Lincoln's home in Springfield, Illinois."

MENTORSHIP IS CRITICAL

Nichole gives credit to her mentor for inspiring her: "Clara Wooden has played and continues to play a crucial role in my life. She supports me, mentors me, and shows me the right path for growth. She is always enthusiastic and energetic. She has taught me the importance of servant leadership and that with anything we do, particularly in the workplace, we need to have empathy for people, [and] always think about people as our most important resource."

Standing on her mentor's shoulders, Nichole is paying it forward: "I manage the Midwest Region Student Academy, which was started by my former supervisor Clara Wooden. The program's objective is to recruit young people to come work for the National Park Service. We hire them via Pathways, a student internship program, and once the student graduates, [we] help place them in permanent positions in the National Park Service. I am happy to say that every student I helped to recruit has been placed in permanent positions in the National Park Service, and they continue to work for the National Park Service."



*"My appreciation of
the outdoors has grown
a lot since starting my
career."*

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

Like many, Nichole has faced challenges due to her race: “I was told that I was a ‘quota-hire.’”

But she would not let that get her down: “I just held my head up high and kept doing the job that I knew I was meant to do. I knew I wasn’t there just because I was Black, but because I was qualified. I continued to hone my skills which in turn made me qualified for the next position. I set out to prove it to myself and the naysayers in the National Park Service.”

And she had many successes: “I have been fortunate in all the places I’ve worked. I am currently the only person [who] has recruitment as a part of their portfolio in the National Park Service.”

Nichole’s work and passion are inspired by her mission: “I believe in the idea of protecting and preserving these special places and stories for future generations, and I have the privilege to wear the NPS uniform and represent the agency. Wearing the uniform inspires me, and I know it inspires others. Although there are challenges, the mission of the National Park Service is what motivates me.”

Nichole notes the importance of her work to make a difference: “Over the years, I’ve seen things change, and I have been a part of that change in the sense of helping to recruit more diversity to the National Park Service. We are having more conversations about diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility; we hope those conversations will lead to a more diverse and inclusive workforce.”

CAREER PATHWAY

Hometown
East St. Louis, Illinois

1994
Graduated from University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (HBCU), Bachelor of Arts Communications

First point of entry into forestry
NPS at a Career Fair

1994–Present
National Park Service

First job, 1994–2004 **Park Ranger, Independence National Historical Park**

2004–2008 **Park Ranger, Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site**

2008–2014 **Park Ranger/ Volunteer Program Manager, Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail**

2012–2013 **Shadowed the Associate Regional Director of Planning, Construction Communications and Legislation**

2013 **Acting Chief of Interpretation, Education, and Volunteers**

Acting Superintendent at Ulysses S. Grant National Historic Site

Present **Relevancy Diversity and Inclusion Program Manager**



“

Nichole's **ADVICE TO THE FUTURE GENERATION OF BLACK AMERICAN GREEN JOB SEEKERS:**

Opportunities abound

“There are a wide range of skill levels required for natural resource jobs. No matter your background or education, you can jump in and begin a career. You don't need to love the outdoors. There are plenty of positions whether you like working with computers, data, or technology—or have skills in public relations, marketing, or hiring.”

Be open and patient

“Be flexible, curious, and open to new things. Chances are you may need to move to a different part of the country to get an entry-level job that allows you to get the experience to reach long-term goals. You may also need to take a job that you may not be so passionate about to get your foot in the door. If you can, try not to look at the pay of the job, but rather its potential.”

Step outside of your comfort zone

“No matter what your personality, be bold and confident. Step outside of your comfort zone and meet new people in positions and at organizations in which you are interested. Volunteer, join professional groups, attend job fairs, reconnect with college professors and alumni, stop by a local National Park site—you never know who you might meet, who they might know, and what connections can be formed.”





MEET

ALTON PERRY

**DIRECTOR, SUSTAINABLE
FORESTRY AND LAND RETENTION
PROJECT**

ROANOKE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

38 YEARS' EXPERIENCE



*SFI Community
Grant Recipient*

Alton's Story:

FARMING TO FORESTRY

MEETING FORESTRY

Alton grew up on a farm in Franklin County, North Carolina, so his love for the outdoors and nature is in his DNA: “All we did down that way was farm.” His father encouraged him and his brother to get an education beyond high school, and he attended East Carolina University, but he said that college “wasn’t for me.” Instead, he chose the Technical Forest Resources Program at Wayne Community College, where he heard things were more ‘hands on.’ After graduating with an associate degree, he went to work for the NC Forest Service as a forest technician and rose to the ranks of ranger and statewide outreach coordinator before retiring with over 30 years of service.

MENTORSHIP IS CRITICAL

One mentor who helped him navigate different entities to do outreach work was Victor Harris, the first Black forester in Virginia, who later published the Minority Forest Landowners Magazine, which got Alton interested in Black land retention efforts. Another mentor was Mikki Sager, with The Conservation Fund, who invited him to professional events, connected him with community members, and encouraged others to recognize his knowledge and expertise in forestland management. She, like most of Alton’s mentors, was not a Black person.

“All we did down that way was farm.”



OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

Having been a forester for a while, Alton describes what it was like in a white-dominated field: “One of the challenges is that you feel alone because no one else can live your experience or see your experience as Black American in a field that’s dominated by white men and women. There were times when I felt like I didn’t measure up.” But that was not the case, and as he grew older and wiser, he felt more empowered and more comfortable speaking his mind about forest-related issues and the Black American experience conserving natural resources.

As Alton moved up the ranks in the NC Forest Service, almost all of his counterparts had degrees from four-year universities, while his degree was from a two-year technical college. He says, “It was quite an accomplishment to work across the state with Black American, Native American and other landowners, from the coast to the mountains because I knew how to do my job well and was not held back by my education.”

CAREER PATHWAY

Hometown

Franklin County, North Carolina

First point of entry into forestry

Worked on 4-H projects as a young person

1982

Graduated from Wayne Community College, Associate Degree in Forest Technologies

1983–2012

North Carolina Forest Service

1982–1983 **Southern Pine Beetle Technician**

1983–1996 **Assistant Ranger**

1996–2006 **Ranger**

2006–2012 **Outreach Coordinator**

2013–Present

Roanoke Electric Cooperative

2013–2016 **Forest Management Consultant**

2016–Present **Director, Sustainable Forestry and Land Retention Project**



“

Alton's

ADVICE TO THE FUTURE GENERATION

OF BLACK AMERICAN GREEN JOB SEEKERS:

**Figure out what
you like and find
places where you
can do it**

“There are so many different disciplines that a person can go into, and I always would challenge young folks, and say, ‘what is it that you like doing?’ They would tell me and then I would associate that with something in conservation. Then they would have this look on their face like ‘you can really do that?’ Yes, you can do that in forestry or natural resources. You don’t always have to go into the field and be out there with all the wildlife, different insects, and trees.”

**Value yourself
and your
experiences**

“You must never feel belittled because of your race or gender. You have a place, and you bring something to the table.”

**Become
well-rounded**

“If you get an opportunity to intern, whether it’s for pay or not...take that opportunity, because when someone looks at your resume, and they see that you’ve worked with a group or organization that focuses on agricultural, underserved communities, or just farm-to-table type things, or you’re working within the conservation environment, all those things add up.”



MEET

ASIA DOWTIN

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF
URBAN FORESTRY

DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

9 YEARS' EXPERIENCE



*SFI Community Grant Recipient,
PLT Education Operating Committee
Member*



MANRRS Student Member

Asia's Story:

MAKING YOUR OWN WAY

MEETING FORESTRY

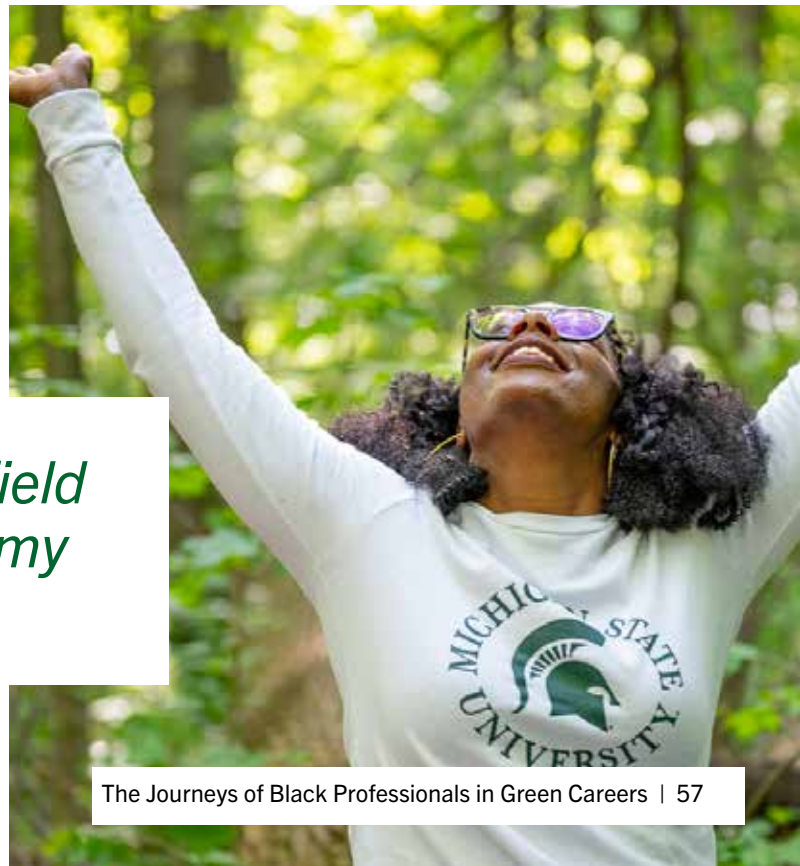
When Asia was younger, she used to watch The Weather Channel to figure out what was happening with hurricanes. The weather fascinated her so much that she carried it with her from third grade into college and pursued a degree in Meteorology at the State University of New York in Oneonta. Halfway through that program, she talked to mentors and learned that Climatology would be a better path forward for her. She later received her Master's degree in Geography, with a specialization in Climatology, from the University of Delaware, where she studied droughts.

While pursuing her doctorate in Geography, with a focus on Urban Forest Hydrology, Asia took an internship with The Nature Conservancy in Wilmington, Delaware. "They were switching gears and starting to move into the realm of urban conservation and knew they needed help laying the foundations of what they want to do and what type of projects would be feasible." Her work during that internship helped build her foundation and interest in nature.

"I stayed in the field and carved out my niche in it."

MENTORSHIP IS CRITICAL

Asia was encouraged by mentors during her graduate school experiences, first by Herbert White, a Black urban forester in Wilmington during her Master's program. "He really helped me to understand how my work could potentially fit into the larger narrative of urban forestry." The second mentor was her PhD advisor, Del Levia, who kept her from dropping out of the program because of what she calls 'an unfavorable experience.' "He told me, 'I know you feel that this particular professor doesn't see your promise, but I do and so do the rest of us, and you should too!' Hearing him say that really encouraged me to stay in the field and carve out my niche in it."



Asia highlights other mentors she's had: "Katie Fernholz has been an invaluable mentor, helping me to understand that even without formal training in forestry, my experiences and research are still impactful to my students and the urban forestry field. There are also Black role models who I appreciate for the example they've paved in urban forestry: Beattria Wilson (page 84), Dr. Sharon Jean-Philippe in Urban and Community Forestry at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville; Herb White, City of Wilmington, DE, Urban Forest Administrator; Quentin Tyler, Associate Dean of DEI for the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources; and Dr. De'Etra Young at Tennessee State University."

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

While Asia experienced many challenges, "the biggest challenge was finding a way to embrace the reality that another person's perspective did not equal the truth about me, my value, or my potential. I had to do the work to really embrace that truth and see myself, not as someone who was just a token hire, but someone who really brought and brings a lot to the table."

But Asia sees challenges as opportunities: "This was an opportunity for me to find what I was good at and what I liked about the field. So I did, and created a path that others might not necessarily follow, but can still connect with to start developing ideas for their own paths."

CAREER PATHWAY

Hometown
Long Island, New York

First job, 2008
**Undergraduate Research Scholar,
Geoscience Research at Storm Peak
(GRASP) Program**

2009
**Graduated from SUNY College at Oneonta,
Bachelor of Science in Meteorology, Minor
in Mathematics**

2012
**Graduated from University of Delaware,
Master of Science in Geography,
Climatology Concentration**

First point of entry into forestry, 2012
The Nature Conservancy in Delaware

2011–2013
**Graduate Program Assistant, Delaware
Geographic Alliance**

2013–2014
**Graduate Research Assistant, Water
Resources Agency, University of Delaware**

2018
**Graduated from University of Delaware,
PhD in Physical Geography**

2018–Present
**Assistant Professor of Urban and
Community Forestry, Michigan State
University**



“

Asia's

ADVICE TO THE FUTURE GENERATION OF BLACK AMERICAN GREEN JOB SEEKERS:

Be open

“Be open to new things, new people, and new opportunities, and this will open your eyes to new interests or affirm your original interest and goals.”

Be persistent

“Even when you're on your right path, there will be challenging times and you will want to give up, but don't do it!”

Build your network

“Get connected with professional organizations and contacts in your field who you can connect with and learn from.”



A portrait of Cassius Cash, a Black man with a mustache, smiling. He is wearing a dark grey National Park Service uniform jacket with a white shirt and a dark tie. A name tag is visible on his left chest, and a park ranger badge is on his right chest. He is holding a tan-colored hat with a dark band. The background is a warm, wooden interior. A green semi-transparent rectangle is on the left side of the image, containing the text.

MEET

CASSIUS CASH

**SUPERINTENDENT FOR GREAT
SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL
PARK**

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

31 YEARS' EXPERIENCE

Cassius' Story: **IT TAKES A VILLAGE**

MEETING FORESTRY

Cassius initially found his love of nature on television, watching Mutual of Omaha Wild Kingdom. In their programs, he could travel from the natural habitats of the Everglades to the Serengeti. “But the visual barrier in my mind, at least at that age, was that I didn’t see people who looked like me, doing that type of occupation.” The encouragement of his Boy Scouts troop leader, Henry Peabody, would turn this spark into a blaze. “He taught me about discipline and achievement and how to apply those skillsets to the natural world, which allowed me to pursue my interest in the outdoors.”

While in college as a pre-med major, the wild called him again: “My interest was so great that I switched to becoming a wildlife biologist, and to be that person that I couldn’t see on TV, now in real life! I started my career in the Pacific Northwest at the Gifford Pinchot National Forest as a wildlife biologist.”

“My interest was so great that I switched to becoming a wildlife biologist, and to be that person that I couldn’t see on TV, now in real life!”



MENTORSHIP IS CRITICAL

Cassius credits his village for his success, including his Scouts troop leader and others. People like Henry Peabody and, later, biologist Earl Ford helped him to see the benefit of representation and service: “You represent a lot of others before you, and that’s a heavy load to carry, one that I accept...I’m a messenger from the past. And what I like to do, one of the best parts of my job, is speaking to young folks because I get a chance to speak to my future with the stories from the past.”

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

Cassius' biggest challenge reminds him of what he did not see on television: people like him. "Throughout my entire career, and I do mean my entire career, I've always been the first or the only in the jobs that I've decided to take on in the location that I took them. And that's a very uncomfortable position to be in." But he believes in the strength of representation, as "history tells us that it is usually a worthwhile proposition to take on." Cassius takes this charge of representation in natural resources so seriously that after almost 20 years in National Forests, he transitioned over to the National Park Service, where he has had a stellar career for over 10 years.

He says that graduating from University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, an HBCU, has instilled in him great pride in his professional demeanor: "You find yourself carrying that into meetings and into conferences because you're representing! As we reach out to others who have an interest in natural resources, seeing me in uniform has sparked them to pursue what they felt was their dream, like I did as a young kid in Memphis. I bring a different perspective to the table, from my background, education, and just how I see life through my lens as a Black American man."

CAREER PATHWAY

Hometown

Memphis, Tennessee

First point of entry into forestry

Boy Scouts

1991

Graduated from University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (HBCU), Bachelor of Science in Biology

1991–2010

USDA Forest Service

First job in forestry, 1991–2000

Wildlife Biologist, Gifford Pinchot National Forest

2000–2002 **Civil Rights Program Manager, National Forest**

2002–2005 **District Ranger, Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest**

2005–2007 **Services Staff Officer, Nebraska National Forest**

2007–2010 **Deputy Forest Supervisor, Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest**

2010–Present

National Park Services

2010–2015 **Superintendent, Boston National Historical Park and Boston African-American National Historic Site**

2015–Present **Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains National Park**



“

Cassius’

ADVICE TO THE FUTURE GENERATION

OF BLACK AMERICAN GREEN JOB SEEKERS:

**Measure
twice; cut
once**

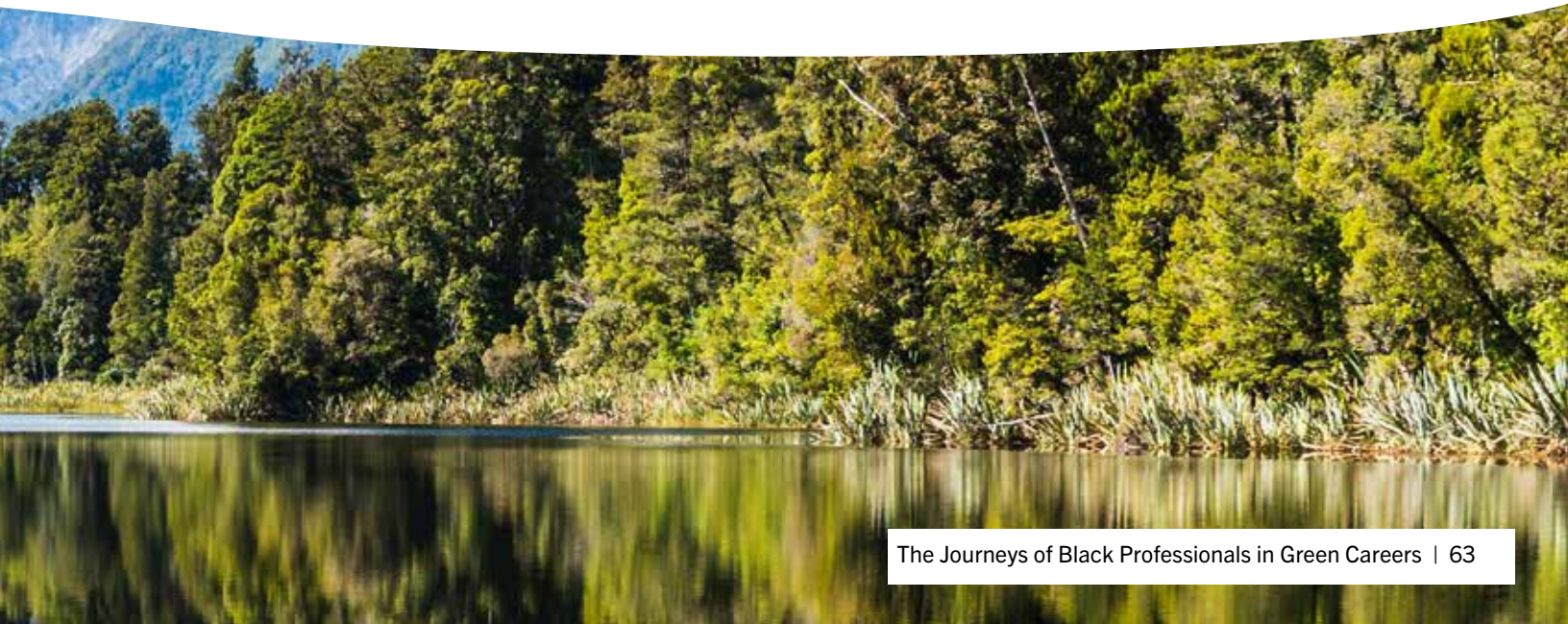
“Take your time and gather all your information and resources before you make a decision that involves a relationship with others.”

**You will use
everything
that you learn**

“I would strongly advise taking courses or classes that talk about leadership or emotional intelligence, because what I find is that we don’t have our young folks tap into those skillsets until much later in life.”

**Own your
story**

“Your journey, your successes, your fears, and your failures are going to be gifts to others one day. So place value on that journey now so when you’re asked to share, you’ll be comfortable telling your story in a way that it becomes a gift to others.”





MEET

JERRI TAYLOR

DIRECTOR OF DIVERSITY IN
CAREER PATHWAYS

SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY
INITIATIVE

8 YEARS' EXPERIENCE



SUSTAINABLE
FORESTRY
INITIATIVE
SFI-00001



PROJECT
LEARNING
TREE

SFI Staff

PLT is an initiative of SFI 

Jerri's Story: **USING HER VOICE**

MEETING FORESTRY

Growing up in the country, Jerri was surrounded by nature and had a love for animals. To her, farming was a way of life, she just didn't know it was a career. "Growing up on a farm and working the farm, I just thought that's what you did to survive because that's how we ate. I realized it was a real career when my family decided to go into fish farming. We had the only Black-owned globally certified tilapia fish farm, and my role working for the family business was to write grants. And so that's how it started."

Jerri invested in her education: "I went to college and my family expected me to give back. In my family, whatever you go to college for is what you're going to use to work on the farm. So that's kind of how conservation found me...I had never really known, being Black, that conservation was a career option. I thought of it as just jobs people do. So finding this passion; it all makes sense. It all just clicked and everything worked out!"

"I realized conservation was a real career when my family decided to go into fish farming."



MENTORSHIP IS CRITICAL

Jerri has benefited from the guidance and encouragement of many in her life. In the conservation and forestry areas, Krishna Roy has been a huge advocate and mentor for her. “Krishna saw something in me, and I got to SFI because she sent my resume to SFI. She introduced me to so many scientists, like Judy Braus from the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE). She also encouraged me to explore new opportunities, telling me, ‘Jerri, you found your love for conservation so don’t leave the field.’ I was willing to go back to school counseling because I was just scared that no one else would hire a school counselor to do conservation work. Having a person pushing you to that extra level made a difference.”

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

Jerri’s biggest challenge has been dealing with what some would call an “invisible disability” as an adult. “I didn’t have a disability as a very young child. I developed a disability at the age of 15, after my brother was shot, so I never really lived with a disability, and I don’t often have issues with my disability. But having to constantly think about that in the background is challenging because I may be good today and tomorrow I don’t know.”

In such a fast-paced working world, it is easy to be left behind; but Jerri not only overcomes, she also advocates for others. “I’ve seen a lot of things during COVID where they were saying this has been the greatest time for people with disabilities because they don’t have to explain themselves, and I can attest to that. I just want to be that voice because I honestly think a lot of organizations have missed opportunities with people who have great voices that can come to the table.”

CAREER PATHWAY

Hometown

Durham, North Carolina

2009

Graduated from University of Maryland, College Park, Bachelor of Science Public Health

2014

Graduated from George Washington University, Masters of Education School Counseling

2020

Director of Community Partnerships, Conservation Nation

2021–Present

Director of Diversity in Career Pathways, Sustainable Forestry Initiative





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Jerri's

ADVICE TO THE FUTURE GENERATION

OF BLACK AMERICAN GREEN JOB SEEKERS:

Learn to listen

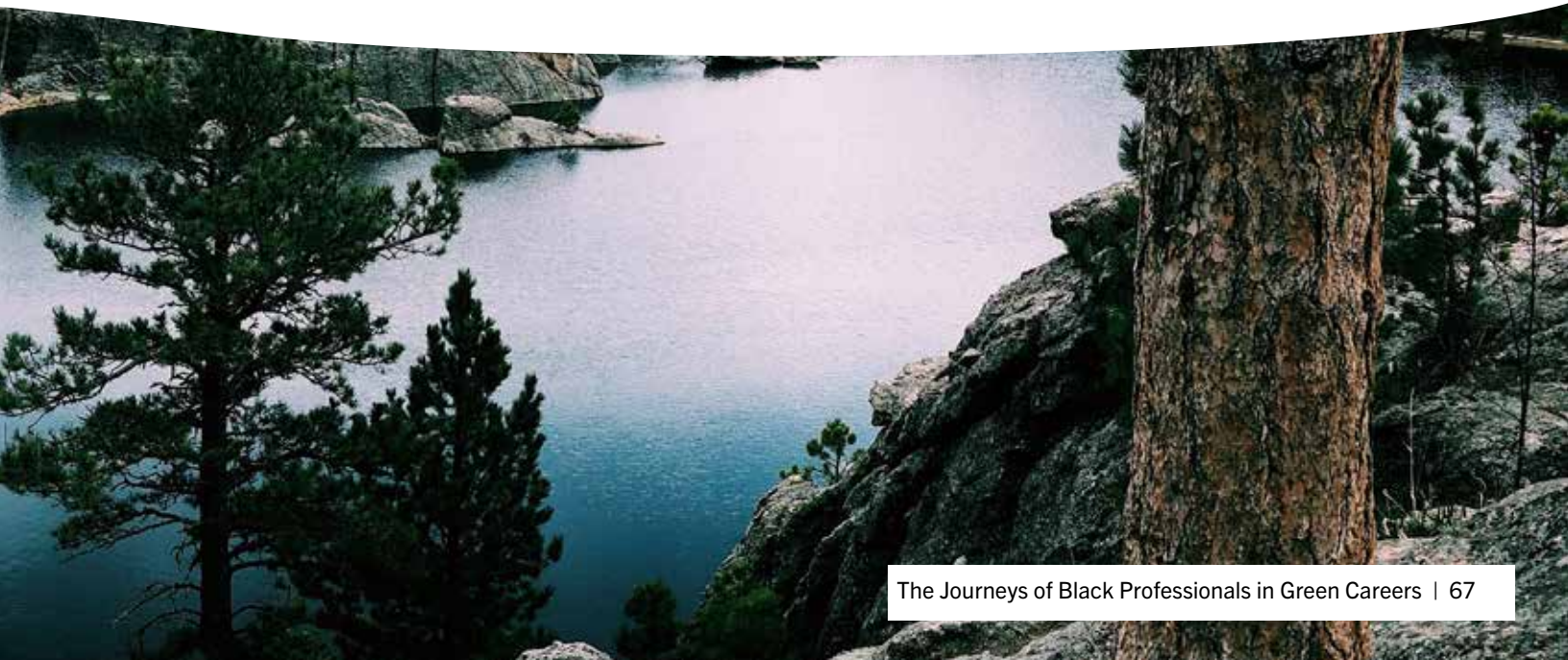
“You have to hear the needs of every client or customer that you work with and be able to implement it in the work that you're doing.”

Multi-tasking is important

“An office job is a little different than being in the school system and even working on a farm; you must be able to juggle a lot of balls at one time. That's an executive functioning skill that I think people need a lot of support in to do this work.”

Develop integrity

“When a person is looking at you, you have to understand that you represent everybody, so you want to make sure that your morals are correct; your ethics are correct; the way that you carry yourself is correct.”



MEET

J. DREW LANHAM

**DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR
AND MASTER TEACHER OF
WILDLIFE ECOLOGY**

DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION,
CLEMSON UNIVERSITY

36 YEARS' EXPERIENCE



SFI Consultant, PLT Trained



*MANRRS Student
Member, MANRRS
Conference Presenter*

Drew's Story: **I BELIEVE WE CAN FLY**

MEETING NATURE

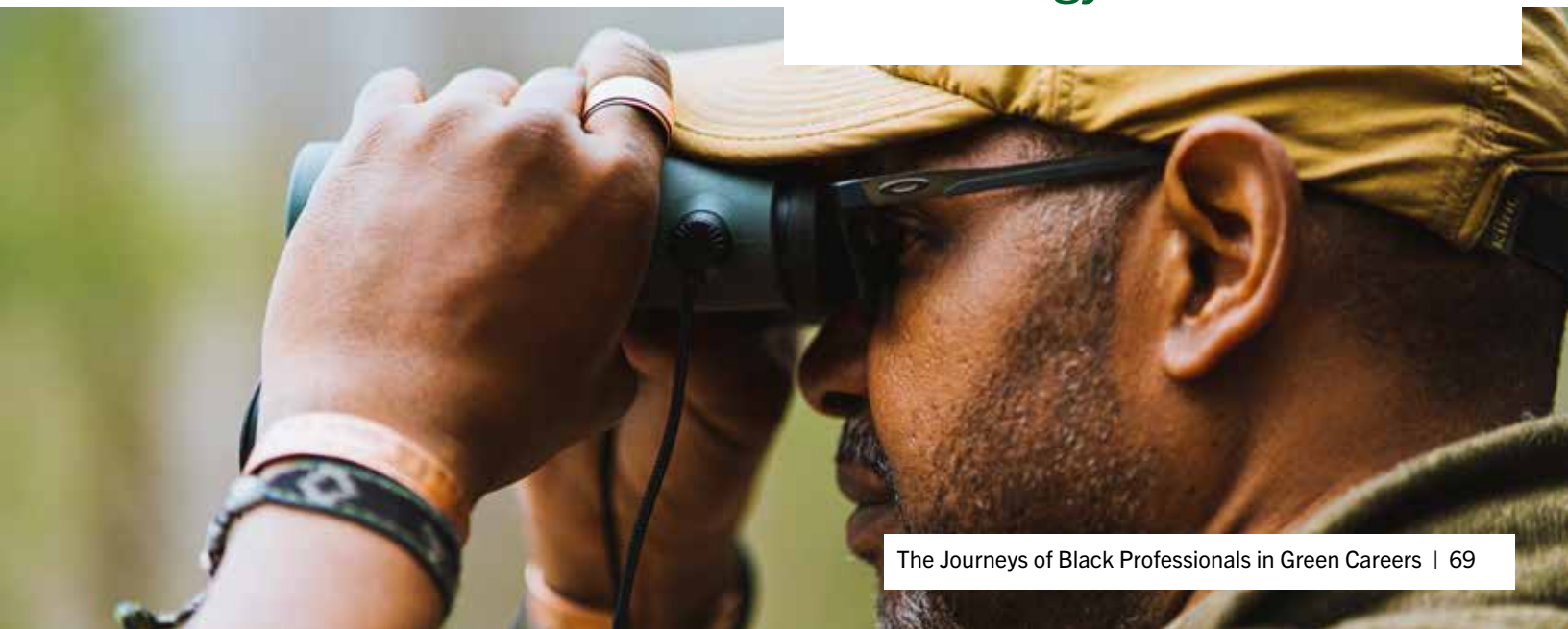
From a young age, Drew has wanted to fly: “I wanted to be a bird as a kid. That sort of took me down this track of ornithology and bird love, of being someone who wanted to fly.” He grew up on a family farm in Edgefield, South Carolina, where his love of nature was nurtured by his parents, grandparents, and nature itself. “For me it came naturally, just growing up where I did, having those influences of parents and a homeplace that depended on nature.”

After he completed his undergraduate and graduate degrees in zoology at Clemson, Drew found his way into the forestry world working with wildlife in the South Carolina Department of Resources: “The first job that I really had was paying me to trap small mammals and do the work of hacking (that is releasing peregrine falcons) in the mountains of South Carolina.”

MENTORSHIP IS CRITICAL

Family was Drew's first influence: “I think about my parents as scientists, my father as an earth science teacher and my mother as a biology teacher. That foundation formed the appreciation for what science is and then seeing that at work on the ground on a farm.” Adults at his schools fostered that influence, including his second-grade teacher who appreciated his love for birds, and the librarian who encouraged his love for learning. His high school science teacher, Miss Marshall, encouraged him to share his love for birds with his classmates even though Drew was worried because “it didn't seem cool.”

“I wanted to be a bird as a kid. That sort of took me down this track of ornithology and bird love.”



In his college years and beyond, Drew was lucky to be taken under the wings of some great people. “I think about Dr. Jim Schindler, Dr. Sid Gauthreaux, Dr. Patty Gowaty, Dr. David Gwynn, Dr. Don Hook, and Dr. Tom Waldrop.” These scientists and supporters gave Drew the wind he needed to do what he loves and soar above the problems and setbacks.

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

Drew has had his share of challenges over the last three decades. “One of the challenges is being one of the few and not seeing many people who look like me or have my experiences as a Black man in this country. I remember back in the day when I was a lot younger and someone would come up, address my graduate students, and ask where Dr. Lanham was, and there I stood. So, the challenges of racism are real. It’s like soaring alone.”

Still, he persists because he cares. “Being the only one, sometimes it’s a heavy weight, but it’s also a responsibility, one that I try to pick up and carry forward. There are some burdens that you lift purposely because they make you stronger.” Drew’s strength and love for nature has lifted both himself and his students.

CAREER PATHWAY

- Hometown
Edgefield, South Carolina
- 1985
National Science Foundation Intern, Clemson University
- First point of entry into forestry, 1987
Wildlife Technician, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources
- 1988
Graduated from Clemson University, Bachelor of Arts in Zoology
- 1988–1990
Graduate Assistant in Zoology Department, Clemson University
- 1990
Graduated from Clemson University, Master of Science in Zoology
- 1990–1991
Zookeeper, Greenville, South Carolina Zoo
- 1992–1993
Field Ornithologist, Wildlife Toxicology Institute
- 1993–1995
Teacher, Technical School
- 1995–Present
Assistant to Full Professor, Department of Forestry and Environmental Conservation, Clemson University
- 1997
Graduated from Clemson University, PhD in Forest Resources, with focus on Wildlife
- 2017
Author of *The Home Place: Memoirs of a Colored Man’s Love Affair with Nature*



Drew's

ADVICE TO THE FUTURE GENERATION

OF BLACK AMERICAN GREEN JOB SEEKERS:

Relate to people

"Don't bypass people that you're working with and for, but try to understand them and relate to the world."

Care

"Hopefully, you have this passion for nature that is always burning inside. You understand that it's not some people who do this because we think we're getting away from people. Ultimately, it ends up being about other people."

Be a change agent

"Having clean water is not a privilege, that's a right! All of these things that the world has going on, natural resources are tied up in most of it. See conservation as that place where you're going to work to make things better."



A portrait of Jason Swann, a Black man with a shaved head and a light beard, smiling. He is wearing a white button-down shirt and a grey suit jacket. The background is a blurred outdoor setting. A green vertical bar is on the left side of the image, and a white curved shape with green topographic line patterns is at the bottom right.

MEET

JASON SWANN

**FINANCE DIRECTOR,
INTERMOUNTAIN WEST
CONSERVATION**

**TRUST FOR PUBLIC LAND
FOUNDER AND ADVISOR,
RISING ROUTES**

5 YEARS' EXPERIENCE

Jason's Story: **RISE UP**

MEETING THE WESTERN LANDS

Growing up in Sparta, Georgia, Jason is familiar with the healing power of nature. Dodging cow patties, climbing trees, swimming in ditches, and breaking bones were a regular part of life. He remembers his sister telling his mom, “It’s so quiet here, I can hear myself think.” Jason would later use that quiet to heal and grow.

Jason found the forestry world after an incident too many Black men have experienced: “I was wrongfully accused of a crime I didn’t commit, beat up by a couple of law enforcement, and thrown in jail. I had to fight the system for over a year before charges were eventually reduced, but not dropped. It put a bad taste in my mouth, and I ended up moving to Colorado. At that time, I was filled with maybe some rage, some resentment, certainly fear.” Jason would find peace and calm in the Colorado wilderness, the Rocky Mountains, and Great Sand Dunes National Park. In time, he found his peace and decided to pass that peace on to others: “While I was there, I just felt more myself, and I healed from some of those past traumas. And with that, I wanted to share something so helpful to my mental health. I certainly believe that it should have been helpful to everyone else and everyone should have an opportunity to experience what I felt.”



*“While I was
there, I just felt
more myself.”*

Jason didn't hesitate to share what he'd found. "I created an organization called *Rising Routes* and at the time, we were just focusing on bringing people from different backgrounds, life experiences, races and ethnicities—to be able to learn about each other."

MENTORSHIP IS CRITICAL

Jason is inspired by the everyday work of Black men and women who "speak truth to power" and "fight for us and our climate because we are nature." He is inspired by women like Taishya Adams, founder of Mukuyu Collective and Commissioner of Colorado Parks and Wildlife, who "shows the fiercest power that you have because she will not be moved." He is also inspired by "OGs" like Phil Henderson who has "been in the outdoor industry for over 30 years and just created an organization called Full Circle Expedition, which became the first all-Black team to summit Mount Everest in spring 2022." For Jason, these examples of courage and determination inspire him to also rise up and help others do the same.

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

Jason overcame the limitations of growing up without all the benefits money can provide but he had the support of family and a drive to succeed. He says: "One wouldn't have imagined that I'd be in this space advocating for our land, air, and water. But here I am. Even if my mother didn't do anything else, she assured her four children that we were more than the poverty that was around us!"

CAREER PATHWAY

- Hometown
Sparta, Georgia
- First point of entry into forestry
Visiting Colorado National Parks
- 2013
**Graduated from Bellevue University,
Bachelor of Science Management**
- 2013–2015
Investment Consultant, TD Ameritrade
- 2016–2019
**Financial Consultant, Field Consulting
Group**
- 2017
Founded Rising Routes
- 2020–2022
**Coalition Leader and Policy Analyst,
Western Resource Advocates**
- Present
**Intermountain West Conservation Finance
Director, Trust for Public Land**





“

Jason's

ADVICE TO THE FUTURE GENERATION

OF BLACK AMERICAN GREEN JOB SEEKERS:

Be real

“Being authentic, being truly who you are, living your truth, and telling your story is very important.”

Be confident

“It is very important to walk in confidence each day knowing that you are a man of God and you have agency.”

Take risks

“Plans may not go accordingly, they often don't. You should always have a plan to follow—faith without a plan of action is dead.”



MEET

LESLIE WELDON

ACTING CHIEF DIVERSITY
AND INCLUSION OFFICER

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE

40 YEARS' EXPERIENCE



SUSTAINABLE
FORESTRY
INITIATIVE

PLT is an initiative of SFI



PROJECT
LEARNING
TREE

SFI-MANRRS Advisory
Committee



MANRRS Partner

Leslie's Story:

TEAMWORK MAKES THE DREAM WORK

MEETING FORESTRY

Leslie always loved the outdoors and activities like camping and hiking. Her interest and exposure to nature inspired her and would later fully blossom: “When I was 12 years old, I became intensely interested in the Endangered Species Act of 1972 and tried to learn as much as I could from groups like the National Wildlife Federation. I loved my biology classes in high school and through a friend’s referral I was able to join the Youth Conservation Corps, with the National Park Service on the Blue Ridge Parkway in Virginia. This gave me two high school summers working outdoors, learning a lot about natural resource conservation.” These opportunities encouraged Leslie to pursue her passion in college and led to many successes throughout her four-decade career with the USDA Forest Service.

“When I was 13 or 14 years old, I got really intensely interested in wildlife conservation.”



MENTORSHIP IS CRITICAL

“I have three people who I would name as cherished mentors for me. The first was during my very first Forest Service position when at age 19 I traveled from Maryland to Washington State for a summer forestry position on the North Bend Ranger District. I was thrilled to be there and was making new friends and finding my way around. And there was this woman forester there who, literally, took me under her wing and made me feel cared for and supported. Her name was Marsha

Kearney, and she saw that I was truly interested in, and passionate about, working in conservation. And she's my dear friend to this day."

"The next person is Mike Dombeck, former Chief of the Forest Service. Chief Dombeck taught me about making bold moves as a conservation leader, and the importance of strong relationships with other agency leaders, Congress, administrative officials, industry, and conservation organizations, all of whom are critical to success. Through the years, he constantly stayed in touch with me, wanted to know how I was doing, what I was thinking, and provided a lot of insight and advice about what I could do to be successful."

"The third person is Sally Collins. She and I shared many of the same career experiences and she provided a lot of advice over many years. As Associate Forest Service Chief, she helped me learn about and contribute to our international program partnerships around the world. She provided great advice on leading people as I kept moving up the ranks through the agency."

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

Leslie notes that one of her biggest career challenges was growing into leadership roles and getting used to leading others: "When I first moved into some executive roles, I had to come to an understanding around how to have the best impact that I can with the authority of my positions and to guide my employees and the organization through change so they could meet expectations. And so, I created some leadership development training that gave me the ability to really be confident and firm about how I wanted to move our programs at the national level. It was a game changer."

CAREER PATHWAY

Hometown

Oxon Hill, Maryland

First point of entry into forestry

Youth Conservation Corps

Graduated from Virginia Tech University, Bachelor of Arts Biological Sciences

First job in forestry, 1981

Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, USDA Forest Service

1981–2022

USDA Forest Service

1991–1996 **District Ranger, Bitterroot National Forest**

1997–2000 **Executive Policy Assistant, Office of the Chief**

2000–2007 **Forest Supervisor, Deschutes National Forest**

2007–2009 **External Affairs Officer, Office of the Chief**

2009–2012 **Regional Forester, Northern Region**

2012–2018 **Deputy Chief, National Forest System**

2018–2022 **Chief Executive for Work Environment and Performance, Office of the Chief**

2022–Present **USDA**

Acting Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer



Leslie's

ADVICE TO THE FUTURE GENERATION

OF BLACK AMERICAN GREEN JOB SEEKERS:

**Teamwork,
teamwork,
teamwork**

"Everyone knows what it means to develop relationships, to be in community, to have access, to be treated fairly as it relates to developmental opportunities. If everyone's doing that together, then you'll get great work done, and people can feel fulfilled in what they've accomplished."





MEET

ROBERT RAZE

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION
PROFESSOR

ST. PETERSBURG COLLEGE OF
EDUCATION

43 YEARS' EXPERIENCE



PLT is an initiative of SFI



SFI-MANRRS Advisory Committee, PLT
Education Operating Committee (EOC)



MANRRS Advisory Board

Robert's Story:

A LEARNING LEADER FINDS OUTDOOR EDUCATION

MEETING FORESTRY

Environmental education is Robert's passion. Having participated in summer camps, Boy Scouts, and Nature Conservation Area programs, he knows what it takes to get young people excited about the great outdoors. Robert grew up loving and learning in nature and has spent the last four decades passing that love on to his students. Now a professor at St. Petersburg College in Florida, Robert has served many learning communities over the years as an environmental educator, elementary school teacher, mentor, and advisor.

*"I'm really trying to
expose and spread
the word about
forestry."*



MENTORSHIP IS CRITICAL

Like everyone working in education, Robert has been advised and encouraged by professionals and mentors who care. He fondly remembers one of his major professors at Oklahoma State, Dr. Ted Mills, who made sure Robert learned outside the classroom as well as in it. He also recalls Dr. Kathy Shea Abrams, the Director of the Office of Environmental Education for the Florida Department of Education, who provided Robert with focus and encouragement. Along with other professors and colleagues in the field, Robert and his students have benefited from his mentors' contributions to his life and career.

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

As a teacher, Robert knows the challenges he and his students face every day. Sometimes the hardest thing is to stay motivated when you have so much to give: "I'm really trying to expose and spread the word about forestry and it's figuring out how to do that. How do I get the information out? How do I give experiences to students? And that's one of those things that just gives me a little space to be able to grow if I want to put a little forestry to it."

CAREER PATHWAY

- Hometown
Tyler, Texas
- First point of entry into forestry
Summer camps and Boy Scouts
- 1976
Graduated from Tyler Jr. College, Associate of Arts Liberal Arts
- 1978
Graduated from Texas A&M, Bachelor of Science Elementary Education
- 1979
Graduated from Texas A&M, Master of Science Early Childhood Education
- 1989
Graduated from Oklahoma State University, PhD Environmental Science
- 1995–2000
Coordinator, Florida Gulf Coast University Office of Environmental Education
- 2000
Acting Director, Florida Gulf Coast University Office of Environmental Education
- 1998–2004
Adjunct Professor, Florida A&M University
- 2000–2001
Director of Educational Marketing, Interactive Training Media, Inc.
- **Project Manager, Interactive Training Media, Inc.**
- 2004–Present
Professor, St. Petersburg College



“

Robert's **ADVICE TO THE FUTURE GENERATION OF BLACK AMERICAN GREEN JOB SEEKERS:**

Communicate

“What’s critical? It’s listening and then learning that information and asking, ‘how do I share it?’”

Immerse yourself in the field

“Take as many courses as you can; attend conferences; network with people; get out there and see what’s going on in the field.”

Go outside

“Youth make up their minds about what career they are going to pursue around middle school, so I think getting multiple outdoor exposures, early and over time, will help them find out if they want to be in forestry, natural resources, or conservation fields.”



MEET

BEATTRA WILSON

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
FOR URBAN AND
COMMUNITY FORESTRY

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE FOREST
SERVICE

21 YEARS' EXPERIENCE



SFI-MANRRS Advisory
Committee, SFI Urban
Forestry Committee



MANRRS Member and
Sponsor

Beatra's Story: **BECOMING IN FORESTRY**

MEETING FORESTRY

Forestry found Beatra! Growing up in rural Louisiana, she was surrounded by nature and attended 4-H programs to learn more about agricultural careers. Following high school graduation, she attended a summer youth agricultural program, where she was presented with a pivotal opportunity—a full scholarship to pursue a bachelor's degree in Urban Forestry. A USDA Forest Service Liaison was assigned to the campus of Southern University. With a scholarship, summer internship opportunities, and the chance to pursue a federal career, Beatra seized the moment.

Beatra had dreams for a career in agriculture, and urban forestry not only fit but provided her with opportunities and platforms she never thought possible: “My dream was to get out of

rural Louisiana and get to the BIG city. When I thought of a federal career, my goal was to one day work at the White House.” Years later, Beatra has completed two rotations at the White House—one of which was during the Obama Administration, serving as Deputy Associate Director of Forestry at the Council on Environmental Quality.

MENTORSHIP IS CRITICAL

Mentorship is important, and in her years at the Forest Service Beatra found women like her who inspired and supported her. These women served in roles ranging from administrative assistants to executive leaders. They generously offered words of encouragement, advice on office etiquette, interview preparation and tips to acquire the budget and political savvy required to elevate her

“My dream was to get out of rural Louisiana and get to the BIG city.”



career beyond its “position description.” Beyond mentorship, Beatra admired those who impacted communities through natural resources and conservation. In 2021, Beatra was a recipient of Audubon Naturalist Society’s Environmental Champion Award for her leadership in community engagement and collaboration on the Taking Nature Black Conference. There were six honorees that year, and one of the other honorees was Harriet Tubman. Reflecting on the ceremony, Beatra shared, “I sat there thinking, Wow! In 2021, what are the chances me and THE Harriet Tubman are on the same platform?” Tubman’s knowledge and understanding of forests and conservation protected and impacted Black people, by helping them gain freedom and feel resilience.

EFFECTING CHANGE

Beatra is working on bringing powerful and effective change to the forestry sector. “The national Urban and Community Forestry Program I lead annually serves 7,500 communities through the management of urban forests. More than 200 million people live in these communities. Our work is to sustain and improve the conditions of urban forests through local collaborations and consideration for the livelihood of the folks who live in those communities.”

Beatra’s work is blazing a trail for more women like her to get involved and improve urban forestry, and thus the lives of more than 80% of Americans (the percentage who live in or near urban areas). “Daily, I give presentations or speak to forest industry leaders and partners, and I may be the only Black person in the room. This has been intimidating at times, but I know that it is a space where I can effect change for many people who are not represented, while paving the way for others to do the same.”

CAREER PATHWAY

- Hometown
Oakdale, Louisiana
- First point of entry into forestry
4-H
- 2002
**Graduated from Southern University
Urban Forestry Program**
- First job in forestry, 2002–2004
Urban Forestry Trainee
- 2006
**Graduated from Kennesaw State
University MPA Program**
- 2004–2022
USDA Forest Service
 - 2004–2007 **Regional Budget
Coordinator**
 - 2007–2010 **Wildfire Program
Analyst**
 - 2010–2020 **Urban Forestry
Program Manager**
 - 2020–Present **National Lead for
Urban & Community Forestry**





Beatra's

ADVICE TO THE FUTURE GENERATION

OF BLACK AMERICAN GREEN JOB SEEKERS:

“

Step up!

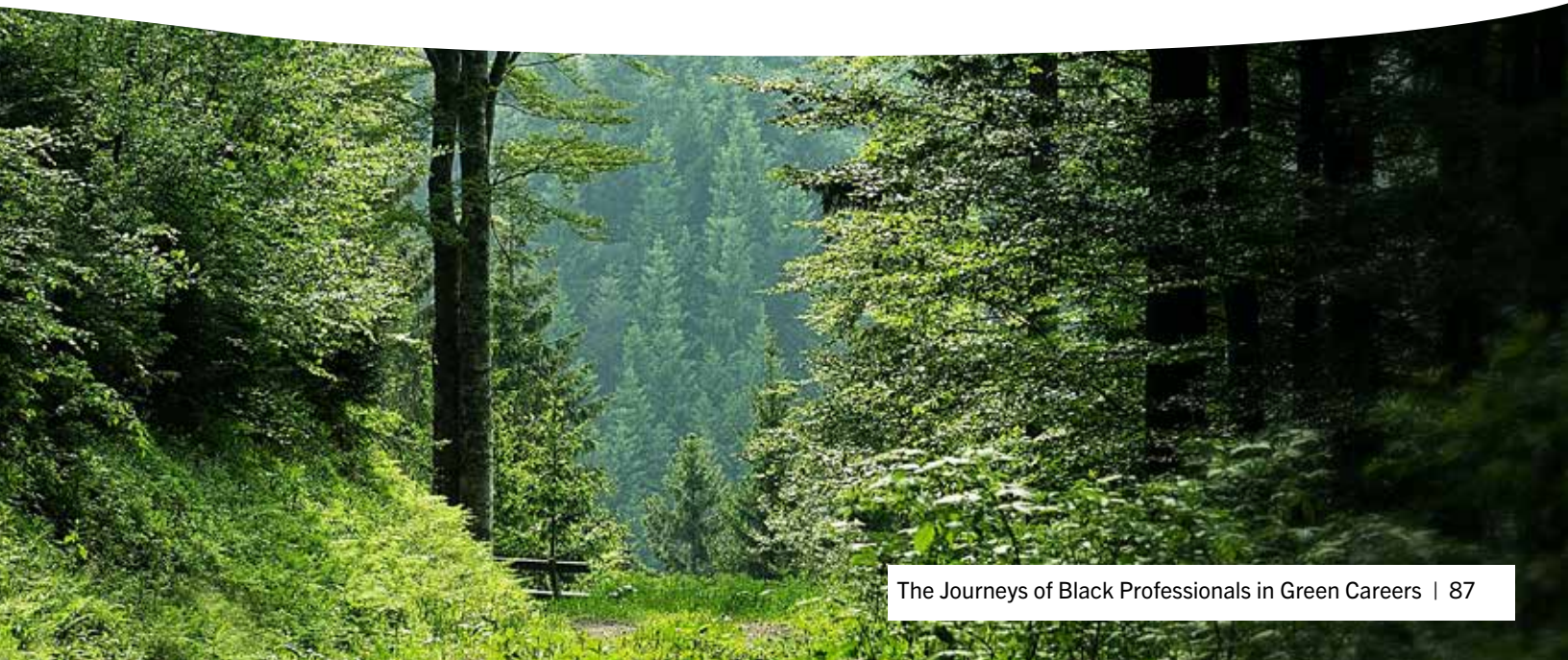
“My goal is to make a shift happen in the nation's urban forests. 84% of Americans live in urban communities, and when I break down the social and economic values of urban communities most affected by disparate systemic challenges, the recipients look too much like me to not leave this program more equitable than how I inherited it.”

Be authentic

“You will be judged based on your actions; your reputation hangs on your actions.”

Get knowledge and experience

“Climate equity and environmental justice are ripe opportunities if you are interested in advocacy—anything around policy, strategy, budget processes, and government relations is critical.”





MEET

LILLIAN DINKINS

PHD STUDENT, URBAN FORESTRY

SCHOOL OF FOREST,
FISHERIES AND GEOMATICS
SCIENCES UNIVERSITY OF
FLORIDA

6 YEARS' EXPERIENCE



SUSTAINABLE
FORESTRY
INITIATIVE



PROJECT
LEARNING
TREE

PLT is an initiative of SFI

PLT Green Mentor - Mentee



MANRRS Student Member

Lillian's Story:

SEIZE OPPORTUNITIES

MEETING FORESTRY

Lillian grew up in the South, spending a lot of time outside and in nature with family and friends.

"My grandparents or my parents would take me out to parks and we would feed the birds or just walk around looking up at the trees." Although she initially wanted to be a veterinarian, her experience in the AgDiscovery summer camp at South Carolina State University changed her life.

"My mind was just blown! I was able to see a lot of different aspects of agriculture: environmental topics, forestry topics, wildlife, even farming! It was really interesting to see people who looked like me in a lot of these roles. We had a lot of different students who came to talk to us about their majors that weren't just animal science, and it really opened my mind to the fact that there was more out there to do. I still began as an Animal Science major because I wanted to get to college and figure things out. I met Rodney Stone, a USDA liaison, and he told me, 'We're going to switch your major. You're going to do something bigger than this!' So, I switched my major to Environmental Science during my freshman year and I have never regretted it!"

"It was really interesting to see people who looked like me in a lot of these roles."

MENTORSHIP IS CRITICAL

Lillian has had many mentors. She gives credit to people like Rodney Stone, her current advisor Dr. Mysha Clarke, her undergraduate advisor Ronald Smith, her botany professor Dr. Gregory Bernard, her former manager Cindy Tusler, and Dr. Zakiya Leggett and Dr. Porché Spence from North Carolina State University, who mentored Lillian as an Inaugural Fellow from the Scholars for Conservation Leadership Program. But it would be her friend Caleb Bugg who would give her the advice that would change her life.



OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

“I only had one friend pursuing a PhD, Caleb Bugg, who just finished his degree in Industrial Engineering and Operations Research from University of California, Berkeley. Caleb and I talked a lot about his PhD experience, and he was the one who told me, ‘You know that you can apply straight to a PhD program without getting a master’s degree?’ I didn’t know that, and thought, ‘Wow, if I could save two years of my life, and just go straight to the PhD, I might as well!’ So, I applied to the University of Florida for its PhD program, and since I was already living in Florida, I qualified for one of the PhD fellowships.”

Dr. Clarke is an important part of Lillian’s PhD program. “University of Florida was the very last school that I received an acceptance from, and I accepted its offer because of my advisor, Dr. Mysha Clarke, and the research she was doing. We talked before I even moved to Orlando; I really wanted to work with her! Dr. Clarke also took the same academic path, going from an undergraduate degree to a PhD. I knew that if I was going to do this, I wanted to be sitting under someone who’d been through the same path. Of course, I had my doubts at first, but she said, ‘Lillian, I got you!’ And that was all I needed to hear.”

CAREER PATHWAY

Hometown

Savannah, Georgia

First point of entry into forestry

AgDiscovery Summer Camp at South Carolina State University

2018

Range Aid/Technician, Bureau of Land Management, Miles City, Montana

2019

Hydrographic Survey Intern, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

2020

Graduated from Tuskegee University (HBCU), Bachelor of Science Environmental Science

2020–2021

Conservation Fellow, Conservation Florida

2021–Present

PhD student in Urban Forestry, University of Florida



Lillian's

ADVICE TO THE FUTURE GENERATION

OF BLACK AMERICAN GREEN JOB SEEKERS:

**It's okay to be
uncomfortable**

"You can't grow in a place of comfort for your entire life, so sometimes we're asked or called to step into certain roles and positions that really help us grow."

**Be mindful
of others**

"You never know who's talking about you when you are not in some spaces, so carry yourself well."



MEET

JENNIQUAL JOHNSON

URBAN CONNECTIONS
COORDINATOR

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE
FOREST SERVICE

<1 YEAR EXPERIENCE



SUSTAINABLE
FORESTRY
INITIATIVE

PLT is an initiative of SFI



PROJECT
LEARNING
TREE

SFI/PLT Annual Conference
Attendee

Jenniqua's Story: **FULL CIRCLE**

MEETING FORESTRY

Having grown up in Chicago and St. Louis, Jenniqua was more used to concrete than forests. With Girl Scouts, she got her first real exposure to green spaces and nature. “There wasn’t a park in my neighborhood in Chicago, but with scouting, we were kind of exposed to that.” She would later lead her sister’s troop and work as a camp counselor, connecting other youth to nature. Now, years later, working with the Forest Service, Jenniqua said, “What was planted in me as a youth in Girl Scouts has come full circle!”

MENTORSHIP IS CRITICAL

Being new to the forestry sector, Jenniqua has had many mentors, but few in the green sector. However, the SFI/PLT Annual Conference brought her networking opportunities: “I picked up a brand-new role model—her name is Beatra Wilson, and she was absolutely outstanding and amazing! She doesn’t know she’s my role model, but I hope she becomes a mentor because I definitely look up to her.”

Several people have particularly encouraged Jenniqua along her journey. “Outside of the National Forest Service and those green spaces,



*“What was planted
in me as a youth
in Girl Scouts has
come full circle!”*

several of my professors have mentored me, like Dr. Dietra Wise Baker, who is at Eden Seminary, and one of my colleagues at the nonprofit organization where I worked prior to coming to the Forest Service, DeMarco Davidson, who really encouraged me to increase my community organizing skills. And I have a really good friend, Kira O’Bradovich, who was one of the first people I met when I worked at the U.S. Census Bureau. These folks keep me in line and keep me engaged in the work, so that on days when I think, ‘I don’t know if this green job is me,’ they constantly remind me, ‘Hey, the skills you have, even if they’re not specifically green, are worthy and they do belong here.’”

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

Jenniqua came into the forest sector with a lot of feelings to overcome. “When I think of somebody working in forestry, I’m thinking about Smokey Bear and the forest rangers. I’m thinking white male, blond hair, blue eyes, the American dream. And I’m thinking that they have this big background in biology and natural sciences, and they’re all doctor-this and PhD-that! And I’m like, ‘I’m just Jai who enjoys and loves her community and wants to spread the joy!’”

Jenniqua had to change her thinking. “I had to make conscious decisions. Number one: stop looking at my education as something that didn’t fit and start looking at what about this job fit my education. Number two: what skills do I have that fit this job and work in this job for me—and how will it fulfill me? Once I changed my thinking, it became less difficult to put myself in the space and easier for me to start reaching out to folks.”

CAREER PATHWAY

Hometown

Chicago, Illinois

First point of entry into forestry, 1994

Girl Scouts

2016

Graduated from Harris-Stowe State University, Bachelor of Science Business Management

2018

Graduated from Webster University, Master of Arts Human Resources

Present

Urban Connections Coordinator, USDA Forest Service

Present

Master of Arts Candidate at Eden Theological Seminary





“

Jenniqua's

ADVICE TO THE FUTURE GENERATION

OF BLACK AMERICAN GREEN JOB SEEKERS:

Take risks

“If kids are in elementary or middle school and they start getting messaging that, ‘Oh, I’ve got to be really good at science, and really good at math, and really good at engineering,’ say, ‘No I don’t, I just have to be the best me!’ I know some parents might say, ‘Why would I want my child to fail?’ You can’t know that you’re not really good at something until you try and fail. And on the other side, you don’t know if you’re really good at something until you try it and say, ‘Wait, I’m really good at this, and I like it!’”

Find your place in the space

“In the Forest Service and in these green jobs, specifically in the U.S., I’m an underrepresented face. I don’t see a lot of faces like mine. I remember being so excited at the SFI/PLT Annual Conference when I saw Beatra, Jasmine, and Jerri on stage. I thought, ‘Oh! They all look like me and they sound like me! There is a place for me in this space.’”



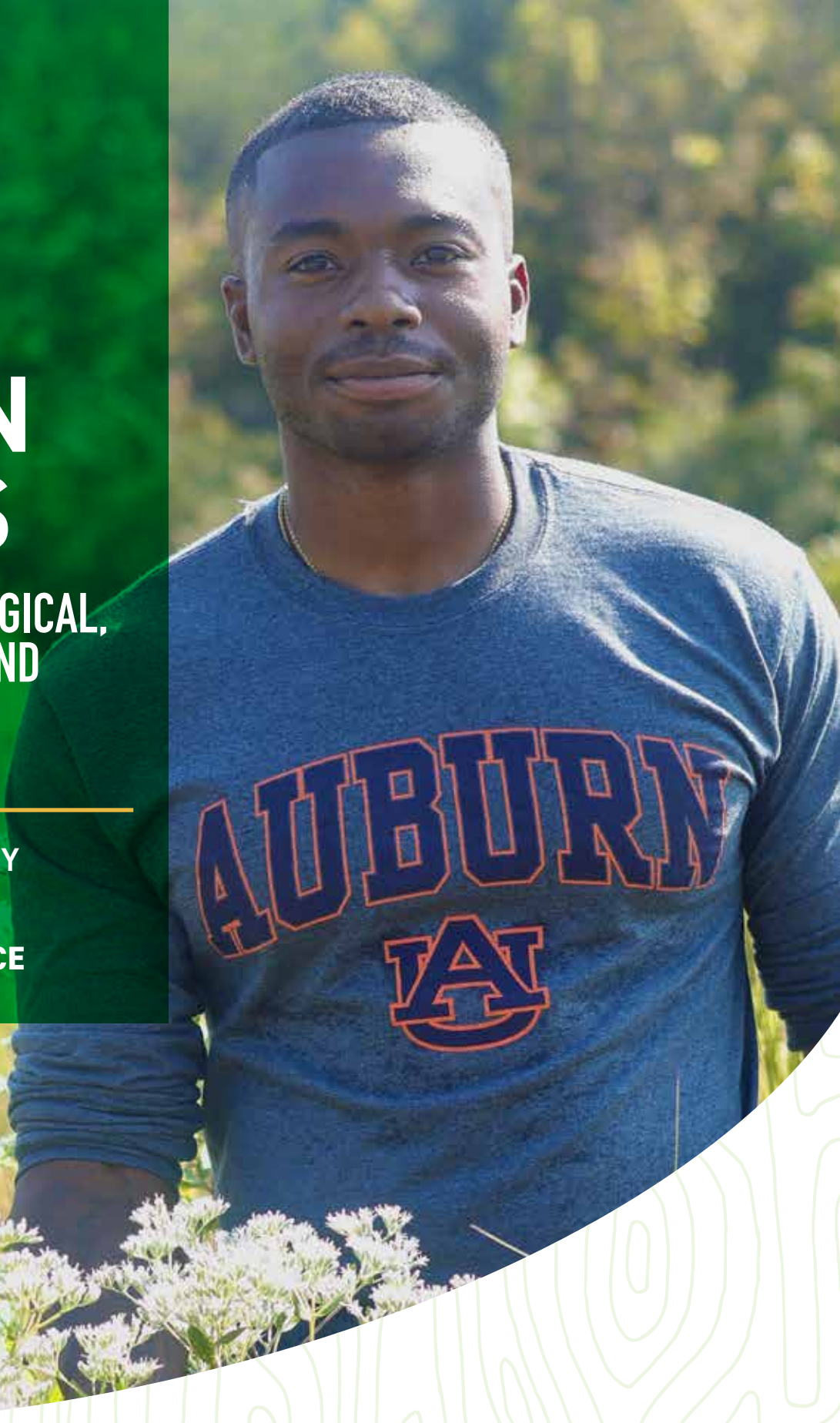
MEET

AARON EVANS

CHEMICAL, BIOLOGICAL,
RADIOLOGICAL, AND
NUCLEAR (CBRN)
SPECIALIST

UNITED STATES ARMY
NATIONAL GUARD

4 YEARS' EXPERIENCE



SUSTAINABLE
FORESTRY
INITIATIVE
98-0001



PROJECT
LEARNING
TREE

PLT is an initiative of SFI

PLT Green Mentor - Mentee, PLT
Trained



MANRRS Student Member

Aaron's Story:

MAKING YOUR OWN WAY

MEETING FORESTRY

Without knowing it, Aaron was always interested in forestry. When he was a child, his father cut down his favorite tree, and it really had an impact. But it wasn't until he was in college that he realized how much of an impact it had. "For the first two semesters in college, I majored in computer science. And then I took this environmental science class. The professor talked about different things about trees, and I reverted to my favorite childhood tree: how it grew; what it was there for; how it sequestered carbon; and how we get everything from trees like rubber, paper, and money. I talked to the professor afterwards and changed my major to environmental science that same day!"

MENTORSHIP IS CRITICAL

"I have been blessed to have a lot of mentors, and there are some very important ones like my awesome advisor Dr. Kelly Dunning, but two have been very important to starting my career. First, Dr. Ketia Shumaker, who has her PhD in Environmental Science, oversaw most of the forestry-related courses and activities I did at the University of West Alabama. She was crucial to my academic success and natural resources research and field opportunities. She was also instrumental in helping me get two amazing summer internships at Virginia



"I have been blessed to have a lot of mentors."

Tech University and in Auckland, New Zealand. I never could have gotten them without her guidance and assistance! The second would be Michelle Cole, the Outreach Director for the Center for Environmental Studies at the Urban-Rural Interface at Auburn University. She keeps me informed about activities related to forestry like SFI and MANRRS. She keeps me level-headed on what I should be doing or thinking about doing next.”

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

As a first-generation college graduate, Aaron had to build his college support system and network from the “unknown.” His parents were supportive, but it is very difficult to help someone navigate a system that you have not been through. “When I brought home questions about college or problems with one of my classes, they were not really able to help me solve a problem, but they provided me with encouragement and support. So, it fell on me to figure it out, and if I made a path, it made it easier for someone to follow. And this is where mentorship became so important to me.”

Along with emotional support, Aaron needed financial support. He was able to find solutions and a plan that will enable him to be successful. “I didn’t want to have a mountain of debt when I finished my degrees. After my undergraduate degree, I made the decision to join the U.S. Army National Guard. That decision has greatly helped me limit my outstanding debt while getting my Master’s degree. The Alabama Guard’s educational assistance program pays part of my tuition, I get sponsorship through the Montgomery GI Bill, and I get financial aid.”

CAREER PATHWAY

Hometown

York, Alabama

First job in green jobs sector, 2016

Recycling job at high school neighborhood clean-up

First point of entry into forestry, 2017

Chose Environmental Science as a major

2018–2019

Conducted research with professor at the University of West Alabama (UWA)

2020

Graduated from UWA, Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science

2021–Present

Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) Specialist, United States Army National Guard

2022

Graduated from Auburn University, Master’s of Science in Natural Resources Management

Present

Technical Forester, Rayonier





Aaron's

ADVICE TO THE FUTURE GENERATION

OF BLACK AMERICAN GREEN JOB SEEKERS:

Learn, learn, learn

"There's a lot more to forestry than you think! I didn't know much about it either because I'm new to forestry. When in college, learn about it beyond, 'Oh nice tree, nice leaf!' Get to know the products that trees make, or how to sell timber, how to manage timber, how to manage forest plant diversity or plant species—all about tree species diversity, acreage, and stuff like that."

Take risks

"When I applied for my internship in New Zealand, I didn't think I would get it, and I knew I didn't have the money for it, but I applied anyway. I had never even flown on a plane before, but I applied. I got the internship and I got to go to New Zealand. While I was waiting for my internship to start, I had a little vacation, staying at a hotel where the beach was literally outside my door, and I woke up hearing waves and peace. I took so many videos and brought so many pictures home. I was living my best life! Risks are sometimes needed for greater rewards."

Set milestones

"There are a million ways you can reach a milestone, and there's no set time to reach a milestone. I just keep working my way up until I make it."





GREEN JOBS



Green jobs represent one of the fastest growing and changing segments of the global economy. Green jobs—defined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics as jobs that produce goods or services that benefit the environment or conserve natural resources, or jobs that use more environmentally friendly processes or fewer natural resources—have outpaced jobs in other categories by almost 250% over the last decade. A recent U.S. Census Survey found that fewer than 3% of foresters and conservation scientists identify as Black American (Moore, 2019).

GREEN JOB FACT SHEET

FORESTER

Every day, foresters across the United States lace up their boots, put on their high-visibility vests, and head out to the woods. They gather information about forest health so they can predict and identify problems. They also create detailed plans to harvest and regenerate forests. They are responsible for protecting important wildlife habitats, cultural areas, and other historical assets within forests.

The Big Picture

Foresters manage our forests so that the communities and wildlife that depend on them can thrive. As problem solvers, they balance the ecological, social, and economic value of forests by:

Creating plans that tackle challenges and achieve long-term forest management goals.

Using scientific information and research to help make decisions that ensure the long-term health of a forest.

Monitoring the impacts of their decisions, in order to make better choices in the future.



IS THIS CAREER RIGHT FOR YOU?

DO YOU CARE ABOUT WILDLIFE, THE ENVIRONMENT, AND FORESTS?
DO YOU FEEL MOST COMFORTABLE IN THE OUTDOORS, GETTING YOUR HANDS DIRTY?

If so, this might be the perfect career for you!

Since foresters work in the field, in the office, or in the lab, they have diverse skills: writing, data analysis, speaking, monitoring, reading comprehension, judgment and decision making, critical thinking, and plant and animal identification. Foresters must organize and moderate meetings and talk about their plans to many different people, including Indigenous communities and government representatives. To succeed in this job, you should be a good communicator.

Salary

U.S. salaries range from about \$42,500 to \$93,060 per year and average about \$63,980.

Where Can You GROW?

Careers in forestry include **forestry technician, extension agent, land conservation specialist, and arborist**. Some possible employers and tasks:

- Forestry companies (creating timber management plans)
- Government agencies (developing policy)
- Private landowners (developing property management plans)
- Schools or universities (inspiring the next generation of leaders)
- Nonprofit organizations (contributing to education, conservation, and research)

Moving Forward >>>

Here's a path of study that could lead to a career as a forester. You'll likely need a four-year college degree.

- **HIGH SCHOOL:** Focus on biology, chemistry, mathematics, physics, and pre-calculus classes.
- **COLLEGE:** Earn a bachelor's degree in forestry. Visit the [Forestry USA website](https://www.forestryusa.org) for a list of U.S. colleges and universities that offer forestry degrees.

For more about green jobs, visit www.plt.org/workingforforests

GREEN JOB FACT SHEET

DEI SPECIALIST

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) specialists work closely with the human resources team, and often with a director or manager of diversity and inclusion. They are a supportive member of the larger HR family, focusing on an organization's overall diversity, equity, and inclusion strategies, programs, advancements, and retention. They are subject matter experts in the fields of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and are trusted to bring creativity and compassion to the department.

The Big Picture

DEI specialists ensure equity in the organization, by:

- **Developing, coordinating, and evaluating** employee-focused DEI programming that is fair to all current and prospective employees.
- **Consulting, educating, and advising** employees on human rights legislation.
- Helping remove any conscious or unconscious biases or barriers that may exist in a company's work environment.



IS THIS CAREER RIGHT FOR YOU?

ARE YOU AN EXCELLENT COMMUNICATOR WITH A PASSION FOR **JUSTICE** IN THE WORKPLACE? DO YOU CARRY A HIGH LEVEL OF RESPECT FOR **GLOBAL CULTURES** AND DIFFERENCES AND ARE YOU EXCITED BY TEAM-BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES?

If so, this might be the perfect career for you!

DEI specialists must have a talent for speaking, collaborating, and understanding the diverse backgrounds of others. They do diversity presentations and trainings to multiple divisions and departments of the organization. They analyze data and deliver reports to their supervisors. To succeed in this job, you must value diversity and commit to an inclusive working and learning environment.

Salary

U.S. salaries range from about \$52,000 to \$64,000 per year and average about \$59,000.

Where Can You **GROW?**

A career in DEI can include work as a **Diversity Coordinator, DEI Analyst, or DEI Consultant**. Some possible employers:

- Federal, state, or local government agencies
- Forest industry companies
- Educational institutions
- Consulting firms

Moving Forward

The road to working as a DEI specialist is different for **everyone**. Many people have training in a related field, such as forestry.

- **HIGH SCHOOL:** Study a wide range of subjects and focus on developing your communication skills.
- **COLLEGE:** Work toward a bachelor's degree in Business Administration, HR Management, Organizational Development, Management Studies, Communications, Psychology, Public Policy, Political Science, or Liberal Arts.

For more about green jobs, visit www.plt.org/workingforforests

GREEN JOB FACT SHEET

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATOR

Environmental educators help youth and adults learn about forests and the environment by engaging people in hands-on experiences in the natural world. They provide facts, answer questions, and lead interactive field trips, hikes, and workshops. Environmental educators often teach outdoors, using forests and camps as their classrooms. They also spend time researching to make sure they are providing accurate, relevant information.

The Big Picture

Environmental educators help create the next generation of environmental stewards by:

- **Building awareness** about the environment and empowering the transition to sustainability.
- **Building critical thinking** and problem-solving skills.
- **Making real-world connections** using science, math, and technology.



IS THIS CAREER RIGHT FOR YOU?

ARE YOU A STRONG **COMMUNICATOR**?
DO YOU ENJOY **LEADING GROUPS** AND
HELPING OTHERS LEARN?

If so, this might be the perfect career for you!

Environmental educators enjoy learning about the world around them and work with people of all ages and education levels. They often must adapt to new situations and scenarios. To succeed in this job, you need flexibility, adaptability, and the ability to communicate well.

Salary

U.S. salaries range from about \$34,000 to \$77,000 per year and average about \$50,900.

Where Can You **GROW**?

Careers in environmental education include **ecotourism specialist, communications coordinator, sustainability manager, and parks interpreter**. Some possible employers:

- Government agencies (state and federal)
- Forest industry
- Schools or universities
- Nonprofit organizations

Moving Forward

Here's a path of study that could lead to a career in **environmental education**. You'll likely need a four-year college degree.

- **HIGH SCHOOL:** Focus on science (especially biology), social sciences, math, and geography classes. Gain experience working with kids and members of the public by volunteering at a community center or becoming a camp counselor.
- **COLLEGE:** Work toward a bachelor's degree in education, environmental science, natural resources, conservation, or similar fields.

For more about green jobs, visit www.plt.org/workingforforests

GREEN JOB FACT SHEET

FORESTRY TECHNICIAN

Forestry technicians gather data, monitor resource use, and inform decision-making. Their tasks vary depending on their employer's needs. On any given day, they might work on a conservation project, supervise a tree nursery, or help to coordinate fire suppression efforts. They work as part of a forest management team, often under the direction of a forester.

The Big Picture

Forestry technicians assist professional foresters in managing forest resources. They help to ensure the sustainability of forests for future generations by:

- **Monitoring** for harmful insects or tree diseases.
- **Coordinating** reforestation efforts after trees are harvested or destroyed by fire.
- **Calculating** sustainable yields of forest trees.



IS THIS CAREER RIGHT FOR YOU?

DO YOU LIKE BEING **OUTDOORS** AND WORKING WITH YOUR **HANDS**? ARE YOU EXCITED BY A JOB THAT IS DIFFERENT EVERY DAY?

If so, this might be the perfect career for you!

Forestry technicians need to know basic forest management techniques and to have experience with specific forestry tools, such as prisms, clinometers, and calipers, or geographic information system (GIS) and database programs. To succeed in this job, you'll need analytical, communication, critical-thinking, interpersonal, collaboration and planning skills, because you'll often be working in a team.

Salary

U.S. salaries range from about \$52,000 to \$64,000 per year and average about \$59,000.

Where Can You GROW?

A career as a forestry technician can include **working for yourself, for forest companies, or even for consultants**. Some possible employers include:

- Federal, state, or local government agencies
- Forest industry companies
- Educational institutions
- Consulting firms

Moving Forward

Here's a path of study that could lead to a career as a **forestry technician**. You'll likely need vocational experience or a two-year associate degree.

- **HIGH SCHOOL:** Focus on science and math courses. Gain on-the-job experience through summer employment at the parks department, or through a work-study program or internship.
- **COLLEGE:** Many junior and community colleges offer two-year programs leading to an associate degree in forest technology with courses in land surveying, timber cruising, forest protection, wildlife management, and logging.

For more about green jobs, visit www.plt.org/workingforforests

GREEN JOB FACT SHEET

HR DIRECTOR/RECRUITER



HR directors or recruiters facilitate the effective use of human resources to achieve organizational goals and objectives. They provide advice to all levels within their organizations regarding human resources management. They also develop employee recruitment and retention programs, help choose job candidates, facilitate employee professional development, and develop and administer other human resource programs. They also work on developing and executing recruiting and retention plans and maintaining staff and labor relations.

The Big Picture

HR directors or recruiters have the ability to perform the following duties:

- **Develop and execute** recruiting plans.
- **Identify issues** and recommend ideas and trends that will contribute to a culture of improvement.
- **Develop and implement** HR strategies aligned with the overall business strategy.



IS THIS CAREER RIGHT FOR YOU?

ARE YOU PASSIONATE ABOUT FOSTERING A **RESPECTFUL WORKPLACE**, DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT IT TAKES TO DELIVER EXCELLENT HR SERVICE IN AN EVER-EVOLVING ENVIRONMENT, AND DO YOU ENJOY **FINDING EFFICIENCIES AND MEETING BUSINESS OUTCOMES**?

If so, this might be the perfect career for you!

An HR director or recruiter must be very approachable and must be able to see things from other people's perspectives. They are sound decision-makers and help in building a strong employer brand. They bridge management and employee relations by addressing demands, grievances, or other issues. To succeed in this job, you need to have great communication, problem solving, and interpersonal skills.

Salary

U.S. salaries range from about \$75,000 to \$208,000 per year and average about \$126,230.

Where Can You **GROW**?

A career in HR can include work as an **Employee Relations Director, Vice President of HR/People Relations/People Operations, or Chief Human Resource Officer**. Some possible employers:

- Federal, state, or local government agencies
- Forest industry companies
- Consulting firms

Moving Forward

The road to working as an HR Director/Recruiter is **different for everyone**. Many people have training in a related field, such as Human Resources.

- **HIGH SCHOOL:** Study a wide range of subjects and focus on developing your communication skills.
- **COLLEGE:** Work toward a bachelor's or Master's degree in Business Administration, HR Management, Organizational Development, Management Studies, Communications, or Psychology.

For more about green jobs, visit www.plt.org/workingforforests

GREEN JOB FACT SHEET

URBAN FORESTER

All the trees that grow in a city or town make up its urban forest. Although it looks different from a typical idea of a forest, an urban forest provides critical benefits to people and wildlife. Urban foresters inventory and monitor tree health using a variety of tools to track tree condition, location, and canopy cover. Their work often goes beyond tree care to involve urban planning, research, policy and law, and advocacy.

The Big Picture

Urban foresters ensure that urban forests provide social, physical, and environmental benefits for humans and the surrounding ecosystem by:

- **Participating** in community events to promote urban forestry.
- **Developing and supporting** urban forest management plans.
- **Ensuring** that contractors follow city policies and regulations.

IS THIS CAREER RIGHT FOR YOU?

DO YOU CARE ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY, URBAN COMMUNITIES, AND TREES?
DO YOU ENJOY WORKING OUTDOORS
AND USING A RANGE OF TOOLS?

If so, this might be the perfect career for you!

Urban foresters are excellent observers who can assess tree health and prescribe appropriate treatments. They need to be flexible and innovative, as their job can vary so much. Some days, they write management plans, while other days they use chainsaws and other heavy equipment to remove trees that are infected with disease. To succeed in this job, you need to have integrity, dependability, attention to detail, the ability to cooperate, adaptability/flexibility, independence and good communication skills, as you'll be talking with residents, land-use planners, city managers, and more.

Salary

U.S. salaries range from about \$42,500 to \$93,060 per year and average about \$63,980.

Where Can You GROW?

A career as an urban forester can include working as an **arborist**, **commercial grounds worker**, or **tree care consultant**. Some possible employers:

- Federal, state, and city government agencies
- Local and city-based nonprofit organizations
- Public utility companies
- Landscape maintenance and architecture firms
- Universities, colleges, and extension services

Moving Forward >>>

Here's a path of study that could lead to a career as an urban forester. You'll likely need a four-year college degree.

- **HIGH SCHOOL:** Focus on biology, chemistry, physics, mathematics (especially pre-calculus).
- **COLLEGE:** Complete a bachelor's degree in forestry or a related field, such as environmental science, biology, and natural resource management.

For more about green jobs, visit www.plt.org/workingforforests

GREEN JOB FACT SHEET

MACHINE OPERATOR

Machine operators work with mechanical or computer-operated equipment. They calibrate machines to launch production, determine optimal settings, and oversee material operations. They are responsible for ensuring that equipment is working properly.

The Big Picture

In the forestry sector, machine operators drive harvesting and road-building machinery or operate equipment in lumbermills or papermills. Their work helps to process wood, paper, and forest products by:

- **Helping to assess** forest sites and terrain.
- **Running machines** like skidders, feller bunchers, loaders, and sawmill or paper machines.
- **Safely handling** logs, paper pulp, and other forest materials.

IS THIS CAREER RIGHT FOR YOU?

DO YOU ENJOY WORKING WITH YOUR **HANDS**? DO YOU LOVE MAKING THINGS WITH SPECIALIZED **TOOLS**?

If so, this might be the perfect career for you!

This is often a fast-paced, physically demanding job. Machine operators are good at using tools and following safety rules. Because they work with heavy machinery, they wear safety equipment like hard hats, safety boots, and ear protection. To succeed in this job, you need to be detail-oriented and have dependability, self control, stress tolerance, integrity, persistence, good hand-eye coordination and problem-solving skills.

Salary

U.S. salaries range from about \$21,680 to \$48,080 per year and average about \$31,560.

Where Can You **GROW**?

A career as a machine operator can include work as a **machinist, millwright, assembler, or construction worker**. Some possible employers:

- Federal or state government agencies
- Forest products companies

Moving Forward

Here's a path of study that could lead to a career as a **machine operator**. It is a great choice if you are looking for a job right out of high school or a more limited college experience.

- **HIGH SCHOOL:** Take advantage of any career and technical education program your school may have. Gain entry-level work experience as a warehouse worker or production worker. Look for machine operator apprenticeships.
- **COLLEGE:** To get a job in the forestry sector, it is helpful to take college courses in wood science or wood technology, but it is not required.

For more about green jobs, visit www.plt.org/workingforforests

GREEN JOB FACT SHEET

WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST

Wildlife biologists study the biology, behavior, and habitats of animal populations in the wild. Their research often takes them into the wilderness, where they conduct wildlife surveys and habitat assessments. They frequently observe animals' roles in a specific ecosystem and perform experiments to learn about animal species, ecosystem interactions, and how humans influence habitats.

The Big Picture

Wildlife biologists play a crucial role in forestry conservation efforts, as wildlife are a key indicator of healthy forests. They help guide sustainable forest management decisions by:

- **Making observations**, running controlled tests, and analyzing their findings.
- **Consulting** on and implementing measures to improve wildlife habitat.
- **Drafting reports** and presentations for internal and external stakeholders, policymakers, and the public.

IS THIS CAREER RIGHT FOR YOU?

DO YOU LOVE **ANIMALS**? ARE YOU PASSIONATE ABOUT STUDYING **HABITATS** AND WORKING OUTSIDE TO HELP THEM?

If so, this might be the perfect career for you!

Wildlife biologists spend lots of time in the field outdoors, often in remote areas without physical comforts. To succeed in this job, you also need to have strong research and analytical abilities, reading comprehension, critical thinking, science, active listening, speaking, writing, and excellent communication skills to write reports, submit recommendations, and make presentations to industry and government.

Salary

U.S. salaries range from about \$41,720 to \$106,320 per year and average about \$66,350.

Where Can You GROW?

A career as a wildlife biologist can include a job as an **ecologist, conservation biologist, fisheries technician, or zoologist**. Some possible employers:

- Federal or state government agencies
- Zoos or environmental research facilities
- Private consulting firms
- Colleges and universities

Moving Forward

Here's a path of study that could lead to a career as a **wildlife biologist**. You'll need a four-year college or even a graduate degree.

- **HIGH SCHOOL:** Focus on biology, math (especially calculus), English, and chemistry.
- **COLLEGE:** Earn a bachelor's degree in the applied and natural sciences, such as wildlife biology, ecology, or zoology. While the minimum education requirement is a bachelor's degree, many wildlife biologists have a master's degree or a PhD.

For more about green jobs, visit www.plt.org/workingforforests



GREEN JOB FACT SHEET

PARK RANGER

Park rangers help protect our parks and share them with the public. They help visitors make the most of their visit, present educational programs on the park's natural or historical significance, maintain facilities, and keep the park safe for everyone. Most park ranger positions involve either (1) education and interpretation or (2) law enforcement and protection.

The Big Picture

Park rangers are passionate about protecting the environment, wildlife, and park visitors. In the forest sector, their work helps to ensure the sustainability of forests by:

- **Educating visitors** about the forest.
- **Explaining rules** and regulations to visitors and enforcing them.
- **Keeping visitors safe** in the forest and keeping the forest safe from visitors.



IS THIS CAREER RIGHT FOR YOU?

DO YOU DREAM OF WORKING IN THE GREAT **OUTDOORS**? DO YOU ENJOY WORKING WITH **PEOPLE** OF ALL AGES AND BACKGROUNDS?

If so, this might be the perfect career for you!

Much of a ranger's time is spent outside, and the job can be physically demanding. Park rangers may also work indoors when welcoming visitors, preparing reports, or doing administrative tasks. To succeed in this job, you need to have the ability to cooperate, dependability, integrity, self control, a concern for others, adaptability/flexibility, and leadership skills so you can take charge in emergencies, and you need interpersonal and communication skills to keep park visitors safe.

Salary

U.S. salaries range from about \$39,230 to \$100,350 per year and average about \$64,020.

Where Can You **GROW**?

A career as a park ranger can include a job as a **conservation biologist, fisheries officer, or ecotourism operator**. Some possible employers:

- Federal, state, or local government agencies
- Private conservation sites or landmarks
- Municipal parks

Moving Forward

Here's a path of study that could lead to a career as a **park ranger**. You'll likely need a four-year college degree.

- **HIGH SCHOOL:** Focus on biology, earth science, and environmental science classes. If possible, participate in a student ranger or junior forest ranger program, and volunteer in your local parks to gain relevant work experience.
- **COLLEGE:** Earn an undergraduate degree in a related field, such as conservation enforcement, natural resource management, outdoor education, or forestry. You should also get first-aid certification and public safety training.

For more about green jobs, visit www.plt.org/workingforforests

GREEN JOB FACT SHEET

HYDROLOGIST

Hydrologists are scientists who study the structure and function of lakes, rivers, and watershed systems. They analyze water levels and the rates, timing, and distribution of water flows. In forestry, they analyze how tree harvesting affects aquatic ecosystems, and they work with foresters and wildlife biologists on conservation. Hydrologists gather information in the forest, then head back to the lab to analyze data and report findings.

The Big Picture

Hydrologists investigate water and the water cycle to solve important questions, by:

- **Learning** how streamflow shapes forests.
- **Studying** the ways in which climate change affects watersheds.
- **Understanding** the environmental consequences of erosion, drought, and other water-related issues.

IS THIS CAREER RIGHT FOR YOU?

ARE YOU DRAWN TO **WATER**? ARE YOU CURIOUS ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WATER, **CLIMATE**, THE EARTH, AND LIVING THINGS?

If so, this might be the perfect career for you!

Hydrologists have great research and analysis skills. They gather information and use critical thinking to identify and solve problems. To succeed in this job, you need analytical, strong communication, critical-thinking, and interpersonal skills. In addition, you must have physical stamina and be comfortable working in and near bodies of water.

Salary

U.S. salaries range from about \$52,900 to \$130,030 per year and average about \$84,040.

Where Can You GROW?

A career as a hydrologist can include working as a **climatologist, environmental geologist, oceanographer, or hydrogeologist**. Possible employers include:

- Federal, state, or local governments
- Management, scientific, and technical consulting companies
- Private companies that provide engineering services

Moving Forward >>>

Here's a path of study that could lead to a career in **hydrology**. You'll likely need a four-year college or even a graduate degree.

- **HIGH SCHOOL:** Focus on biology, statistics, social sciences, math, and physics classes.
- **COLLEGE:** Choose a hydrology concentration within a geoscience, engineering, environmental science, or earth science program. Earn a master's degree to get more opportunities and a higher salary.

For more about green jobs, visit www.plt.org/workingforforests

GREEN JOB FACT SHEET

COMMUNITY RELATIONS SPECIALIST

Community relations specialists build and maintain ongoing relationships with diverse communities. They work to create trust and provide a line of communication between diverse communities and government agencies or private companies engaged in development practices. They are often deeply rooted in an Indigenous community and bring in-depth knowledge of diverse cultures, community issues, and governance.

The Big Picture

Community relations specialists make sure that projects comply with environmental laws and protect historical sites and respected ways of life, by:

- **Monitoring**, analyzing, and communicating issues and opportunities.
- **Sharing** best practices and lessons learned among the groups involved.
- **Developing** project plans and permits that meet the needs of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.



IS THIS CAREER RIGHT FOR YOU?

ARE YOU GOOD AT FINDING COMMON GROUND AMONG DIFFERENT PEOPLE?
DO YOU CARE HOW DEVELOPMENT AFFECTS LOCAL COMMUNITIES?

If so, this might be the perfect career for you!

Community relations specialists must be able to see things from other people's perspectives. They meet with communities to identify their needs and work toward compromises. They do research, write reports, plan community engagement activities, and study relevant laws and regulations. To succeed in this job, you need patience to build relationships and trust.

Salary

U.S. salaries range from about \$36,000 to \$95,000 per year and average about \$56,000.

Where Can You GROW?

A career in community relations can include work as a **traditional ecological knowledge advisor, heritage interpreter, or conservation relationship consultant**. Some possible employers:

- Federal, state, or local government agencies
- Forest industry companies
- Research organizations
- Consulting firms

Moving Forward >>>

The road to working as a **community relations specialist** is **different for everyone**. Many people have training in a related field, such as forestry.

- **HIGH SCHOOL:** Study a wide range of subjects and focus on developing your communication skills.
- **COLLEGE:** Work toward a bachelor's degree in public administration, economic development, law, anthropology, natural resources, or a related discipline.

For more about green jobs, visit www.plt.org/workingforforests

GREEN JOB FACT SHEET

SILVICULTURE TECHNICIAN

Silviculture is the practice of growing and cultivating trees. Silviculture technicians help to maintain forest health by doing site assessments, thinning stands, managing fires, engaging in reforestation, and more. They need to understand how trees grow, including how environmental conditions can affect their health.

The Big Picture

Silviculture technicians work with foresters to manage forests sustainably, by:

- **Calculating** the yield of trees in a plot, flagging individual trees and boundaries.
- **Supervising** planting to regenerate forests.
- **Helping** to decide how much space to give each young tree, as well as how much to prune and fertilize it.

IS THIS CAREER RIGHT FOR YOU?

DO YOU ENJOY BEING ACTIVE
OUTDOORS? ARE YOU PASSIONATE
ABOUT HELPING **FORESTS** THRIVE?

If so, this might be the perfect career for you!

Silviculture technicians need to be physically fit and comfortable using tools, machines, and operating equipment. They work in all types of weather conditions. They typically have good technical and computer skills and are experienced with global positioning system (GPS) and geographic information system (GIS) software. To succeed in this job, you need management, communication, and people skills to lead tree planting crews and enforce reforestation rules.

Salary

U.S. salaries range from about \$27,970 to \$60,910 per year and average about \$38,940.

Where Can You GROW?

A career in silviculture can include work as a **forestry technician** or **silviculture technologist**. Some possible employers:

- Federal, state, or local government agencies
- Forest industry companies
- Consulting firms

Moving Forward >>>

Here's a path of study that could lead to a career as a **silviculture technician**. You'll likely need vocational experience or a two-year associate degree.

- **HIGH SCHOOL:** Focus on science, math (especially calculus), geography, and social sciences.
- **COLLEGE:** Look for community college programs that offer an associate's degree in forest technology or natural resources management that provide field experience, as well as a regulatory background pertaining to reforestation techniques.

For more about green jobs, visit www.plt.org/workingforforests



GREEN JOB FACT SHEET

GIS SPECIALIST

A geographic information system (GIS) is a set of digital mapping tools that helps to organize, communicate, and understand information about our world. GIS specialists use scientific research, spatial data, and expert opinions to help develop plans and management strategies. In forestry, they analyze forestry patterns and trends, map natural disasters, track wildlife, measure logging rates, and more.

The Big Picture

GIS specialists compile a wide variety of data and prepare maps and reports to help monitor the environment and ensure sustainability. Their work involves:

- **Managing** forests and natural resources.
- **Monitoring** and analyzing climate patterns.
- **Contributing** to land-use planning.



IS THIS CAREER RIGHT FOR YOU?

ARE YOU A **VISUAL** THINKER? DO YOU LIKE USING **MAPS** AND GRAPHS TO MAKE SENSE OF THE WORLD?

If so, this might be the perfect career for you!

Although some GIS specialists do field work, most work at a desk. GIS specialists are good at focusing on details when managing, analyzing, and mapping data. They can also see connections between spatial data and real-world conditions. To succeed in this job, you need computer experience, statistical and analytical abilities, attention to detail, independence, integrity, dependability, initiative, interpersonal skills, and technology systems and problem-solving skills.

Salary

U.S. salaries range from about \$45,760 to \$152,730 per year and average about \$92,870.

Where Can You GROW?

A career in GIS can include work as a **cartographer, geographer, remote sensing technician, environmental scientist, or landscape planner**. Some possible employers:

- Federal, state, or local government agencies
- Private companies
- Colleges or universities

Moving Forward >>>

The road to working as a GIS specialist is different for **everyone**. Many people have training in a related field, such as forestry.

- **HIGH SCHOOL:** Study a wide range of subjects and focus on developing your communication skills.
- **COLLEGE:** Work toward a bachelor's degree in public administration, economic development, law, anthropology, natural resources, or a related discipline.

For more about green jobs, visit www.plt.org/workingforforests

GREEN JOB FACT SHEET

SUSTAINABILITY MANAGER

Sustainability managers ensure that organizations set and meet environmental goals, adhere to environmental standards, and minimize environmental harm. They make sure that organizations' business practices are economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable. Their job is to ensure that people and the planet prosper now and in the future.

The Big Picture

Sustainability managers promote environmental protection and social responsibility, while also maintaining profitability, by:

- **Developing** sustainability plans to help organizations conserve energy, use resources wisely, and manage waste.
- **Ensuring** that organizations comply with environmental, health, and safety regulations.
- **Keeping** current on the latest sustainability trends, products, and certifications.

IS THIS CAREER RIGHT FOR YOU?

DO YOU LIKE THINKING ABOUT THE FUTURE? ARE YOU PASSIONATE ABOUT FINDING SOLUTIONS TO ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES?

If so, this might be the perfect career for you!

Sustainability managers must be organized and must enjoy multi-tasking. They lead teams, coordinate among departments, and communicate with internal and external stakeholders. To succeed in this job, you need writing, critical thinking, active listening, complex problem solving, reading comprehension, and speaking skills, and an analytical mind to identify problems and research solutions.

Salary

U.S. salaries range from about \$66,050 to \$208,000+ per year and average about \$179,520.

Where Can You GROW?

A career in sustainability management can include work as a **business manager, production manager, accountant, or compliance officer**. Some possible employers:

- Federal, state, or local government agencies
- Manufacturing facilities
- Nonprofit organizations
- Universities, colleges, and other academic institutions
- Environmental consultant firms

Moving Forward >>>

Here's a path of study that could lead to a career as a **sustainability manager**. You'll likely need a four-year college or even a graduate degree.

- **HIGH SCHOOL:** Focus on environmental science, biology, chemistry, engineering, and economics. Volunteer for environmental initiatives in your area to gain hands-on experience.
- **COLLEGE:** Earn a bachelor's degree in business, environmental science, environmental management, engineering, or sustainability. Consider earning a master's degree in environmental policy, economics, or business administration.

For more about green jobs, visit www.plt.org/workingforforests

FAQS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

CAN I STILL BE IN FORESTRY IF I DON'T LIKE MATH AND SCIENCE?

Yes! There are all kinds of green jobs in forestry, including some that focus on the arts rather than on math and science. Take the PLT Green Jobs Quiz to learn more about how your personality and skills may help you decide what type of green jobs to pursue: <https://cc.plt.org/greenjobsquiz>

DO ALL FORESTRY POSITIONS INVOLVE FIELD WORK OR GETTING MY HANDS DIRTY?

No, not all forestry positions involve going into the field or working directly in the outdoors. You may end up inside doing mapping, communications, or even operations.

WHAT IF I AM AFRAID OF THE OUTDOORS?

Try self-reflection!

Consider which parts of the outdoors you fear the most and why. Are you afraid of wildlife like snakes, frogs, birds, and insects? Are you afraid of the unusual sounds, smells, and surroundings? Where did this fear come from?

Research!

- Look up maps and information about an outdoor area such as a park, trail, greenspace, or forest before visiting. Ask for assistance with finding maps, and contact information.
- Carry a map with you and decide on which route you will take.
- Make contact with someone to let them know your location, if exploring alone.

WHAT IF THERE ARE VERY FEW TREES WHERE I LIVE? HOW CAN I SHOW THAT I CARE ABOUT GREEN SPACES?

Think green!

Plants clean our air and improve our environments. Build as many green spaces in and around your house and neighborhood as you can. The following resources may inspire you:

- [Innovative Ways to Create More Urban Green Spaces \(Project Learning Tree\)](#)
- [Ideas for Creating Green Spaces in Urban Areas \(Leaders in Energy\)](#)
- [22 Benefits of Trees \(Tree People\)](#)

Get educated!

Learn about people and organizations who are out there getting involved and making a difference.

- [Sustainable Forestry Initiative](#)
- [Minorities in Agricultural and Natural Resources and Related Sciences](#)
- [Sustainable Forestry and African American Land Retention Program](#)
- [USDA Forest Service](#)
- [U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities](#)
- [USDA National Resources Conservation Service](#)

Get involved!

Urban forestry is attracting more and more talented people from diverse backgrounds.

- [USDA Urban and Community Forestry Program](#)

RESOURCES



READ MORE ABOUT THE JOURNEYS GUIDE ONLINE

Stay updated on *The Journeys of Black Professionals in Green Careers* and accompanying resources, including:

- Downloadable job training
- PLT Green Mentor program
- Access to networking webinars
- Invitations to local events
- Access to PLT Training opportunities



SCAN the QR code to learn more



www.plt.org/journeys



EXPLORE SAF-ACCREDITED PROFESSIONAL DEGREE PROGRAMS

Society of American Foresters (SAF)-accredited professional degree programs throughout the United States help you pursue a career in forestry and conservation from a program that meets the standards set by the profession you're pursuing.

SCAN the QR code to learn more



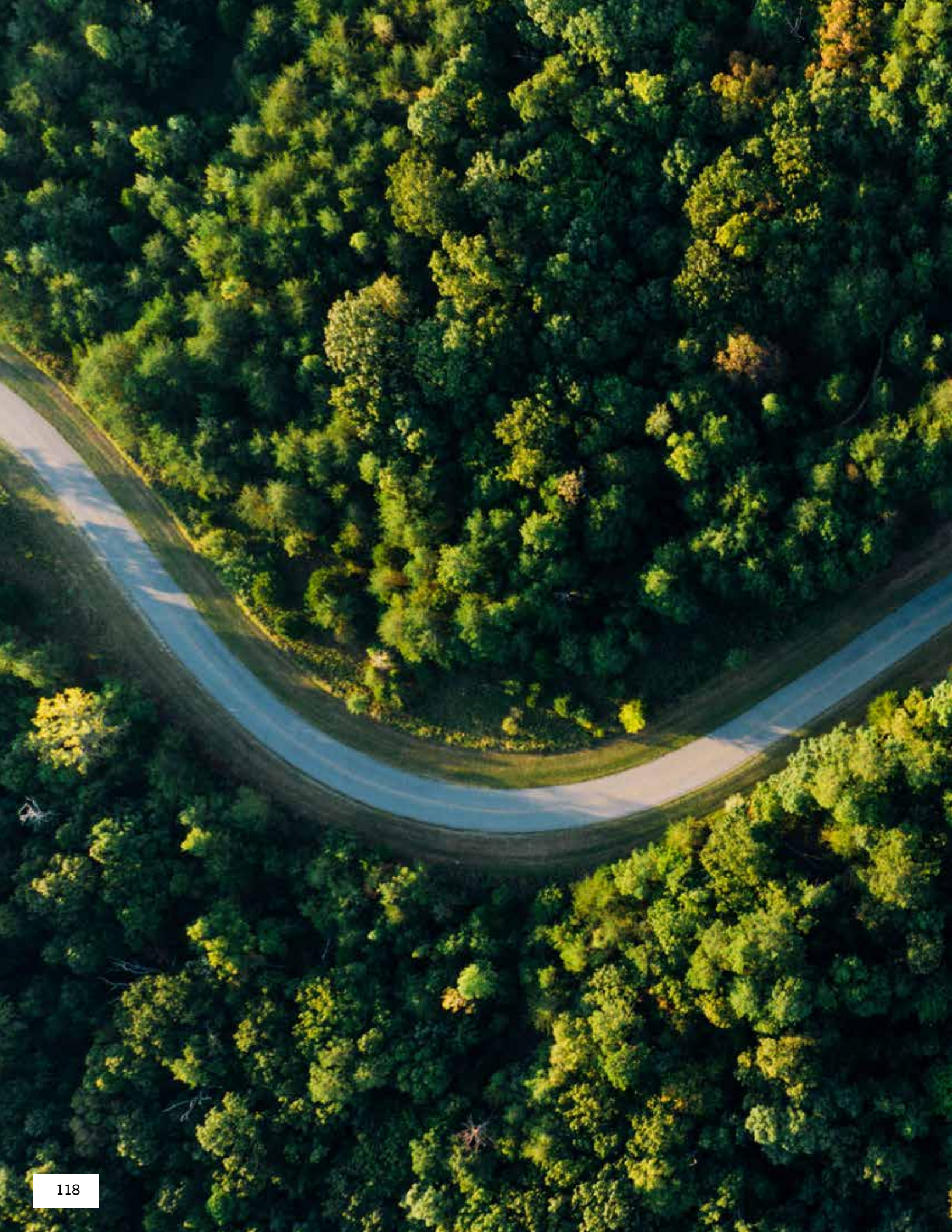
FIND A MANRRS CHAPTER NEAR YOU

Explore a Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences (MANRRS) chapter in your state and discover career opportunities for you in forestry and conservation.

SCAN the QR code to learn more



www.manrrs.org



A SPECIAL THANKS

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