

Career Insider

Project Management Boosts Environmental Careers

By Elijah Donat - MS PMP Environmental Engineer, Chilkat Environmental

As an environmental consultant in Alaska, my job stress runs more toward withstanding 100 mile per hour winds, 40 below weather, grizzly bears and avalanches; besides that, my business challenge is the same as every other owner's – growing my business profitably. Chilkat Environmental (www.chilkatenvironmental.com) which I co-founded, is a company based in the southeast Alaskan community of Haines that provides environmental consulting services for Tribal, State and Federal projects in Alaska.

We handle everything from environmental assessments, sampling and training to contaminated site investigations, regulatory compliance and solid waste management planning. When we're competing for business based on technical qualifications, we need every edge we can get. That's why our staff are certified Project Management Professionals® (PMPs), through the Project Management Institute (PMI) via an online course from Cheetah Learning. When prospective clients see the PMP certification, it gives them a much greater comfort level. It lets them know that we're serious professionals who know how to deliver on-time and on-budget.

Project management is a planned and organized effort to accomplish a specific task with a project plan; the certification demonstrates that we are proficient in using an international project management standard. We offer support to clients to help implement management of their projects using PMI methodology to insure simple quarterly reporting, successful project tracking and expense management, risk management planning, timeline management, deliverables tracking and technical support for project management.

I saw immediate operational improvements after I earned my PMP and still more when the rest of our team earned theirs; we upped the ante with Environmental Project Management Certificates. The PMP credential has proven its value to me as an environmental consultant and as an employer; I know we're all on the same page, with standard methodologies that offer solid results that are very attractive for a company - or a job candidate:

Improved workflow: Some have said managing environmental projects is like herding cats. After my certification training, I could manage workflow so much more efficiently that I was able to triple the size of my operations.

Attract clients: Government clients tend to value certification and sometimes require it. Clients want some assurance of accountability before they hire you – it's like an insurance policy. That's why I think certification is becoming more important in the private sector, and especially in the government. The class offered by Cheetah Learning is authorized by the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) and the Native American Lands Environmental Mitigation Program (NALEMP) for training of Tribal Project Managers for Phase 1 Assessment and remediation of Formerly Used Defense Sites (FUDS).

Better cost and budget estimates: The discipline of Project Management has made our budgeting process much more robust. Since we're better at capturing costs and anticipating changes, our budgets are becoming more bullet-proof. That is something that our clients like to see, and a valuable skill for any professional.

Smoother team operations: With a standard methodology, we work much better as a team. Projects come and go, but well organized teams work together for decades.

Higher perceived value: In the IT community, I think the PMP has definitely garnered those consultants higher consulting fees. My hope is that the halo effect from that industry will follow other consulting industries like ours. I know because of the

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NAAEE Continues to Teach People How to Protect the Environment

Washington D.C. – With so much attention now focused on how to help solve our environmental challenges, members of the North American Association for Environmental Education are ready to answer the question “What can I do?” For over 35 years, NAAEE's annual conference has provided hundreds of ideas for how to teach others to help our planet be more sustainable.

This year's NAAEE conference, in Virginia Beach, Virginia, on November 14-17, features everything from state-of-the-art technology to down-and-dirty, hands-on science as a way to share the message that every action matters. During the four days of events, participants also will be inspired by a host of artistic expressions in words, pictures, and songs. Registration is now open at <http://www.naaee.org/conference/registration/>

Kicking things off on November 14 is Milton Chen, a leading figure in educational media for more than 20 years. He joined the George Lucas Educational Foundation (GLEF) as executive director in 1998, bringing new leadership to its mission of gathering and disseminating the most innovative models of K-12 teaching in the Digital Age.

To showcase relationship between EE and the arts, John McCutcheon is the opening night performer. Six Grammy nominations and other numerous awards, 27 albums, and more than 25 years of concerts have established him as one of America's most respected and beloved performers.

Peter Yarrow of Peter, Paul and Mary returns for an arts and EE symposium and concert on November 15. Founder and President of Operation Respect, Yarrow's life and work embrace the premise that if each person can articulate his or her own voice and join with others, together they can become a powerful force to transform society.

With an infectious positive outlook and incomparable sense of humor, Chad Pregracke is proof that one person can make a difference. In 1998, he founded Living Lands & Waters, a not-for-profit environmental organization that now has several employees and a fleet of several barges and workboats. They work with thousands of volunteers on community cleanups, Riverbottom Forest Restoration, and Adopt-a-Mississippi River Mile programs.

“What Rachel Carson was to insecticides, birds, and our planet in 1962,” reports The Boston Globe, “Sylvia Earle, scientist, explorer, oceanographer, diver extraordinaire, entrepreneur, and eternal romantic, is now to the ocean.” Speaking at the 2007 Conference on November 17, Earle set the women's depth record for solo diving (1,000 meters/3,281 feet) and logged more than 6,000 diving hours—feats that garnered her the moniker “Her Deepness.”

These and hundreds of other speakers offer many opportunities to learn how to explore new horizons for environmental education.

COME TO THE COAST
explore new horizons
for environmental education

NAAEE 36th ANNUAL CONFERENCE
Wednesday – Saturday, November 14 – 17, 2007
Virginia Beach, Virginia
(Workshops are on November 14)

NAAEE 4th ANNUAL EE RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM
Celebrating the Diversity of Our Research
Methodologies: Finding Common Ground
November 13 (evening reception)
& 14 (all day symposium), 2007

Manage (from page 5)

certification, I'm more confident when I pitch business.

Obtaining a PMP requires a certain amount of specific project management education, hands-on project management experience, and passing a four hour exam. The education can be obtained from colleges and universities or online. We chose Cheetah Learning because they have an excellent reputation in Project Management training online. Using their online training, we were allowed to schedule our studying so it was convenient for us. We also found the Cheetah approach to be very reality-based – we could apply the material to our projects, as we were learning. Our overall experience has been so beneficial that Chilkat Environmental is currently working with Cheetah Learning to teach their online Environmental Project Management Certificate Program.

PMP is a registered trademark of the Project Management Institute.



Elijah Donat has more than 11 years of Environmental Project Management experience and holds a Master's of Science degree in Environmental Systems Engineering as well as a Bachelor's of Arts degree in Indian Law and Environmental Science from Humboldt State University. Chilkat Environmental is currently working with Cheetah Learning to teach their online Environmental Project Management Certificate Program. The course is certified with PMI R.E.P., IACET and The American Council on Education's College Credit Recommendation Service (ACE). Visit <http://www.chilkatenvironmental.com/training.html> for more information. For more information about Cheetah Learning, visit them online at www.cheetahlearning.com

Forestry Jobs (from page 7)



landowners employ resource management firms and independent Forestry Consultants. Resource firms may have offices in multiple states. They do hire foresters, preferably those with field experience, dual degrees or specific advanced degrees. Such employment might be for a specific contract or fulltime. Expect entry level opportunities to be limited.

People who work well without supervision and are 'team players' can do well as private consultants. Connecting with prospective employers is more difficult and may mean sending out resumes and letters of inquiry to likely firms. Pay scale is often higher than average, and may include benefits. Good Source: Professional organizations and forest industry publications.

Starting your own Forestry Consultant business would be difficult, but not impossible. Much depends upon where you intend to work. Some states have forester licensing programs. Others have forester certification programs.

Most Forestry Consultants have a background of extensive field experience before launching a business. Some graduates partner with an older forester who already has the business contacts but is ready to let go of some of the field work. Pay scale is unknown, but expect extensive travel.

Academics and Research: Forestry teaching opportunities occur at universities, colleges and community colleges and are limited in number. Advanced degrees are often a prelude to an academic career. The advancement

track is one of teaching or grant-dependant research. Environmental education is a growing field, but not specific to forestry. Good Source: <http://jobs.joe.org/> for teaching jobs and at college jobs boards for scientific opportunities.

Cooperative Extension: Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) is an agency within the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Within each state, Coop Extension offices have educators and other staff who respond to public inquiries and conduct informal, noncredit workshops and other educational events. Forestry positions are scarce, but do exist. Usually an advanced degree would be required to apply, and constant vigilance to spot a job opening. Good Source: <http://www.csrees.usda.gov/>

Nonprofits: Land conservation is in an upswing. Foresters are employed by forest conservation trusts, foundations and nonprofit organizations that need professional expertise to manage their forest lands effectively. Opportunities are scattered. Salaries and benefits are variable. Good Source: Land Trust organizational web sites

Government Contractor: if you can't find a job, make your own!

The federal government has downsized its workforce to the point that nearly all field work on federal lands is done through private contractors. There is a niche for the Independent Forester Consultant to gather a work team together and bid on forestry contracts. Thinning, meadow restoration, stream rehabilitation, and tree planting are commonly contracted out. It's not a job, but it could be a good business.

Great forestry career opportunities do exist. You will be able to have a lifelong career as a forester, though you may have to explore several career paths along the way. Need more leads? Good Source: <http://www.cyber-sierra.com/nrjobs/forest.html>

Jean Saffell has been providing information to job hunters in natural resources since 1997 at: <http://www.cyber-sierra.com/nrjobs> and information on how to locate grants for conservation work at: <http://www.conservationgrants.com> since 2001.



Feeling Like Just Another Face in the Crowd?

Post your resume on
EnvironmentalCareer.com
and set yourself
apart from the masses