

History and Introduction

- The United States Department of Agriculture created the United States Forest Service (USFS) agency in 1905 in order to preserve and maintain the 193 million acres of natural forests and grasslands throughout the United States.
- Forest Protection Officers (FPOs) are a vital part of the overall goal of the Forest Service, which is to protect the lands under management while assuring the safety of the public.
- My position as an FPO fell under the authority of the recreation sector of the Dixie National Forest, but as an FPO my job detail actually extended throughout the Cedar City District.
- The Dixie National Forest is the largest national forest in the state of Utah, occupying approximately two million acres.
- The forest is divided into four districts from east to west and spans a 170-mile stretch. District Two (Cedar City Ranger District) is the district in which I worked.
- The Cedar City Ranger District is known for its vast plethora of Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) trails, totaling more than 400 miles. To a large extent, this monopolized the direction of law enforcement in this region, but was by no means the only issue FPOs deal with in the forest.
- Visitors have the choice of enjoying anything from camping, hiking, hunting, fishing, mountain biking, horseback riding, canoeing, timber collection, OHV riding, recreational vehicle use, and pleasure driving.
- These different activities bring responsibilities with them both on the part of the visitor and the Forest Service.
- If left unchecked and unmaintained, resource damage from these activities could harm the forestlands or even destroy them. This is why FPOs are a vital tool to the overall goal of the USFS.

Forest Protection Officer Internship



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Dixie National Forest, Cedar City, UT



Job Description/Daily Routine



Image 1. Patrolling the forest is done on a daily basis. Most times patrols are done with partners.

- Working as an FPO requires a person to be extremely flexible and vigilant. Some tasks became repetitive, while most were unpredictable and challenging.
- Daily patrols (Image 1) took place on different designated areas drawn on the USFS road map. These areas, displayed in Figure 1, were strategically drawn to appropriately distribute FPOs.
- Patrols took place on all roads/trails that permitted automobiles. All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) were used to patrol trails inaccessible to automobiles. ATV trails are displayed in Figure 2, the map used by both FPOs and visitors of the forest.
- Throughout the season, FPOs maintained road/trails by clearing fallen debris from trees.
- Road closures were established due to snow melt (Image 2). Affected trails were monitored on a daily basis until they were dry enough to pass.
- A sixteen day camping limit is enforced on the Dixie National Forest.

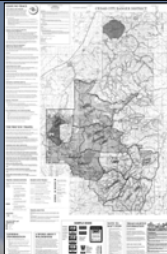


Figure 1. Forest Road Map

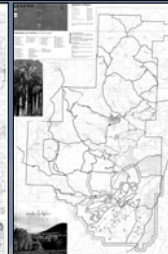


Figure 2. OHV/ATV Map

- Visitors were monitored (Image 3) by their trailers, recreational vehicles, automobile information, date of arrival, and GPS coordinates.
- Designated campsites—camping areas that are pre-established (fee required)—and dispersed campsites—camping areas that are user-established (no fee required)—were patrolled every day.
- Common infractions at campsites included unattended campfires, unsanitary conditions, and resource damage from vehicles.
- Regulations specifying dispersed campsite distances were enforced on trailers and RVs. These vehicles were only allowed to be 300 feet from any forest-developed road and must be 150 feet away from any highway. Campers would be asked to move their vehicles or they would be ticketed.
- If, while pursuing a contact in the field, the situation ever escalated to an uncomfortable level, it is the FPOs duty to contact a Law Enforcement Officer or radio dispatch for reinforcements.



Image 3. Tools such as GPS units, handheld and car radios, and binoculars help complete daily tasks and monitor forest use.

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Image 2. Road closures are necessary for the development of new trails and restoration.

Engineering Education and Enforcement

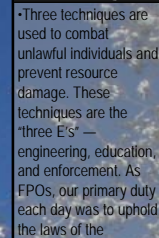


Image 4a-4d. Brochures/Flyers passed out to educate and inform visitors on forest rules and regulations.

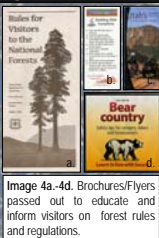


Image 4b. Bear country brochure.

- Three techniques are used to combat unlawful individuals and prevent resource damage. These techniques are the 'three E's' — engineering, education, and enforcement. As FPOs, our primary duty each day was to uphold the laws of the forest.
- Engineering refers to barricades and other obstacles used to control resource damage.
- Education is an important tool when interacting with visitors. It helps visitors understand the rules and also serves as a verbal warning.
- Enforcement, in the form of citations, was used only when the officer felt comfortable with the suspect and deemed it necessary. The appropriate manner of dealing with unlawful persons was taught in FPO training. Ticketing and criteria for probable cause were reinforced.
- In a situation where enforcement was necessary, a verbal warning, written warning or citation leading to a fine or a mandatory court appearance could be administered. Images 5b-5d demonstrate the most common citations written in the field.

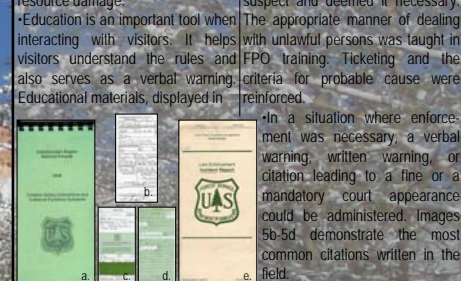


Image 5a-5e. a) USFS Law book; b) Ticket written for resource damage; c) Written warning for an unattended campfire; d) Incident report; e) Incident Report/Warning booklet

Orientation and Training

Image 7. Defensive driving certificate

- Initial training started out with a weeklong orientation followed by additional weeks of adjustment to the new forest surroundings.
- Job-specific training for FPOs took place in Vernal, Utah. FPO training lasted one week and concluded with a written and improvised oral group test in which members switched roles to imitate the acts of an offender or FPO. Image 6 displays the certificate of completion, while Image 10a shows the ID.
- Law enforcement techniques and procedures were taught by local deputies, sheriffs, federal forest enforcement officers and special agents.
- In order to operate a federal vehicle and obtain a government license, a defensive-driving course and a road test must be passed. Image 7 displays the certificate and Images 10b and 10c show the proper identifications.

Image 6. FPO Certificate

- Forest Service employees are required to fall in, and buck trees. The act of cutting down a tree is known as 'falling.' Saving a tree into pieces is called 'bucking.'
- Employees attended a one-week class and were tested for certification as a qualified sawyer.
- Certificates and ID cards are given to each sawyer (Image 8). Specific classification, as to which diameter tree the sawyer is capable of cutting, is displayed on the ID (Image 10d); ratings range from A-C.
- After passing a CPR and basic first-aid class, ID cards were given to each Forest Service employee; refer to Image 10e.
- Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA) certificates (Image 9-10) along with a 'Red Card' allow FPOs to respond to wild land fires and natural disasters.

Image 8. Chain Saw Certificate

Image 9-10. Emergency response certificates

FPO Projects

Image 11. Displays the original kiosk sign

Image 12. Shows how the new signs were installed.

Image 13. Finished kiosk with upgraded sign

- Projects were assigned to all the seasonal employees. Our supervisor designed a comprehensive list with all the projected tasks we would complete during the season. Table 1 shows an Excel spreadsheet copy of this list.
- The Resource Response Team, which mainly worked on engineering, was also given specific tasks. Together, FPOs and Resource Response members helped each other with these larger projects.
- Signs needed to be updated to indicate new or changed trails. Designated trails required specific signs to help the visitors ascertain which roads their vehicles were allowed to travel on. Some trails were closed for resource damage, while others were opened to accommodate larger OHVs.
- Wilderness signs were upgraded to display new boundaries and regulations (Images 11-13).
- In one area of the forest, known as Yankee Meadows, it was necessary to build new kiosks (Images 14-15). The campsites in this region were changed from dispersed sites to dispersed/designated sites in order to limit resource damage from trailers.
- Trailer and recreation vehicle information was recorded to monitor the visitors' stay.
- Tasks completed with the Resource Response Team included fencing and barricade construction. These larger tasks required additional personnel due to heavy equipment use and larger materials.

2007 FPO PROJECTS			
PROJECTS	COMPLETES	DATE PLANNED	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	7/17/07	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	7/24/07	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	8/6/07	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	8/13/07	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	8/20/07	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	8/27/07	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	9/3/07	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	9/10/07	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	9/17/07	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	9/24/07	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	10/1/07	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	10/8/07	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	10/15/07	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	10/22/07	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	10/29/07	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	11/5/07	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	11/12/07	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	11/19/07	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	11/26/07	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	12/3/07	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	12/10/07	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	12/17/07	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	12/24/07	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	1/7/08	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	1/14/08	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	1/21/08	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	1/28/08	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	2/4/08	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	2/11/08	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	2/18/08	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	2/25/08	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	3/4/08	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	3/11/08	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	3/18/08	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	3/25/08	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	4/1/08	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	4/8/08	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	4/15/08	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	4/22/08	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	4/29/08	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	5/6/08	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	5/13/08	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	5/20/08	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	5/27/08	
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Yankee Meadows	Completed	6/24/08	
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Yankee Meadows	Completed	7/29/08	
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Yankee Meadows	Completed	8/12/08	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	8/19/08	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	8/26/08	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	9/2/08	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	9/9/08	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	9/16/08	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	9/23/08	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	9/30/08	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	10/7/08	
Yankee Meadows	Completed	10/14/08	
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