Wilderness Management and Outdoor Recreation Planning
Career Outlook 2009-2010

Wilderness Management Programs Available at Bemidji State University:
Major: Wilderness Management and Outdoor Recreation Planning, (B.A.S.)
Department Website: http://www.bemidjistate.edu/academics/departments/geography

Major Highlights:
Wilderness management is the holistic, philosophical management and study of entire wilderness ecosystems and of human impacts within those systems. Wilderness management students must learn skills from many interrelated fields. The program at Bemidji State University is a continuation of Vermilion Community College’s Wilderness Management Program. The first two years at Vermilion focus on courses leading to an associate in science degree. This program combines a liberal arts requirement, an overview of general natural resources management, and a wilderness management core of courses. The professional requirements of the degree will then be completed by transferring to the companion program at Bemidji State University. The coursework focuses heavily on geography, but pulls additional work from anthropology, biology, business administration, communications, economics, education, English, and sociology. Students from the class of 2003 were the first group to graduate from this program at Bemidji State University.

Employment Areas:
The "Occupational Outlook Handbook" reports that conservation scientists and foresters held about 29,800 jobs in 2008. Conservation scientist jobs are heavily concentrated in government, where 74 percent are employed. The higher level and administration positions often require a bachelor's degree in parks and recreation or a similar field. Most of the individuals employed in either forestry or recreation planning are employed by federal, state or local government.

Projected Demand for Wilderness Management Majors in Minnesota:
MnCareers reports that there are 480 foresters employed in the state, the average salary is $25.50 per hour. Currently, growth in this field is rather slow, but could increase as politicians focus on environmental issues. The DISCOVER guidance system reports the average salary to be $27,000 for Minnesota’s Recreation Leaders.

Projected Demand for Wilderness Management Majors Nationwide:
The DISCOVER guidance system reports that the nationwide demand for foresters is growing more slowly than average. The average starting salary reported was $37,000 annually in 2009. The DISCOVER guidance system reports that recreation leaders earned average starting salaries of $21,000 annually in 2009. This field is expected to grow at a moderate rate.

Placement Information for Wilderness Management Graduates:
Since the program is still relatively new, there have been very few graduates (6 total graduates since 2003-2004). Of the Bemidji State University 2008-2009 wilderness management graduates, 100% reported obtaining related employment within one year of graduation. This does not include students who were not seeking employment, furthering their education, unavailable, or had unknown status.
A Partial List of Employers Who Have Hired BSU Wilderness Management Graduates:

United States Forest Services  Forestry Technician  Walker, MN
US Forest Service  Forestry Aid  Duchesne, UT
US Forest Service  Forestry Technician  Tofte, MN

Note 1: Some of the above job/career titles require advanced degrees or specialized training.
Note 2: Degrees alone do not get students jobs. Internships, summer jobs, volunteer work, part-time jobs, work-study positions, and active participation in student organizations on campus are all ways to become more competitive in a tight job market.
Note 3: Personal Competencies: it is also recommended that individuals be competent in a variety of communication methods, and computer skills are a must.

Bibliography:
Annual Graduate Follow-Up Study 1997-2009, Bemidji State University, Bemidji, MN (2010)
Bemidji State University Undergraduate Catalog 2006-2008, Bemidji State University, Bemidji, MN (2009)

For more information, please contact the Career Services Office in 102 Sanford Hall or call us at 218-755-2038 or toll free at 800-657-3726.