

**Keith Williams**

**James Rennie Bequest Report**



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**Nine weeks voluntary work on Clearwater National Forest, Idaho.**

**Aims**

The main aim of working with the US Forest Service in Idaho was to gain some work experience abroad. Therefore improving my knowledge of forestry and greatly enhancing my opportunities in future employment. I was also intrigued by the idea of travelling to a new country and experiencing a different culture.

**Work Details**

I spent just over two months in total at Potlatch Ranger Station. I stayed at the self-catering bunkhouse at the station with a number of other workers. Due to the extreme midday heat, I started my days in the early hours of the morning. I was treated as a regular employee, and was soon accepted as being part of the team.

- Primarily I was working with the fuel break and timber improvement crews. This work involved making cleared strips through areas of forest, which could then be used as a point of attack if a fire should break loose in the area. I was part of the brush piling crew, which involved tightly packing all the cut branches and trees into stacks, which would be burnt in the autumn. We also made fuel breaks around clear-cut areas to withhold a fire during a controlled broadcast burn.
- I also had the opportunity to work with the recreation crew, which involved visiting campsites to collect fees and undertake some general maintenance. I also mapped some forest trails using a Geographical Positioning System.

- I was also working with the watershed crew for some time, which involved removing sediment from rivers using a portable dredging system.
- I also worked with the White pine pruning crew. The White pines were suffering from a blister rust and therefore the lower branches of uninfected trees were being pruned to reduce the risk of infection.

During my time on the Clearwater Forest I also had the opportunity to work with various foresters at the Ranger Station. I even had the chance to spend a day spotting fires in a small patrol plane.

I believe that I gained valuable experience during my time in the States. I have made some useful contacts and I have met some interesting people whom I hope to keep in touch with. Although the future employment prospects with the Forest Service are not good, it has proved to be an excellent summer, which I have thoroughly enjoyed and will remember forever.

I am truly grateful to the fund for awarding me £150 and therefore making my trip more affordable.