



EarthWatch Rhode Island



Topic: Cool Summer Jobs at DEM

Date: February 15, 2008; Location: DEM Headquarters, 235 Promenade Street, Providence, RI

Protecting the environment and operating Rhode Island's natural resource areas is a big job. The Rhode Island Department of Environmental manages approximately 15,000 acres of state parks and beaches, trails, and bike paths, which attract more than six million visitors each year. The Department also operates hundreds of programs to guard the public from environmental risks and to protect and restore healthy ecosystems. The warm weather months – when the parks and beaches are open, people spend more time outdoors, and the weather is conducive to data collection and sampling - is particularly challenging for the Department.

In order to adequately perform its seasonal work, the Department nearly doubles its workforce in the summer hiring approximately 475 seasonal employees - making it one of the state's largest seasonal employers. Positions range from lifeguards and park rangers who help operate state parks to field interns and student researchers who help with specific environmental programs and projects. The positions provide the opportunity to work outdoors, to gain valuable job and career experience and, of course, to earn money.

Most of the positions are at the state parks and beaches where seasonal employees are responsible for the safety and comfort of patrons. Positions include lifeguards (must be certified), park rangers (various levels), laborers and groundskeepers, park naturalists, and campground clerks. The Department looks for individuals who are friendly, open and customer-service minded as these positions require a great deal of contact with the public. While most positions require a minimum age of at least 18, some positions, such as Ranger I, are suited for applicants 16 years of age. Salaries range from \$7.50 to \$13.75 per hour and applicants must be available to work a 40-hour week including weekends and holidays.

Researchers and field and technical interns assist full-time staff with environmental projects such as resource surveys, water quality



A Seasonal Park Naturalist, one of the summer positions available at DEM, conducts public education programs regarding animal life and behavior, natural resources and conservation.

monitoring, mosquito abatement, duck box maintenance, goose banding, and policy development. Responsibilities vary and could include research, data collection and entry, and public education and outreach. The Department looks for applicants with environmental science or biology education and/or experience and candidates who have good written and verbal communications as well as computer skills. The seasonal program is also recruiting experienced clerical workers. Salaries range from \$9.00 to \$12.50 per hour. Positions require either a 35 or 40-hour work week.

Although there is no deadline, potential applicants are encouraged to apply early as most positions are filled in April and early May. Also, returning seasonals are given priority. Information about DEM, full descriptions of all summer positions, and downloadable application forms are available online at [DEM's website, www.dem.ri.gov](http://www.dem.ri.gov), by clicking on "Jobs" then "Seasonal Positions". Applicants may also visit or call DEM's Office of Human Resources at 235 Promenade Street, Room 350, Providence, weekdays between 8:30 a.m. and 4 p.m., or call 222-2774, ext. 4603.

The Story of a DEM Seasonal

Alan Stone has served as a Seasonal Tech Support Intern with the Department's Division of Parks and Recreation since 2006. His responsibilities include operating and updating the Parks website and maintaining computers at the parks and beaches. He became interested in the Tech Support position while pursuing a degree at URI in digital art design. During his time as a seasonal at DEM he has made the Parks web site more user-friendly and visually appealing. He also helped with the development of *Reserve America*, DEM's new on-line campground reservation system. His experience at DEM has helped him refine his skills in digital art design, which he hopes will give him an edge in searching for a permanent position. The best part of his experience at DEM has been working outdoors at the state parks and beaches part of the time and working with the Parks staff. His biggest challenge has been maintaining computer equipment at the saltwater beaches, where the salty air tends to corrode equipment fast. His advice to others who want to work at DEM during the summer is to apply early to get the position you want and to work hard at what you do.



Channel 10's RJ Hiem (left) talks about DEM seasonal hiring program with Seasonal Alan Stone (middle) and Employee Relations Officer Janice Thurston (right).

Interviews:

- Janice Thurston, Supervising Employee Relations Officer, DEM/Office of Human Resources, talked about DEM's seasonal hiring program and her role in the process
- Alan Stone, Seasonal Tech Support, DEM/Division of Parks and Recreation, talked about his experience and the work he does as a seasonal employee