



# Meet the Scientist!



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A plant ecologist studies plants and how they function on the landscape.

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### Important Scientist Characteristics

Curiosity and careful observations are important characteristics. Observations of aspen within the landscape are critical to better understanding how they function and what kinds of problems they might have. Curiosity helps identify if there is a problem. A problem leads to research to try to figure out how to remedy the problem.

### Example of a simple research question I have tried to answer:

What are the magnitudes and causes of Sudden Aspen Decline (SAD) that occurred in southern Utah during the past decade?

### Technology or equipment used in research:

Geographic information systems (GIS) technology is used to evaluate the changes in aspen composition on the landscape as a result of succession (i.e. change from aspen to conifer dominance) or Sudden Aspen Decline. These changes can be quantified using current aerial photographs and comparing them to past photos of the same area.

### Most Exciting Discovery

I developed a video of the decline of aspen in the western U.S. This helps transfer knowledge about aspen restoration to the land managers. The latest version is in a DVD format and has been distributed widely.

### When did you know you wanted to be a scientist?

I grew up on a farm in west central Kansas and developed a love and deep appreciation for the land at an early age. These convictions are a part of my heritage. A mentor in college guided me in the right direction and I developed my ecological interest further through the educational process.

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