A landscape architect studies how the design, planning, and management of landscapes can provide a more harmonious fit between people and their environment.

Dr. Paul Gobster
Research Landscape Architect
Ph.D., University of Wisconsin-Madison
USDA Forest Service scientist

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FOREST SERVICE — U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Important Scientist Characteristics:
The world is full of data, but it's no better than random facts until it's organized. I love to code and analyze data to reveal its underlying patterns of meaning, turning data into useful information.

Example of a simple research question I have tried to answer:
People love natural landscapes but sometimes have concerns with the management practices used to restore natural conditions. My studies in both urban and wildland forests have helped managers understand how to introduce management changes in ways that people prefer and find acceptable.

Technology or equipment used in research:
I use time series photography to identify changes landowners make to their property. By coding visible features and conditions over time I have documented improvements in landscape stewardship. Freely available imagery from sources like Google Earth and Street View are wonderful resources for studying fine-scale landscape change.

Most Exciting Project or Discovery
In my research on urban landscape stewardship I found evidence for a "garden hose theory of care." This theory states that residents are often willing to care for trees and plants beyond their own yard if they are close and have the right tools for the job. This distance is about the length of their garden hose, and increasing stewardship potential may be as simple as giving people a longer hose!

When did you know you wanted to be a scientist?
Early in my career, I was asked to help develop a scenic quality rating system to assess lakes in northern Maine for the State Planning Office. We flew in a small float plane over each lake to make our ratings. It was fun and from that point I knew that I wanted to do field research.