



Meet the Scientist!



As a research forest products technologist, I study forest management and the effects of management on wood products we use everyday, like furniture, paper, or building materials.

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<http://www.naturalinquirer.org>

Important Scientist Characteristics:

I am a people person, and my job lets me work on projects that involve a number of skills and different people. This skill also helps me communicate results to people of diverse backgrounds. I'm also very observant, and I often pick up on details that are helpful in my research.

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

What happens to a tree after it is killed by fire or insects? I spent many years trying to answer this question. I was determining how fast different species of trees decompose and at what point they can no longer be used for wood products. This question was hard to answer because of all the differences within a tree and the environment in which it grew.

Technology or equipment used in research:

My research requires that I visit different kinds of wood processing facilities, such as sawmills. Sometimes these facilities are quite large, with lots of moving equipment. They are very noisy. It can be difficult to figure out how the equipment operates and safely collect the data that I need.

Most Exciting Discovery

It was exciting to write an electronic book, called an eBook, on wood energy. The eBook included videos and a financial model where users could play "what if" scenarios. It was rewarding to watch people have fun using the eBook while also quickly determining whether their plans for wood energy were a good idea.

When did you know you wanted to be a scientist?

In 4th grade I wanted to be an archaeologist. An archaeologist studies past cultures using artifacts. I also wanted to be a veterinarian, forensic medicine expert, and a science teacher. I began college as a biology major, but then settled on forestry. I focused on wood science and technology. I decided that a job that enabled me to be outdoors, interact with people, and travel was a perfect fit.

<http://www.fs.fed.us/research/people/profile.php?alias=elowell>