



Meet the Scientist!



A soil scientist studies soil properties and processes, how they change in response to management actions, and how they influence other parts of the forest.

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<http://www.naturalinquirer.org>

Important Scientist Characteristics

I think my most important talent is in communicating science to a wide variety of people. Too often, scientists focus on discovery but don't communicate it well. I enjoy speaking about my science to everyone, from the experts to local elementary schools.

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

Do forest management practices, such as tree harvesting, alter the soil's ability to function in a number of ways?

Technology or equipment used in research:

I frequently use a custom-made soil coring tool. It's about 50 cm long, 8 cm wide, and it is hammered into the soil to remove an intact soil core 30 cm long. From this sample, I can calculate all sorts of chemical and physical properties important to understanding how the soil functions.

Most Exciting Discovery

I calculated the potential biomass energy lost from harvesting trees on nutrient-poor sites and the energy it would require to restore the nutrients to the soil. I showed that the energy gain of having fertile soil is much greater than the energy needed to fertilize the soil.

When did you know you wanted to be a scientist?

I grew up exploring the forests around my house, and entered forestry upon the advice of a local forester. I got a job working for a forest soils scientist the first summer I was in college, and I found that I loved forestry, soils, and science.