

USDA Forest Service Student Trainee – Timber Sale Preparation

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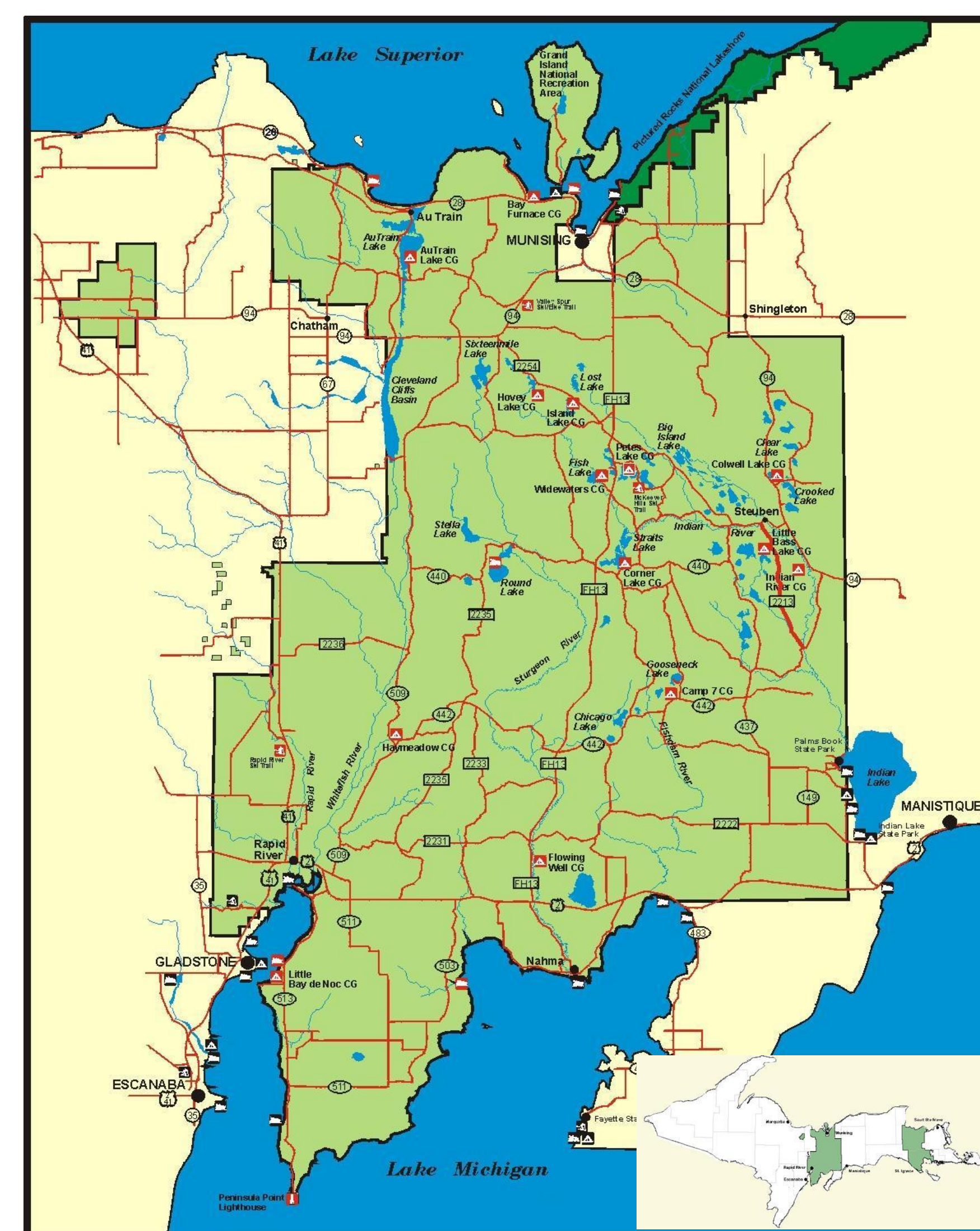


Background:

For my internship this summer, I worked as a Timber Sale Preparation Student Trainee for the USDA Forest Service on the West Zone of the Hiawatha National Forest. I was working out of the Rapid River / Manistique Ranger District Office located in Rapid River of Michigan's Upper Peninsula. The Forest Service is responsible for caring for our nation's vast National Forest System. The Forest Service's motto is "Caring for the land and serving people," and I was blessed with an opportunity to fulfill this motto while improving my timber management knowledge.



Walking behind my coworkers after a day of marking timber to be cut in a red pine (*Pinus resinosa*) plantation



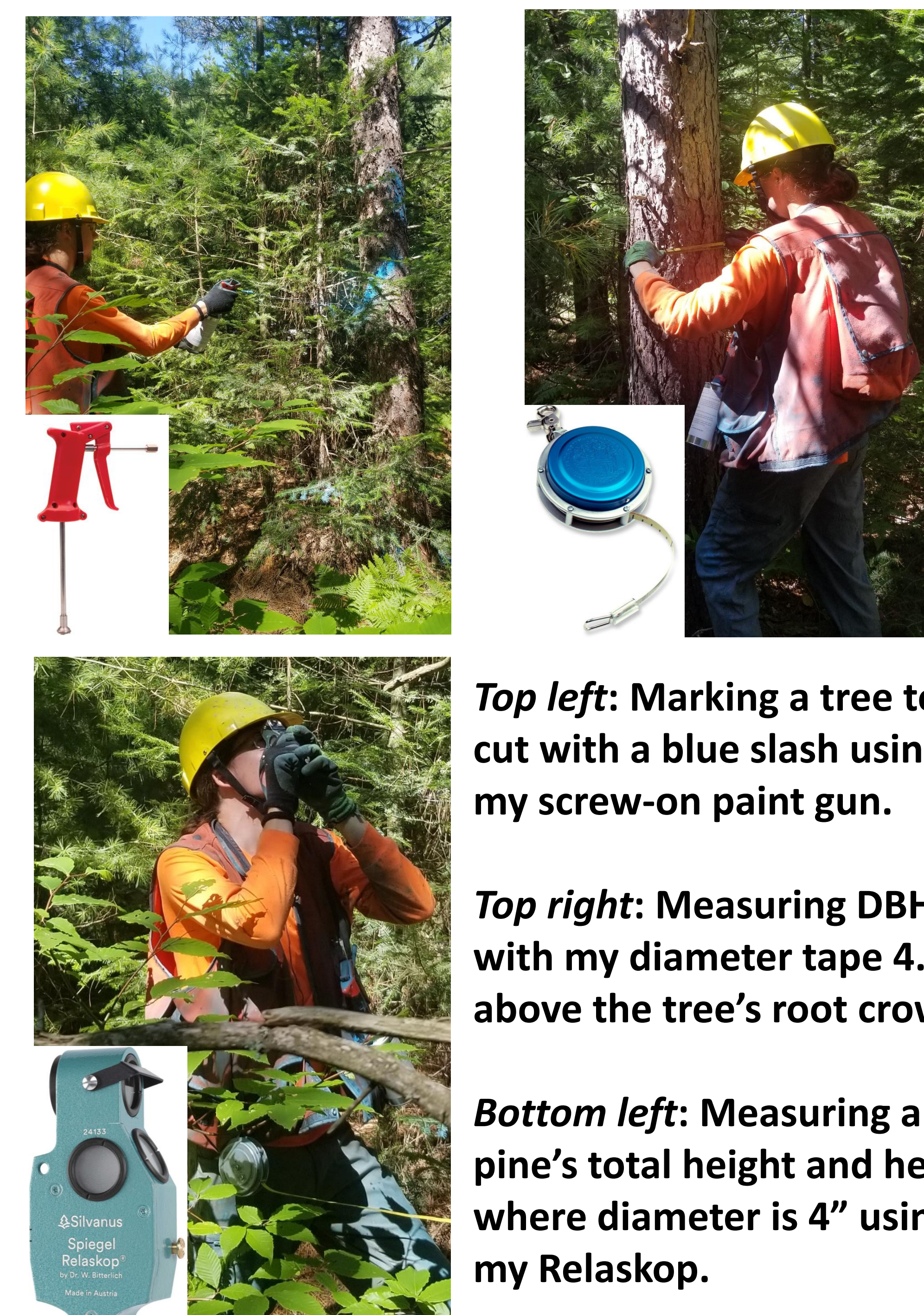
Map of the West Zone of the Hiawatha. Rapid River is located just north of the peninsula that extends south.

Getting the Job:

I was fortunate enough to hear about the application deadline for the job I got through networking. Before hearing about the job deadline, I was checking USAjobs.gov multiple times a week. This was the best way to make sure that I did not miss any application windows. Applying to jobs can be a tedious process, but it is well worth it. Another important factor to getting the job was being prepared for interviews over the phone and having a neat and complete resume. My advice to anyone considering applying to the Forest Service is to be sure you do *everything* correctly on USAjobs.gov while applying and to apply as early as possible!

A Day in the Life:

My primary duty over the summer was to mark timber in preparation for a future timber sale. This involved following prescriptions that were created specifically for each unique sale unit. The instructions included information about which trees should have priority in being cut (damaged, dying, etc.) which species to target and leave behind, and the residual basal area to be left behind. Depending on the prescription for a given unit, I would be either instructed to mark trees to be cut with a slash of blue paint or mark trees to leave behind with a band of orange paint.



Top left: Marking a tree to be cut with a blue slash using my screw-on paint gun.

Top right: Measuring DBH with my diameter tape 4.5' above the tree's root crown.

Bottom left: Measuring a red pine's total height and height where diameter is 4" using my Relaskop.

Whenever trees were marked to be cut, a mental tally of every tree and its product class had to be remembered and periodically reported to the teammate with the field computer. Occasionally, the computer would select a tree to be measured. Diameter at breast height, defect, species, and various heights, were recorded for every tree selected.

Reflection:

This summer was an amazing experience for me. I learned and sharpened many skills that are basics of forestry. This internship showed me what it is like to work as a forester under the government, and I learned that working for the USDA is something I wholeheartedly enjoy. I will return to work in Rapid River the following 2 summers under the Pathways program, and I can not wait! For anyone interested in an experience like this, my advice is to apply right away, and not be afraid of ending up far from home. Also be sure to look into other agencies who hire forest professionals, such as the BLM.



Some of the breathtaking views from the beautiful forest I got to work in every day!

