

Restoration Intern at Glacier NP, Summer 2007

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When you think of Glacier National Park you think of grizzly bears and of course glaciers. But due to different environmental factors that mankind has imposed on our earth, we now face a new Glacier with diminishing glaciers and grizzly bears being forced into different areas in search of food. One way of combating human impact on our National parks is a vegetation crew focused on keeping our park full of native plants, instead of human scares. This is a very important and coveted job that requires knowledge of native plants and the environment in which they live. Along with these skills one should enjoy the outdoors and not be afraid of getting dirty. These are just a few of the perks that come with getting a job with a re-vegetation job in Glacier National Park.

This last summer I had the privilege of working with the re-vegetation crew in Glacier National Park. With the hundreds of miles in Glacier humans can have a large impact on the park. Visitors need places to stay when they visit the park. These backcountry campgrounds are a vital part of Glacier National Park. Without these visitors wouldn't be able to see the beautiful Belly River Valley or the few glaciers that still exist. Over time these campgrounds expand and vegetation is wiped out throughout the campgrounds. To keep these campgrounds from becoming one giant tent pad, re-vegetation crews monitor and affix boundaries for tent pads. These pads are supposed to

keep backcountry visitors from leaving the designated area for camping. But we all know that some people need that little extra room, so they move a pad here and there, and before you know it you have a living tent pad growing and expanding in all directions. By re-vegetation crews monitoring all the backcountry campgrounds Glacier National Park has a good record of how the campground looked when they were built. The crews keep records of what is growing from the ground up, so they know what is there. This is important because you don't want plants growing there that were not originally growing in that area. This also helps keep invasive plants from establishing in these campgrounds. Monitoring also involves measuring the size of the tent pads and sometimes putting up logs for boundaries. The tent pads are not supposed to get over a certain size. This is where putting up boundaries helps keep the pads the recommended size. We also had to do some important planting in the new transit center. We took the previously salvaged plants and returned them to their home, while planting nursery stock as well. When working in Glacier National Park the re-vegetation crew does more than plant native plants, they help all over the park. I got the opportunity to work with the nursery staff. What a great bunch of people. One of the main jobs I did while I worked with the nursery was collect native plant seeds. This is a very important job because growing your own nursery stock helps keep the native plants vigorous and healthy. By collecting seeds in an area where plants are adapted to growing, you have a better chance of survival when out planting in that area. I really enjoyed collecting seeds with the nursery staff and definitely gained more knowledge about collecting seeds. One of my most memorable moments collecting seeds happened up in Canada. We were out collecting grass seeds on a grassy mountainside. John and I were up on the mountainside a little

higher than the others. In the middle of collecting seeds I stopped to take in the view when I noticed a bear on the other side of the mountain. The bear was about a mile away when it stood up and looked in our direction. I think the bear could smell us and was checking us out. The bear then proceeded to run over the hill with ease. I think it was the coolest thing to see a bear in its natural environment. Collecting native plant seeds is very important in the ever-changing world of plants and their environment. It is also a good way to see Glacier National Park while learning about native plants. Another benefit from working with the nursery is the scientific presentations we were able to attend. I especially liked the presentations done about the park. I also benefited from the fantastic work Joe Scianna and Peter Lesica have done with native plants. Joe came up to Glacier and talked to us about propagation techniques, proper ways of planting, and different nursery techniques. Peter also came up and gave us a course in identifying native plants and grasses. I really enjoyed the trip to East Glacier where we took our classroom knowledge and used it in the field. It was all very educational. I also took some very important first aid classes that will without any doubt help me down the road. I also did a little teaching myself. I taught the MCC crew how to play Salish and Kootenai stick game, which I really enjoyed.

This summer wasn't all about work; it was about gaining knowledge through hands on experiences that I will be able to use throughout my life. I am able to take what I learned in Glacier National Park and apply it to my own schoolwork. I'm also using this newly acquired knowledge to help out our Native Plant Methods class. Working in Glacier National Park has taught me leadership as well as organizational skills. One benefit that shouldn't be overlooked is the great people that work in the park. They make

the work environment a great place to be. My roommates, crew, and nursery folks were awesome people to work and hang out with. I have made some great friends here.

My favorite place in Glacier National Park had to be the Belly River. The view of the Belly River Cabin with Chief Mountain in the background is breathtaking. There are a number of clear lakes with beautiful waterfalls along the Belly River trail.



Gross Venture Falls

Belly River Cabin

I would have to say that the Belly River trip was the best part about my work experiences. That is not to say I didn't enjoy any of the other trips or experiences. I got to taste at least 8 different berries on the many different trips I took. My favorite was the currant. I got the opportunity to travel to Canada and see Waterton Lakes National Park. What an awesome place, overly priced products with a great view. Finally I had the cold, but exciting experience of swimming in Glaciers' water.

When I tell people I worked in Glacier National Park they tell me I'm lucky. I say yes I'm lucky, but I don't think that I would call it work because look at where I have to work and spend my off time. I would call it an educational, fun, and relaxing experience. I don't think I would change a thing. I have gained new tools I can use throughout my life. If given the opportunity to work in Glacier again I would gladly

accept the offer. I would like to thank Joyce Lapp and Matt Whithed for giving me this educational opportunity to work in Glacier National Park.