Current Students
As always, our Environmental Science students are busy with internships, research projects, and other cool things. Here, Rob Larose talks about his summer plans....

Sea to Shining Sea Ride
by Rob Larose

During the spring 2012 semester, I decided to apply as an intern to a unique non-profit organization called World Team Sports. World Team Sports is an organization which grants U.S. citizens, disabled and non-disabled, the opportunity to accomplish goals which are “beyond what is thought possible”. One of the organizations largest journeys is the Sea to Shining Sea Ride, which is an incredible trek across the United States on road bicycles.

The most astonishing part of this ride is that the participants are disabled U.S. veterans. Twenty veterans have been chosen via application to show the world that despite their disabilities, there are no boundaries and nothing can hold them back from the things they put their hearts into. I have been granted the opportunity to aid these veterans in such a feat that even able-bodied people would have trouble completing. My enthusiasm for this journey is incredible, and I look forward to representing Westfield State University on this ride across the United States. The 3,500 mile ride starts on Memorial Day (5/28/12) in San Francisco, California and ends on July 28, 2012 in Virginia Beach, Virginia. Please see the link below for further information on this event and upcoming events by World Team Sports.
http://worldteamsports.org/
"FOCUS on ALUMNI – Congratulations Graduates”
2012 Graduates & Kenneth Smith (2007)

Congratulations 2012 Graduates

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Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life...

Confucius

Kenneth Smith (2007)

Kenneth told us that after graduating he was able to use the skills that he acquired in his Environmental Science, as well as Biology classes, to get a job at the Connecticut Valley Biological Supply Company. While there he was able to work in the microbiology department and decided that he wanted to enter that field. Kenneth was accepted at Eastern New Mexico University and in 2010 he graduated with a master’s in Biology with an emphasis in microbiology. Immediately after, he entered the PhD program at the University of Vermont in the Department of Microbiology and Molecular Genetics.

Since graduating from Westfield State, Kenneth has published five papers in peer reviewed journals and has also been given the opportunity to teach. Kenneth told us that the skills he gained from his time at Westfield State University really prepared him for getting a job and subsequently getting into graduate school, not to mention getting paid to go to school!

For additional information about the Environmental Science Department please visit our website at:
www.westfield.ma.edu/prospective-students/academics/environmental-science
"FOCUS on ALUMNI - What are they doing now?"
Jenna Flynn (2008) and Nicole Leja (2011)

Jenna Flynn (2008)

Jenna works as an Environmental Specialist with a contracting company (Integrated Statistics) for a federal resource agency, to protect and conserve fish habitat. This includes reviewing in-water projects that are proposed, funded or permitted by other federal agencies as well as providing advisory conservation recommendations to minimize impacts to important fish habitats (salt marsh, mudflats, submerged aquatic vegetation, shallow spawning areas, etc).

In the photo Jenna is aboard the Army Corps' dredge vessel, the Currituck, in June 2010. Jenna told us that she went to observe the navigation dredging operations, since she typically reviews this type of work on paper. Contractors in a similar position with this company may make between $47,000 to $57,000 a year, plus benefits.

Photo: Jenna is observing the navigation dredging operation, aboard the Army Corp's dredge vessel, the Currituck.

Nicole Leja (2011)

Nicole is a Laboratory Director for an environmental laboratory. Nicole works on method development, ensuring the laboratory meets all state and EPA regulatory limits for drinking water, groundwater and soil protection. In addition, she manages the staff in the operational areas, talks to clients to answer technical questions and validates data before it is released to clients.

Nicole started working in the laboratory in 1997 in an entry-level position and has worked her way up, by accepting every opportunity that was offered to her. Nicole told us that if a student is interested in a management position in this field, she recommends that they get at least thirty chemistry credits.

Nicole shared with us the salary range for similar positions in our geographic area is $65,000 to $85,000 per year.
"FOCUS on ALUMNI - What are they doing now?"
Jordan Gibbons (2010) and Megan Scholl (2011)

**Jordan Gibbons (2010)**

Jordan works for the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station's Invasive Aquatic Plant Program as a Research Technician in New Haven, CT. During the summer months Jordan leads vegetative surveys of the State’s lakes and ponds. Jordan also conducts experiments regarding aquatic plant communities and invasive plant control measures. She is currently involved in an experiment of early detection and rapid response using hand pulling of the invasive Fanwort in Bashan Lake, East Haddam, CT.

In the same lake, she is starting an experiment this summer using deep water benthic barriers to control variable water milfoil. During the winter months, Jordan uses GIS to digitize the summer's vegetative surveys and also write reports and papers regarding the experiments.

Starting salary is $40,000+
Internships and summer work are available. More information can be found at [www.ct.gov/caes](http://www.ct.gov/caes)

**Megan Scholl (2011)**

Megan graduated with a double major in Environmental Science and Regional Planning with a minor in Geographic Information Systems. She is working for the Nashville Civic Design Center in Nashville Tennessee. Megan is currently working on a new sports park, just over the Cumberland River next to the Titans football stadium. The park will be located right on the river, so Megan hopes to incorporate water sports such as canoeing, kayaking, and even water skiing in the new park.

Megan shared with us that the NCDC has invited the public to submit their designs and the best design will be used to develop the new park.
Faculty Members

Faculty members Dr. Carsten Braun and Dr. Tim Parshall have been busy doing research abroad and traveling...

2011 - 2012 was definitely an exciting year for Dr. Braun! Here’s his report:

I climbed Mount Kilimanjaro as part of a research expedition in September/October 2011. That was my fourth trip to the summit glaciers, but the first one where I used social media (Facebook and Twitter) to teach students while climbing the mountain. We even had three live conference calls with my Introduction to Physical Geography students! Unfortunately, the glaciers on Kilimanjaro are shrinking fast and I can easily see the changes over the last 10 years that I have been working up there.

This summer promises to be fun and productive. I will return to the Quelccaya Ice Cap in Peru for the sixth time as part of an ongoing research project with scientists from UMass Amherst. We are starting a new project using high-precision GPS surveying to measure the changing shape of the ice cap since the early 1980s. Next stop is Yellowstone National Park for a 5-day seminar on public land management and civic engagement (with optional wolf and bear watching!) before a 2-week road trip to Glacier National Park, Mount Rainier, Mount Hood, and many places in-between. I am also very excited for our Fall 2012 Web GIS @ WSU course and I will spend some time towards the end of summer organizing the overall course project and resources we need.

Dr. Parshall was on sabbatical during the 2012 spring semester and spent six weeks in Costa Rica working on restoration of tropical forests in Monteverde. He worked closely with Debra Hamilton who heads the Costa Rican Conservation Foundation, an organization who has purchased land for reforestation and provided over 120,000 native tree seedlings to local landowners.

On this research trip, Dr. Parshall helped to document the successes of their reforestation efforts by measuring nearly 2000 tree seedlings that have been planted over the past ten years. Basic information about the survival and growth rates of many trees in the tropics isn’t known, so the results will be helpful in making recommendations about how best to approach reforestation to support habitat restoration. Although Costa Rica has a very good record of forest preservation – nearly 25% of the land in Costa Rica has some level of protection -- most of the landscape on the Pacific side of Costa Rica is deforested and used for grazing land.

This means that the necessary habitats for birds, mammals, amphibians and other organisms are cut up into small, isolated fragments. Dr. Parshall leads a course to Costa Rica during the January Term where students get firsthand experience with the amazingly diverse ecosystems of the country and interact with world-class conservation biologists and naturalists.

Costa Rica fields undergoing restoration (left) and grazing (right)

Dr. Tim Parshall

Photo: Dr. Carsten Braun
New Faculty Member

We’re pleased to announce the addition of a new tenure track faculty member to the department this Fall, Dr. John McDonald.

John rose to the top of a nation-wide search coming to us from the US Fish and Wildlife Service in Hadley, MA, where he worked for 9 years in positions ranging from doing field work up to serving as Acting Division Chief. He also served as a fellow at Harvard Forest; worked for the Mass DEP; was a Wildlife Ecologist and Adjunct Professor at Southern Illinois University; and worked as a wildlife biologist for Mass Division of Fisheries and Wildlife for 5 years. John has an uncommonly wide range of wildlife experience including working with bears, deer, lynx, turkeys, grouse, moose, and other critters. John will be teaching Natural Resource Management, Wildlife Conservation and Management, and other courses. Welcome!!

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