



University of Idaho Offers a New Solution for IDL's Need for Qualified Firefighters and Foresters

By Dustin Miller

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Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) dual mission of financially supporting the endowment beneficiaries, such as public schools, and protecting 6.3 million acres of timber and rangelands from wildfire results in our agency offering Idahoans great employment opportunities to work in the outdoors.



Even as the fire season in Idaho winds down, wildfires across the west remain a staple of nightly news coverage during the summer months. The national wildland firefighter shortage, which includes both entry level and leadership positions, has resulted in a persistent need for Idaho and other states.

Firefighting is just one of many natural resource careers available at IDL. Forestry and forest management is another.

Using the latest technology, IDL foresters ensure our state and private forestlands remain sustainable for generations to come. We manage, harvest, plant and repeat. Our foresters support private forestland management by administering the Idaho Forest Practices Act and helping family timberland owners understand and implement solid forest management practices.

Sourcing seedlings for replanting remains challenging. In Idaho, we work with several nurseries that grow and nurture the seeds collected by our foresters. Our foresters also manage seed orchards that produce seed crops we use to regenerate forests after harvest operations and wildfires.

Like many businesses and industries, finding qualified people to fill our natural resource positions presents challenges. Recognizing people need relevant training to land great jobs, and industry needs highly qualified workers, the University of Idaho recently launched new associate degree pathways. These programs quickly prepare people to work in natural resources while also laying steppingstones for earning future bachelor's degrees.

The UI associate degree in Wildland Fuels & Fire Technology opens the door to become a wildland firefighter, fuels technician, or a fire dispatcher. The curriculum includes fuels measurement and assessment, fire behavior, and factors associated

with the start, spread, and management of wildfires and prescribed fires. This degree puts people on the road to leadership roles in fuels and fire management. IDL needs employees with these specialized skills.

The Forest Operations & Technology path invites students to learn real world skills in one of the nation's top forestry programs. Using state-of-the-art commercial harvesting equipment and technology, students help manage the university's 10,000-acre experimental working forest. The curriculum includes practices, techniques, and operations associated with traditional and advanced logging systems that support sustainable forest management. The degree jumpstarts a career in forestry by providing students with the skills and experience employers like IDL look for in new hires.

Those who wish to make an impact on reforestation and restoration can start a career in Forest Nursery Management & Technology. The focus of this associates degree is the propagation and production of trees, shrubs, and native plants using advanced and sustainable technologies. UI is one of only two universities nationwide that operates a forest nursery on a commercial scale, growing more than 400,000 seedlings a year for private companies and state and federal agencies. After completing the program, students are prepared to enter the nursery industry as technicians and managers and grow the seedlings we need for our continual reforestation operations.

A career in natural resources can be very rewarding and will play a part in keeping our forestlands healthy and sustainable for our kids and grandkids, and future generations to come. I encourage all who want a great job, in a great field to consider enrolling in these new programs at a great school, the University of Idaho. Then after graduation, I hope you'll apply for a job at a great state agency, the Idaho Department of Lands.

Learn more about the UI's new associate degree programs by visiting <https://www.uidaho.edu/cnr/undergraduate-majors>.

**Learn more about the UI's new
associate degree programs**



**Learn more about joining the
Idaho Department of Lands**

