

Forester

Manage whole forests: what gets cut, what gets planted, what gets protected. A four-year degree and a truck.

TYPICAL PAY

\$76,400

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$51k to \$110k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

4 to 5 years

after high school

DEMAND

Limited

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

National and state forests, timber companies, consulting firms, city...

How you get there

- 1 Finish high school** Grade 12
Biology, chemistry and math. Get outdoors on your own time, because interviewers ask what you have actually done in the woods.
- 2 Bachelor's degree in forestry** 4 years
Pick a program accredited by the Society of American Foresters. Federal hiring rules and several state licenses are written around those programs, so an unaccredited degree can quietly block you later.
- 3 Summer field session and seasonal work** Summers during the degree
Almost every forestry degree has a field camp. Spend the other summers as a seasonal technician for a state or federal agency. That is how nearly everyone gets hired.
- 4 First permanent job** Year 4 or 5
State forestry agency, the US Forest Service, a timber company or a consulting firm. Expect to start on inventory, marking timber and writing plans.
- 5 Certification or a state license** After a few years of experience
Earn the Certified Forester credential, or get licensed if you work in a state that requires it.

Pros and cons

- + You work outdoors in country most people only visit
- + Real decisions with consequences a century long
- + Government jobs come with a pension and loan forgiveness
- The field is not growing, so openings are limited and competitive
- The jobs are where the forests are, which usually means rural
- Heat, cold, ticks, brush, biting flies and steep ground

Optional boosts

Certified Forester. Wildland fire qualifications. Pesticide applicator license. Remote pilot certificate.

Good to know

A third of the country is forest

About 766 million acres of the United States is forest land, which is roughly a third of the country. More of it is standing now than a hundred years ago, because farms in the eastern states were abando...

Most American forest is privately owned

More than half of the forest land in the country belongs to private owners, a lot of it to families with a few dozen acres. That is why so many foresters work for consulting firms and timber companies rath...

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Foresters (19-1032.00)
Society of American Foresters
State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry
US Forest Service careers, United States Department of Agriculture

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in United States dollars, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics wage data and published pay scales. They vary by state, employer and experience. Tuition is for in-state students at public schools unless the card says otherwise. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/us/careers/forester>



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