

What is cool about working here? Why do you work here?

Both of these questions arrived on the same day on the display board at Foothills Park; since they are very similar I will answer them together.

I work here (Palo Alto open space) because it is the coolest job I can imagine.

Often, when I am out and about running errands on a Friday people ask me why or how I got the day off. I tell them I usually have Fridays and Saturdays off but have to work on Sundays. Most then tell me that's too bad, then I get to disagree.

I get to go to work where other people go to play. I spend eight hours a day (sometimes more in an emergency) five days a week enjoying Palo Alto open space. On any given day I may do any number of things from opening or closing the parks, cleaning restrooms, picnic areas or buildings, talking to groups of people at picnics or other gatherings, leading a hike, mending fences, clearing trails, driving a front end loader or 20,000 pound tractor, to emergency medicine, law enforcement or fire fighting.

In the last year, while at work, I have seen countless black tailed deer, many coyotes, bobcats, rattlesnakes, king snakes, gopher snakes, many hawks, owls and other birds of prey, songbirds, tarantula hawks (the biggest wasp in the area at almost two inches long) and had a cynipid wasp land on my hand (one of the smallest at about ¼ inch), I have walked through many fields of wildflowers and have been one of the first to hear streams flowing in the foothills.

I am privileged to be able to see many gorgeous sunrises and sunsets. I get to be outside in all manner of weather; sun (wear sunscreen), clouds (take off my flat hat – it's the weird looking one all rangers wear), hot (work in a t-shirt), cold (put on a fleece), windy (hold on to my flat hat), still (ahhhh calming), raining (ultra bright green raincoat on) or dry (make sure I have my fire gear).

I meet people from all over the world (literally) who have come to open space to experience all the myriad things here. They come to bird watch, walk, run, bike, hike, camp, canoe, kayak, windsurf, picnic, play Frisbee, fly a kite, fish, or just sit in the sun. Some are accomplished athletes; some have various disabilities. All come out to enjoy the spaces I take care of. Their enjoyment is my main measurement of how well I (and my coworkers) am doing my job.

It is said that variety is the spice of life; I have to add that variety is also the spice of work. I am seldom bored at work (sometimes meetings can be a drag, I would rather be outside), almost always have a story to tell my wife when I get home and never get home in a grumpy mood.

In short -- the coolest thing about working here is working here.

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