

Managing the masses

Managing a national recreation area with 2 million visitors each year poses special challenges.

From the sound of his title – Customer Service Department Manager – you might think Brian Beisel (B.S. Forest Science 1981) sits behind his desk fielding complaints all day. In reality, his responsibilities at Land Between the Lakes (LBL) National Recreation Area in western Kentucky include many hands-on activities related to recreation engineering, environmental education, and managing heritage resources. He and his Forest Service employees are responsible for directing educational programs, planning facility maintenance, setting performance standards for on-site contractors,

contract administration, as well as addressing customer complaints. “My department’s employees are responsible for the front-line contact with approximately 2 million visitors per year,” says Brian. That might be why when asked what advice he would offer current FE&M students, he strongly recommends they polish up their communication and interpersonal skills. In a job such as his, Brian says, these skills are essential to success on the job. He also says that internships provide a great avenue for students to develop these skills as well as make important contacts in their professional field.

Internships provide a way for students to demonstrate their skills to potential employers. “It is all about relationships,” says Brian. “Nature is forgiving, people are not.” Prior to working at LBL, Brian served at several National Forests in Wisconsin, in South Carolina, and elsewhere.



Brian Beisel (far right, no hat) briefs a crew prior to a controlled burn of the elk and bison prairie at Land Between the Lakes National Recreation Area.