

# ‘Dirt forester’ practices hands-on forest management

*Bayfield County’s forest land is the “office” where Mike Amman handles a variety of forest management chores.*

**M**ike Amman (B.S. 2001) is a Forester with the Bayfield County Forestry Department. Bayfield County borders Lake Superior in northern Wisconsin and encompasses about 170,000 acres of “working” forests where timber production is a high priority along with recreation and wildlife management. Mike has worked as a county forester for the past four and a half years, one and a half years in Burnett County prior to taking his current position. So Mike is speaking from experience when he says positions such as his are an excellent place to be a “dirt forester.” By that he means you spend a lot of time in the woods

applying what you learned in school—planting trees, carrying out prescribed burns, running property lines, and setting up and administering timber sales. “County forests are usually run with only a few people, so you are exposed to the full spectrum of forest management activities,” says Mike. “My main duty is setting up timber sales. Last year I set up around 1,000 acres, which included a wide variety of timber types—jack pine, aspen, scrub oak, red oak, north-



*Mike Amman, above, is at work in his “office.” Mike estimates that he spends four of every five days in the field.*

ern hardwood, red pine, and white birch.” Mike estimates that he spends about four days a week working in the field setting up sales. He also conducts some recreation planning and development and is currently working on a new cross country ski trail on county forest land. In his prior position with Burnett County, he was the county’s snowmobile and ATV coordinator and also dealt with the county parks. So in addition to utilizing forest management principles, he also uses many concepts covered in his recreation courses.

Mike echoes the sentiments of many of our other graduates in

stressing the importance of good summer work experience like internships. “Internships are a good way to meet people and experiment with a certain field without committing more than a few months of your life and at the same time learn valuable field skills,” says Mike. “When you graduate and apply for a job, you will learn that everyone applying has a forestry degree. What separates the top candidates from the rest is their work experience.”