

A job in paradise

Things couldn't get much better for a fishing forester working in a wilderness area.

As Wisconsin DNR Forester and Property Manager for the Willow Flowage Scenic Waters Area, Tom Shockley (B.S. 1996, M.S. 1998) says he just might have “the best job ever conceived in the history of employment.” The Willow Flowage, located in northern Wisconsin near Woodruff, includes over 16,000 acres of state-owned property that consists of more than 6,400 acres of open water as well as swamps, bogs, and forest. The area is an excellent place to view wildlife and the waters provide outstanding fishing opportunities.

“I’m responsible for all of the forestry related work on the Willow Flowage,” says Tom. That includes setting up timber sales, reconnaissance updates, tree planting, prescribed burning, site preparation, and any other activities related to forest management. He also has law enforcement responsibilities, supervises employees, and handles various office duties related to his job, such as budget management, equipment purchases, inventories, and general office management chores. “I enjoy the work location, the undeveloped nature of the property, the variety of my job duties, and the high quality of my co-workers,” says Tom.

Tom looks back on his time at UW-Madison and



Tom Shockley carefully removes a hook from a trout in this catch-and-release photo.

says his overall experience here—the classes, field trips, professors, and other students—all helped prepare him for his current job challenges. With the benefit of hindsight, he says job shadowing is something he highly recommends to today’s students. “Get out in the field and meet more foresters or people working in forestry-related professions. Ask them to set up a day when you can tag along and observe what they do. Or volunteer to help for a day. If you can find your dream job, you’ll have a goal to set your sights on and it will be easier to focus on achieving that goal,” advises Tom. Would that include sharing the location of secret fishing holes?