



Water Resource Planner

Job Description

A Water Resource Planner monitors water supply, monitors droughts, creates drought response plans, and helps coordinate state climate plans with other environmental resource planners. Water Resource Planners also work on crafting policy, engaging with the public, and serving on resource management committees at the state and federal level. This position serves as an important connection between climatologists, governments, the agricultural industry, and the general population.

Salary

Entry — \$41,000
Middle — \$81,000
Top — \$105,000+

Core Tasks

- Develop strategies for watershed operations to meet water supply and conservation goals
- Implement soil or water management techniques, such as nutrient management, erosion control, buffers, or filter strips
- Provide consultation to management, interstate, interagency and intra-agency stakeholder and work partners
- Analyze, interpret, and monitor internal and external policies, procedures, and regulations

Workplace / Environment

- **Work hours**
Approx. 40 hours/week
(At key milestones overtime work may be required to meet deadlines)
- **Environment**
Work typically includes a mix of time spent in the office and in the field **monitoring watersheds** and **water resources equipment**
- **Travel**
Travel around the state and potentially the country. At the highest level, resource planners can expect to travel worldwide

Education / Prerequisites

Education Level

Bachelor's degree in public administration, geology, natural resources, geology, land use, landscape architecture, or another environmental field. Masters degree in similar concentrations is encouraged.

Licensing

Driver's license required

Pre-Job Preparation

Previous professional experience in a similar field is typically required. Involvement in any internships, clubs, or advisory groups related to resource management will help.

Experience

Soft Skills

- Communication and presentation
- Community engagement
- Problem solving
- Reading comprehension
- Verbal and written communication

Technical Skills

- Report and technical writing
- Data compilation
- Knowledge of water systems, water rights, and climate reports
- Ability to interpret water laws and regulations



Career Path: Jeff Marti

About Me

Water Resource Planner with at the
Washington State Department of Ecology

B.S. Journalism and Mass Communication,
Environmental Studies Program

Masters of Environmental Studies

High School Life

"I had an inkling in high school that I wanted to work in the environmental field. I was very interested in **biology and chemistry**, I was in the **Outdoor Adventure Club**, and growing up my dad would take my brother and I on annual backpacking trips out to Wyoming and Montana. The environment was an **important value** for me."



College Choices



"In college, I knew I wanted to **think and write about environmental issues**. By the time I graduated college, I was gung-ho on working in an environmental occupation. I would read environmental writers as an undergrad and in grad school as well. I was a **voracious reader** of environmental writers, things like **natural history** and **environmental advocacy**."

"Internships are a really **valuable kind of testing** — it's taking organizations for a test run. While I was in grad school at Evergreen, I had a couple **internships** at the Department of Ecology. Those gave me a trial run at what it would be like to work for a **state agency**."

Into the Real World

"I think the environmental field by its nature demands a **liberal education**, because the issues cross over so many disciplines. I like the **interdisciplinary nature** of environmental problems; it's economics, it's anthropology, it's law, biology. It's the physical world and the social world trying to get along, and doing that in the context of a political system is so intriguing and challenging, not boring."

"For my first eight to ten years I worked on reviewing **hydropower projects**, hydropower licensing, which was interesting. I also dealt with **instream flows** for fisheries, recreation, and aesthetics. That's why I've been at the Department of Ecology for **31 years**. I can be part of trying to **solve the problems** that come up over **managing a shared resource** — it's very interesting and it's very fulfilling."

About My Job

"I get to work on really interesting problems. A lot of water issues pose complicated questions — the kinds of issues that involve a mixture of science, law, history, and culture. Water crosses all those boundaries."

Pros

- "Another part I like about my job is that I get to **work with people outside the agency**, whether they be consultants, researchers, or landowners, or work for a water or power utility. There's a lot of talent out there and a lot of perspective. I always benefit from that and learn a lot, and I've never felt like I'm going stale in terms of my job. There's **always so much to learn.**"

Fieldwork

- "Most of my fieldwork was in my younger days, but I can still remember the **thrill of being paid to spend a day along a river**. As you age in an agency, you tend to spend more time wearing business casual and less time wearing jeans. But there are certainly folks who have jobs where they **continue to get muddy** until the week they retire."

Cons

- "It can be cumbersome, it can be bureaucratic. Progress can be slow, when coming. Change can be very slow when coming. Because we're a public agency, we answer to the public — and the **public is not of one mind**. So you're doing your best to reconcile a **number of perspectives.**"

Office Work

- "Lots of environmental work is indoor work. You're paid to understand and synthesize, so that means lots of **reading** and **writing** and **summarizing**. I'm a water resources planner in the Water Resources program of the Department of Ecology. I work primarily on **water supply, monitoring, drought planning, drought response, climate change**, and other issues."

Skills

- "An enduring skill is **communication**. The ability to communicate never gets old. It's the indispensable skill, whether you're a specialist or generalist."
- "You've got to be **versatile** because as you go through your career, the questions will change, and so will the answers, and the tools you use to provide those answers. So be a **lifelong learner**."

Education/Experience

- "**Internships** are a good way to get in the door. My first internship was actually working in shorelines on coastal zone management, where I was the associate editor of a newsletter that was put out called **Coastal Currents**. That was a lot of fun. That internship was writing articles about interesting developments in the world of shoreline management.
- "I was just plugging away on my thesis and this **job opportunity** came up in water resources to work on a hydropower and resource development protection plan. I looked at that and thought it looked interesting because it dealt with rivers. **Real, tangible things**, beautiful places — more so than gravel parking lots with pipes in them. So I interviewed for that and got the job, and that became **permanent employment**."

The Future of **Water Resources Planning**

"There are a vast range of jobs"

"There are a vast range of jobs which either deal directly or indirectly with environmental issues. The issues are complex and diverse, so they **require a diverse population** of people as well. Not only folks like myself with broad, general educations, but also folks with **special superpowers** in things like hydrology or chemistry. Whatever your specialization, you've got to understand that you'll be working with and for people of other backgrounds as well."