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Dear King County,

My forestry studies began at the University of Washington when I enrolled in forest measurements classes and found myself enthralled in the work of capturing and analyzing forest data. I eagerly took on any analysis or data management roles in the classes and additional opportunities in working with King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks to develop an inventory of recently acquired forestland and create forest management plans. I also began using the Forest Vegetation Simulator to project management alternatives, thus beginning my interest in growth and yield projections.

While an undergraduate, I completed an internship with a forest management company in Olympia and had the opportunity to meet private forestland landowners from across the state from the Olympic Peninsula to the eastern slopes of the Cascades. This experience provided me with a concentrated dose of practical forestry knowledge in forest inventory, timber harvesting and in the regional systems that Washington forestry exists within. More specifically, I became more knowledgeable in Washington’s Forest Practices Rules, forest product markets, cost share programs and land taxation programs.

My final year at UW had me working on a research project for the Stand Management Cooperative involving the effects of ungulate herbivory on small tree growth. This research opened up my eyes to the world of forest science research and helped me to realize that I had a lot more to learn. It became apparent that a master’s program would be ideal for gaining the statistical background required for a deeper understanding of forest growth.

As a current graduate student research assistant with the University of Montana’s Inland Northwest Growth and Yield Cooperative (INGY), I have led field crews and gained experience in managing a very large database. I have presented my research at both the Society of American Foresters National Convention and at the INGY technical meeting. Presenting to a diverse group of cooperative members (state, federal, tribal, industrial) at conferences and communicating my research through my thesis has challenged me to effectively communicate complex forestry research.

Although I have focused on forest growth modelling in my graduate research, I have continued to develop my applied forestry skills by assisting in writing a forest management plan for University of Montana forestland, assisting in teaching a technical forestry skills course and staying apprised of the latest in applied forest management research. My teaching experience also includes training classes of undergraduate students in the basic use of the Forest Vegetation Simulator, training field crews and tutoring in statistics.

Assisting private forest landowners has been a great interest of mine since early on in my studies of forestry. I appreciate the collaborative, challenging and nuanced work that is involved in achieving the often multiple objectives of forest management. My research experience and forestry skills, in combination with forestry experience in King County, provides a set of skills that could be put to excellent use in serving the private landowners of King County.

Sincerely,

Colin Patrick Kirkmire