My NASA Data - STEM Career Connections

Meet Dr. Amanda West, Postdoctoral Fellow

**Job Title**

Postdoctoral Fellow

**Bio**

Dr. West is former NASA DEVELOP National Program participant, Center Lead, and current mentor to the program. She is currently a Postdoctoral Fellow in ecology.

**How did you discover your passion for Earth Science?**

As a child, I was always very curious about the Earth and how organisms interact. Earth Science has been an intrinsic passion for me for as long as I can remember, therefore it is hard to pinpoint a
discovery moment.

**Where do you work and do you remember what it was like on your first day of work?**
I am currently employed as a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Natural Resource Ecology Laboratory, Colorado State University. On my first day of work, I felt astounded that I was no longer a student and realized that I was truly following my passion for research and teaching.

**What do you enjoy most about what you do?**
I enjoy the diversity of research and teaching projects that I am involved in. It is never monotonous!

**What inspired you to work in this field?**
My passion for observing and increasing our understanding of the Earth and promoting conservation.

**What are some of the most important lessons you have learned in your life?**
Never take time for granted – Gandhi is quoted: “Live as if you were to die tomorrow, learn as if you were to live forever”. Always be true to yourself. Embrace and share gratitude.

**What do you consider your greatest accomplishment?**
Earning a Ph.D. in Ecology.

**What was the most difficult moment of your career? What did you learn?**
During a former career, I had to follow a regulation that did not agree with my values. From this experience, I learned that it is important to always consider the perspective of other interested parties despite what I consider fair and rational.

**Who has been the biggest influence on your life, and what lessons did they teach you?**
My father, who told me to be true to myself and never let anyone convince me otherwise.

**How has your career been different than what you’d imagined?**
My current career falls more in line with what I imagined when I started graduate school. A former career that I had between my MS and Ph.D. programs was not what I imagined or desired (and this led to my pursuit of a Ph.D.).

**Did you have to overcome any gender barriers in your career?**
Yes; a couple of examples in a former career were the notions that I could not conduct the same type of fieldwork as male colleagues or drive a truck pulling a trailer or boat (these were quickly disproven by my actions!). I have also had to overcome name-calling related to gender both in and out of work, which I addressed promptly by telling each respective individual that this behavior is inappropriate.

**What does your future hold?**
I want to continue research and teaching in remote sensing and geospatial modeling, to promote conservation of natural resources.

**What one piece of advice would you like to pass on to the next generation?**
Pursue your passion, and trust what follows.