

USU Forestry Program Experiencing an Upward Trend

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Forest Ecology & Management: Class of 2023

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Over the last 90+ years since USU added a degree in Forestry, a total of 962 students have graduated with Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctorate degrees. The first three students graduated with BS degrees in Forestry in 1931. In May of 2023, 12 more students joined those ranks.

During 1944 - 1948, no students graduated with degrees in Forestry. This trend correlates with WWII, during which time most able-bodied young men served in the military. After WWII, the need for forest management increased as demand for housing increased, and USU graduate numbers rose to meet that need.

The peak of Forestry degrees happened in 1978, when 40 students graduated with Bachelor's degrees, and 5 students graduated with Master's degrees. By this time, the Environmental movement was in full swing, with the creation of the Environmental Protection Act (EPA) in 1970 and the Clean Water Act passing in 1972. Students

were undoubtedly motivated to be involved in the changes happening in forestry.

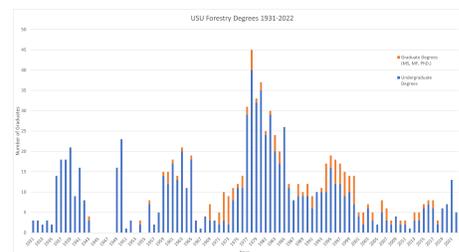
Graduation numbers reached a decades-long low in 2012, when only a single undergraduate student finished a forestry degree. Since then, the degree has been getting more attention and graduation numbers seem to be trending upwards.

While the number of students graduating from USU forestry programs is lower today than 50 years ago, there are more forestry jobs available now than possibly ever before. In just the last six months (December 2022 – June 2023), the Quinney College of Natural Resources has sent out over 60 job opportunity emails, most of which contain several job openings for current students and recent graduates.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 granted the US Forest Service \$5.5 billion (2). The REPLANT Act from the same year was projected to add 49,000 new jobs to the market across the country (3). This created a large demand for qualified and capable foresters to join their ranks.

In a recent article in [Utah State TODAY](#), Lael Gilbert describes the rise in forestry jobs in the West. The Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest advertised 20 permanent positions and 60 seasonal positions for the 2023 season.

This may be the best time in 50 years to be a young forester entering the career field. The demand for qualified foresters far exceeds the supply.



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