



An environmental educator is like a translator. We work with scientists to understand the natural world, and then we put scientific concepts into everyday language so people can better understand.

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Forest Service  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



## Heidi McAllister Environmental Educator

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Career Pathways



**What advice do you have for students interested in your job?** Never stop asking questions. Always stop for interesting things and ideas. Stubbornly let your creativity run away with you. Relentlessly make time for fun. Let your mind wander. Always bring your best self.

**What is an example of a question you have tried to answer in your job?** What is the best way to describe a scientific concept so that everyone can understand? For example: Atoms as building blocks are like colors. Blue is blue. Red is red. But mix them together and you get purple! Something completely new and different, but made up of blue and red.

**What is an example of technology or equipment that you use in your work?** I use an inflatable globe. I asked an auditorium of scientists to name natural resources. With each resource I blew into the globe until it was full. Then I squeezed the globe as I talked about actions, like not caring for or using up resources. The shriveled globe showed we need to care for the planet.

**What has been your most exciting project?** For me, the best days are always outside with a group of kids exploring the environment and getting dirty. Every time I see the wonder in a face learning something new and the joy of exploring and asking and answering questions, I ask myself, "They really pay me for this?"

**When did you know this career would be a good fit for you?** When I was in college, they told me I had to choose my career. I loved science, I loved the outdoors, and I couldn't imagine my life without kids. Environmental education brought those three things together in one job. I knew that was the place for me.

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