



# BOOTS IN THE FOREST

*In a series of articles, the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest is recognizing employees for the important work they do and highlighting a variety of U.S. Forest Service careers.*

## Boyd Hatch, Natural Resource Officer and Supervisory Rangeland Management Specialist Santa Rosa Ranger District

They say the apple does not fall far from the tree, and that is definitely true for Boyd Hatch! He grew up in Cedar City, Utah, on a ranch where his family grew wheat, oats, and alfalfa hay and raised sheep and cattle. They held a permit to graze their sheep on National Forest System lands.

Today, Boyd remains true to his roots, helping to manage rangeland similar to the ranch he grew up on. In his role as a Natural Resource Officer and Supervisory Rangeland Management Specialist for the Santa Rosa Ranger District in Winnemucca, Nevada, he works with ranchers and oversees their grazing permits. “My background helps me relate to the ranchers I work with today,” said Boyd.

Boyd is obviously a great match for his job, so it may come as a surprise that he almost took a different career path! He studied engineering in college, intending to minor in agriculture, but he found that he enjoyed his agriculture classes more. He realized that was his true calling and changed his focus.

After that, Boyd never looked back. He began seasonal work consolidating and analyzing data for six range crews on the Fishlake and Dixie National Forests in Utah while still in school. Later, he continued working for the Fishlake National Forest as a Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) intern (now known as the Pathways Program), where he administered permits for seven grazing allotments and used geographical information



system (GIS) to inventory range infrastructure such as troughs, fences, and corrals.

“The internship was a fun job,” said Boyd. “I was surrounded by mountains and glacier lakes. I got to ride through remote areas where no one had been in years. It was a great experience for a student and also helped pay for tuition.”

Boyd graduated from Utah State University in Logan, Utah, with a bachelor’s degree in rangeland management in 2002. Through his internship, he converted to a permanent position on the Fillmore Ranger District of the Fishlake National Forest and continued the work he had started. Soon he added fuels management to his duties, serving on an interagency fire crew.

In 2006, Boyd had the opportunity to come to northern Nevada for a short-term supervisory assignment on the Santa Rosa Ranger District and eventually the position became permanent. “Though I had no prior training in management, I was lucky to have a good district ranger who mentored me,” he said. It is a big job with a dozen employees to manage, including range technicians and a wildfire engine and seasonal invasive weeds crews.



“I’m really proud of our weed program,” said Boyd. “We treated several thousand acres and totally eradicated toad flax on our district. We even located and identified a new invasive weed species. It was one of my most memorable experiences because noxious weeds compete with native plants for space and nutrients. They reduce available forage for grazing wildlife and domestic animals and can even poison them.”

He said that one of the most important things he has learned about working with ranchers is to listen first. “I respect the grazing permittees, and I know they respect me in turn. The ranchers really do care about the land. They care for it like it’s their own.”

***From the office to the field, boots symbolize the work the U.S. Forest Service employees do caring for the land...***

Like most U.S. Forest Service employees whose duties take them out into the field, Boyd has a pair of hiking boots for long treks through the brush. However, much of his fieldwork is done by horseback, through terrain that is often too rugged for motorized vehicles. He works with two Forest Service horses, “Indy” (short for Indigo) and “Buster,” who are owned by the agency. For that, Boyd prefers to wear cowboy boots. “I need slick soles that allow me to get into and out of the stirrups easily,” he explains.