

Heather Burke, National Policy Advisor for Partnerships

It's almost 2013 and I will be celebrating my 18th year working for the Corps of Engineers. It's been a pretty amazing journey... from the humble beginnings as a co-op student just getting my feet wet at John H Kerr Reservoir in 1995, working my way up as a park ranger in California and Idaho, onto a District NRM Program Manager in Jacksonville, and ultimately to my current role as the National Partnership Program Manager. I attribute my successes so far to a few key things: 1) Willingness to move around, 2) Taking advantage of temporary detail opportunities, 3) Participating on various national PDTs, and 4) Working in HQUSACE in the Career Assignment Program.

I was fortunate enough to be selected for the CAP program in 2004, and it was instrumental in launching my career to where I am today. Not only did I gain an entirely new perspective as to how things work at the national level and the strong influence that Washington, DC politics play in our decision making process, but I also expanded my professional network tenfold. The exposure that I got to different program elements and leaders within and outside the Corps was invaluable. The simple fact that I was selected for the CAP program gave me instant credibility (whether I actually earned it or not), and I received multiple job offers that I wasn't even seeking because I was part of that program. The CAP assignment opened the door for me to participate on the National Career Development PDT and the Recreation Leadership Advisory Team. I believe it also played a huge role in getting selected for temporary assignment as the Senior Policy Advisor for Partnerships, and ultimately attain the full-time position in the same role.

I feel so lucky to have the job I'm in today, and have felt that in each position I've filled within the Corps. I've really enjoyed the opportunity I've had to work all around the country, travel to some amazing projects, and meet really outstanding people around the Corps. I look forward to more years of new challenges and opportunities to come.