

Indiana Society of American Foresters,

In an effort to compile a more diverse range of reflection on the trip that Purdue took to SAF National Convention in Albuquerque, I asked three of the six members to compile their experiences to then share with you all. As President of the Purdue SAF group, I was very proud of everything we got to see and do and how we interacted with professionals, alumni, and other students. The following statements contain a little information about almost everything that we did in the days we spent there.

Kellee Edington, a sophomore in Forestry, and our Purdue SAF Treasurer wrote:

“This was my first time ever going to SAF National Convention, and I really enjoyed it. This was my first time going to New Mexico, and combining the travel with the people that went, it was a very enjoyable experience for me. While we were at the convention, I hopped around between several different rooms and speakers, listening to speakers or topics that piqued my interest. All of the speakers were very interesting, although there were a few topics that went over my head in terms of what I knew or could understand of the topic at the time. I remember specifically there was a speaker discussing how they were intending to use a satellite in conjunction with NASA to use LiDAR to create better maps of forests; I had no idea what LiDAR was, but it was really cool to hear that mapping forests from a satellite in space was possible. There was another session about the improvements being made to fire deployment shelters that was interesting to me as well.

The alumni dinner was a really good opportunity to connect with some Forestry and Natural Resources alumni, and see what professions they got into after graduation. It was also a good way to network and get our names out, especially for the seniors that attended, in hopes of getting jobs after graduation. Quiz bowl was also a great experience. We got to compete with 31 other schools from around the country, and see some Forestry students from schools that I never would have thought had a Forestry program. I was part of the quiz bowl team, and we were able to advance through the rounds to take home 8th place of 32!

We were able to go exploring around the vicinity of Albuquerque a little bit as well. We took a day and visited the Cibola National Forest. I had never hiked in the mountains before, so that was a lot of fun to me, and the views were spectacular. I had never been anywhere that didn't have deciduous trees everywhere, so to see the mountains and surrounding landscape not completely covered in trees was a new experience, as was the desert itself.

The whole trip was a great bonding experience for the six of us that were able to attend, and I have a lot of great memories and pictures from the trip, as well some interesting stories and some newfound and strengthened friendships. I look forward to Portland next year, and another round of memories and fun with the people that will attend.”

Sean Verkamp, a senior in Forestry and a four-year Purdue SAF member wrote:

"With this being my second trip to a SAF National Convention, I knew more of what to expect and how to interact with professionals. Having an interest in wildlife, mainly birds, and forestry, I attended many talks on the two fields combined. I also attended a couple talks on forest regeneration and health to better my knowledge and learn what some of the most recent research is showing. Interacting with professionals and alumni was a great help in searching for advice on career paths. Notably, I talked to a Purdue alum who works for the National Wild Turkey Federation and received great information on how to search for NWTFF jobs and what I need to improve on.

One highlight from the convention was the SAF quiz bowl. We were able to advance through a few rounds of the competition and ended up finishing 8th amongst 32 teams. This was a great achievement for the Purdue SAF club and allowed some new members to get experience in the competitive environment. The hope is to make it farther next year!

During one of the afternoons, not much activity was going on at the convention, so we took the time to explore Cibola National Forest near Albuquerque. It was a great opportunity to see a forest type out west and we even tested each other's knowledge with identifying some trees. We talked a bit amongst ourselves about how fire would carry through the ecosystem with all of the downed woody debris and litter materials. We hiked many trails and saw some amazing views. I, being the birder of the trip, pointed out bird species in the area and was able to record my 500th species on my life list, a Steller's Jay.

I greatly appreciate the donation from Indiana SAF which allowed the Purdue SAF group to travel to the convention and interact with professionals and other colleagues."

Amy Hanners, a sophomore in Forestry, and our Purdue SAF Secretary wrote:

"New Mexico was my first time attending the SAF national convention. The part that I enjoyed the most was the feeling of comradery among all the foresters and the opportunity to connect with individuals from other universities across the united states. I spent most of my time at the convention center hopping from room to room and listening to talks about various topics and issues that faced professionals in their varying regions. The alumni reception provided an excellent opportunity to network and pick the brains of past students and see where their degrees had taken them after Purdue. Our group even found time to explore some of the natural beauty around New Mexico outside of the convention center. I left the convention on the last day feeling very confident with my future in forestry and looking forward to how I may contribute my work in the future."

Thank you for all the support that Indiana SAF gave and continues to give to the Purdue Forestry students.

Sincerely,

Edward R. Oehlman
Purdue SAF President