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## Learning to Read Forest Landscapes

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# Learning to Read Forest Landscapes

Rosalio “Roy” Gonzalez

For a city boy, camping in lush forests and serene mountains was a big transition. Though challenging, my internship with Geography Professor Dr. Rosemary Sherriff and Forestry Professor Lucy Kerhoulas last summer was filled with excitement and opportunity. Exploring a diverse wilderness, learning to identify its rare and exceptional species, I was introduced to the complex geographies of forests and wildfires.

Every Monday, I arose at 6 a.m., gathered everything I needed for the week, headed out the door, and was loaded up by 6:45 a.m. Sometimes my commute would be local. Other times, the drive would take four to six hours. We traveled as far south as Mendocino County, ventured north close to the Oregon border, and journeyed as far east as Mt. Lassen. The longer distances usually meant we would be spending the week camping, returning to Arcata by Thursday evening. Deprived of luxuries in the great outdoors, I became more resourceful, finding joy in living away from everyone and everything I was accustomed to. Until last summer, I had never had the opportunity to be so close to nature.

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Working as a field assistant primarily under the guidance of graduate student Sophia Lemno, I was part of a team investigating conifer mortality and regeneration in the forests of northern California. We began collecting data, undertaking measures to ensure

that adequate data was collected in order to monitor specific conditions at sites across northern California.

Over the course of the summer, I developed a research methodology that I can apply in future careers. I

learned how to sample and assemble cores from living as well as dead trees, count regeneration, measure individual trees, collect samples, and manage data. This internship opened my eyes to the scope and complexity of organizing and carrying out a field research project.

Examining geo-physical systems, we recognize that no natural landscape is free of human interference. Acknowledging anthropogenic influence is crucial in understanding underlying dynamics that create natural habitats. In the lands managed by both public and private entities, one discovers

discontinuities in those spaces. In many areas, forests are suffering because of severe overgrowth, a hazardous condition for wildfires. In other areas, clear cuts leave few—if any—trees standing.

While California law enforces some of the country's strictest logging practices, my experience this past summer suggests that many hurdles remain on the path to proper, sustainable timber management. In recent years, Californians have witnessed devastating wildfires which result from longstanding forest management policies that have ignored traditional forestry practices of indigenous peoples.

By going into the field and conducting research, I learned how to read forest landscapes and think critically about the history of a region. Last summer, I fostered a love of nature. And I took part in a research project that helped develop my applied geographic skills, methodology, and my interest in sustainability. My internship has been instrumental in setting me on my current course. The morning drives



*Summit Selfie: The author with HSU grad student Sophia Lemno atop Lassen Peak.*

through mountain roads and past verdant meadows allowed me to apply my recent geographic education to better understand the valuable ecology that surrounds us. With another fire season fast approaching, I hope we can learn from our past mistakes and implement more stringent regulations in order to minimize the damage to California's biodiversity, ecology, and people.

### US CENSUS...Continued from Page 36.

Three-fourths of responding enumerators claimed that residents were not interested in partaking in the Census. Almost two-fifths (39%) reported this happening at least once each day, one-fifth said it happened a couple times per week, and 15% encountered it every other day.

Likewise, three-fourths of the responding enumerators said residents refused to open the door. Just under half (49%) claimed to encounter this at least once daily, 17.6% reported that it happened a couple times per week, and 8.8% said it happened every other day or almost never.

Slightly more than half (52.9%) reported encountering residents who did not know what the US Census is. One-fourth said this almost never happened to them, 19.3% said it happened at least once a week, and 17.6% said a couple times per week.

Of responding enumerators, 27.8% reported encounters with residents who were afraid of immigration/government authorities. And just over one quarter (26.1%) reported interactions with residents who thought the enumerator was trying to sell them something.

The US Census is critically important. We cannot have miscounts or forgotten communities. The 2020 Census was abridged by unprecedented circumstances, leading to an inaccurate and potentially biased population survey. It is important to remember the former integrity of the Census, and aim to return it to a proper, accurate count. Demystifying the goals, repercussions, and implications of the Census is crucial to ensure that the already underrepresented peoples in the US do not fall further into the cracks.