



Aircraft Pilot Positions with the National Park Service

Career Opportunities Take Flight



Aircraft at Big Bend National Park, Texas



Helicopter at Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming



Patrol on the Mall in Washington DC



Floatplane at Voyageurs National Park, Minnesota

The National Park Service, (NPS), a bureau within the Department of the Interior (DOI), has flight operations with permanent NPS pilots in fourteen of its larger parks in the Lower 48 and Alaska.

The majority of the positions are for fixed wing pilots, though there are helicopter pilot positions primarily with the US Park Police in Washington, DC. In addition, the parks contract for a variety of flight operations. Contract pilots are hired directly by the various vendors.

The NPS, and other bureaus within DOI hire pilots thru two job series which are searchable on the website USAJOBS, located at <http://www.usajobs.opm.gov>. The first series is the 2181 professional pilot series. Minimum flight time requirements are 1500 hours Pilot in Command, (PIC) with Commercial and Instrument ratings. These pilots primarily provide transportation of personnel and equipment at parks with very active aviation programs. Flight operations occupy the majority of the incumbent's time, though additional duties may be assigned. The flying occurs mostly at low altitudes and is resource-based with mission work accomplishing tracking, search and rescue, wildlife surveys, and assisting law enforcement patrols in aircraft configured on wheels, floats, and skis.

The second group of NPS pilots is the dual function law enforcement or biologist/pilots. The law enforcement (LE) pilots utilize an aircraft as a flying patrol vehicle while performing many of the missions previously described. The biologist/pilot's focus is primarily on resource monitoring missions such as wildlife or vegetative surveys. Minimum flight time for either position is 500 hours PIC with Commercial and Instrument ratings. The officer will hold a Law Enforcement commission which they may have initially gotten at college or attendance at a Law Enforcement academy. The commission will be upgraded to a full federal commission by attendance at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center,

FLETC, in Glynco, GA. The biologist pilot will usually hold an advanced degree in the natural resource sciences. Though the previously described 2181 pilot's initial hiring qualifications are higher than the dual function pilot, the type of flying done by the two groups is often similar and require a specialized pilot skill set.

Additional opportunities for natural resource based flying careers include working for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). These bureaus, also within DOI, hire both 2181 and dual function pilots. Announcements for these positions may be found on USAJOBS.

The International Association of Natural Resource Pilots, IANRP, is a small organization that has members from a variety of organizations with similar resource based missions. If you would like more information regarding opportunities with the organization, visit <http://ianrp.org/>.



U.S. Park Police helicopter over the Jefferson Memorial in Washington DC

