

Fall 2004

Defending the Environment

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Recommended Citation

Davis, Laura (2004) "Defending the Environment," *Linfield Magazine*: Vol. 1 : No. 2 , Article 11.
Available at: https://digitalcommons.linfield.edu/linfield_magazine/vol1/iss2/11

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Defending the environment

Lindsay Aney '05, has a year-round commitment to the forest.

During the school year, she studies the environment at Linfield College, and each summer, she defends it as a firefighter for the United States Forest Service in Silver Lake.

“Fire is really a natural part of the ecosystem. I’m interested in using fire to help our ecosystems; using fire when we can control it in order to prevent catastrophic and dangerous wildfires in the future.”

– Lindsay Aney

“I enjoy being out in the natural environment,” said Aney, who majors in environmental studies with a science focus and has minors in biology and economics. “I like being able to observe fire behavior, and then see how the burn has affected the forest.”

Aney spent most of her summer living in a Forest Service bunkhouse and working with 12 other firefighters. As a member of an engine crew for the past three summers, she filled her days with training, maintaining equipment and familiarizing herself with the forest terrain. Part of her training covered weather and fire behavior.

“We look up a lot,” she said. “We pay attention to clouds



Lindsay Aney's summer stint as a firefighter for the United States Forest Service is a natural extension of her love for the environment and interest in fire ecology.

because they tell us what weather and winds will be coming our way.”

Over the summer, Aney estimates she fought about 20 fires, most of which were relatively small one-quarter-acre burns. And though Aney works to prevent forest fires, she has also become a proponent of prescribed burning, a growing trend in forest management that advocates burning under controlled circumstances.

“Fire is really a natural part of the ecosystem,” Aney said. “I’m interested in using fire to help our ecosystems; using fire when we can control it in order to prevent catastrophic and dangerous wildfires in the future.”

Aney inherited her love of the outdoors from her parents, both of whom also worked as Forest Service firefighters while in college. Her father is a wildlife biologist and Forest Service ranger in Paisley. Growing up, Aney recalls living in close contact with the nat-

ural world, listening to bat signals through monitors and learning to distinguish different types of trees, birds and other forest inhabitants.

Her deep respect for the environment is evident in her work at Linfield, said Jack Murphy, assistant professor of biology, who collaborated with Aney on fungi research at Charles Metsker Park near McMinnville. She presented her results at the Linfield Science Symposium and plans to present again at the Murdock College Science Research Conference this fall.

Murphy praised Aney’s independence and maturity.

“Lindsay has a personal commitment to do something for the environment,” Murphy said. “Her civility and intelligence give her good presence and will translate into effectiveness in whatever job she chooses.”

–Laura Davis