

Female Forest Rangers in New York state

By

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Abstract

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For my environmental policy thesis, I investigated female forest rangers in the New York state department of environmental conservation (DEC). I looked at how their introduction into the forest service has evolved since the first female forest ranger in New York state, Patti Rudge, who took the job in 1988. I looked at common trends between retired and current female forest rangers as well as comparing their experiences to studies done about park rangers in the national park service. I found many similarities between their experiences, however there are key differences between federal and state level agencies.

Through my research I was able to gain a perspective from female forest rangers of how the New York State DEC could be more inclusive, as well as what to be done to improve their relationship with the public. I also found that gender stereotypes are still a significant issue for female forest rangers. A solution to this, though not an easy one, is to push equality of educational opportunities at a young age to break gender stereotypes associated with the outdoors. This might break the stigmatization that women are not as capable of doing the forest ranger job as men are for the next generation.

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis to the female forest rangers in New York State who have continued to serve and protect the state's most prized possessions while enduring societal gender stigmas.

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Female forest rangers play an important role in the New York State Forest Preserves, however they have not been around for long. From the creation of the Adirondack Park in 1894 and the formation of the Forest ranger force in 1912, the forest ranger staff was entirely male until the first female forest ranger began in 1988. Historically, New York State has been behind when it comes to diversifying the New York State Forest Service workplace. There has been a disconnect between the state and federal level where the state department lacks the proper diversity to create a safe and productive work environment. For my thesis, I researched how women have impacted the forest ranger force in both the Adirondacks and other New York State protected forests. This is a particularly important topic as it shows how, on a national level, women are given certain rights and the workplace is expected to treat them as equals, but on a state-level, women have not progressed as fast as what one may think and there is still gendered harassment in the workplace.¹

National and state level conservation measures led to the creation of both state and federal forests in the late 19th century, each eventually with a professional staff. Theodore Roosevelt was an advocate for preserving America's beautiful places and also making sure that the U.S. would have natural resources into the future. The U.S. Forest Service works on the national level with nationally

¹ Thomas, Jennifer C., And Paul Mohai. "Racial, Gender, And Professional Diversification in The Forest Service from 1983 To 1992." *Policy Studies Journal* 23, No. 2 (1995): 296-309.

protected forests, such as Arapaho National Forest located in Colorado and Angeles National Forest located in California. The protected forested areas are found nationwide; however, the majority are in the west. The U.S. Forest Service primarily work to protect the forests from the exploitation of their natural resources and they work towards trying to conserve all natural resources.²

However, the U.S Forest Service does not own the forests in New York that are protected by the New York State Department of Conservation, which include the Adirondack Park and the Catskill Park. These forests work under a completely different system as do the workforces that accompany these forests. They are held to the same strict regulations that the U.S Forest Service is when it comes to the urgency to diversify the workforce, however under much less scrutiny.³

On the national level there have been many efforts to diversify the workplace to allow for more women to be introduced. Even though the government has done their part to make the workplace more diverse, there are simply not enough women interested in becoming forest rangers.⁴ This might have been true in past years, however now there is an increased interest in the job because of the positive effects women seem to have on the work place by making it more productive. Not only are women not being given as many

² Brown, Greg, And Charles C. Harris. "The US Forest Service: Toward The New Resource Management Paradigm?" *Society & Natural Resources* 5, No. 3 (1992): 231-245.

³ Koontz, Tomas M. "Federal and State Public Forest Administration in The New Millennium: Revisiting Herbert Kaufman's The Forest ranger." *Public Administration Review* 67, No. 1 (2007): 152-164.

⁴ Hubbard, Jennifer A. "Are Women Barking Up the Wrong Tree? A Case Study of the Experiences of Women Majoring in Forest Resources." PhD Diss., University of Missouri--Columbia, (2014): 1-124

opportunities in the field to the extent as men currently are, the workforce as a whole is being cut down due to the current political climate, reduced budget, and poor decision making about environmental regulations that have occurred.⁵

On the national level there is research done on workforce diversification and how diversification impacts the work place in both positive and negative ways. There is substantial information on forest rangers on a national level, however there is not a lot of information that addresses the state forest ranger service.⁶ On the national level, women entered forest ranger positions after World War II when there were labor shortages and the jobs needed to be filled, this did not translate to the state level.⁷ There needs to be a specific research done on forest rangers in New York State, which I have already begun to collect information during the summer of 2018 through the Kelly Adirondack center, and go into greater detail of how women fit in to this historically masculine profession.

New York State level research is confined to speaking of the physical nature of the forests and there is little to no scholarly analysis of the forest ranger role specifically. It is relied on the work of retired forest rangers who speak about their experiences in the 1980's for our sense of the jobs evolution. It is difficult to understand the role of the forest ranger today since most existing literature is

⁵ Brown, Greg, Trevor G. Squirrell, And Charles C. Harris. "Growing Organizational Challenges for The US Forest Service: Results of A Longitudinal Study in A Period of Major Environmental Change." *Journal of Forestry* 108, No. 2 (2010): 77-85.

⁶ Koontz, Tomas M. "Federal and State Public Forest Administration in The New Millennium: Revisiting Herbert Kaufman's The Forest ranger." *Public Administration Review* 67, No. 1 (2007): 152-164.

⁷ James, Chuck. "Women in The Forest Service: The Early Years." *Journal of Forestry* 89, No. 3 (1991): 14-17.

about the conditions thirty years ago in the 1980s. The increase in technology, the increase in foot traffic in the Adirondacks, and the decrease in forest rangers has posed a number of issues that are not written about or discussed in scholarly work. Documentation and research is needed in order for the public to understand the importance of the job, while also potentially increasing interest in the profession.

Since they play such an important role in the protection of the state forest preserves, a light must be shined on their performance and the good work that they do. Gender diversity must also be explored as there is a very small percentage of women who are forest rangers. This begs the question of what makes this job unattractive to women, or if there is underlying sexism rooted in this profession.

It is necessary to find out how genders interacted with each other back in 1988 when the first female forest ranger was introduced into New York State when women first became park rangers, and how the situation has either improved, stayed the same, or deteriorated in this present day and age.

There is ample literature from the early twentieth century about men and the wilderness. However, more notably in the 1960's Anne LaBastille, author of *Woodswoman*, is an example of how women started to voice their thoughts on nature and how women have a strong relationship with it. In order for the examination of the female forest ranger role today, it is necessary to understand how women connected with nature and how they were viewed by the society before they worked in the ranger profession.

A woman who was not a forest ranger, but a notable woman in environmental history in the Adirondacks was Anne LaBastille. Anne LaBastille was an important female figure as she was one of first influential and controversial figures in nature conservation of the 1960's. Many believed that since she did not grow up with the traditional forester background in New York City, she was not a true forester. She is described as "loner" by many who did not believe in her,⁸ however as she describes in *Woodswoman*, her connection with nature was emotional because it gave her a sense of purpose and independence.⁹

She was an inspiration to many women who aspired to break the molds of the stereotypical housewife back in the 1960's. Anne LaBastille provided a foot in the door for people to understand how women can connect with nature at the same level, if not higher, as men. Other influential women in Adirondack history, besides LaBastille argue that they have a stronger spiritual connection with nature and the environment and they care more about it than their male counterparts.¹⁰

The ecofeminism movement began in the 1970's which is when potential female forest rangers began to take an interest. The notion of eco-feminism, which is the combination of ecological and feminist beliefs, emerged and nature

⁸ Wider, Sarah Ann, And Ellen Percy Kraly. "The Contour of Unknown Lives: Mapping Women's Experience in The Adirondacks." *Biography* 25, No. 1 (2002): 1-24.

⁹ LaBastille, Anne. *Woodswoman*. Penguin Group USA, 1991.

¹⁰ Boilen, Sara. "The Backcountry of the Female Mind: Young Women's Voices from The Wilderness." In *The Palgrave International Handbook of Women and Outdoor Learning*, pp. 449-460. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2018.

became a way that women could be empowered. Their connection to nature was just as important, if not more than a man's masculine persona of what the wilderness means to him.¹¹

These stories are the first glimpse that we see in the shift to feminize forestry in a traditionally masculine work environment. When women are brought into this kind of work environment, there are positive aspects that can be seen, such as better decisions made about environmental regulations, a better response from the public when asserting authority,¹² and bridging the gender gap from no women in the forest ranger force, to them making up about 10% of the force in the Adirondacks today is a very big accomplishment for women in forestry. However, there are consequences that result from male coworkers who don't believe they can do the job correctly.

Women face a lot of hardships in this profession because of stigmas that still exist about women and nature. Women have to work twice as hard to prove themselves in this kind of working environment and scholars have documented that there is gendered harassment in the workplace. It is unknown if harassment takes place among the state-level, but there has been documentation that it happens at the federal level of the Forest Service. Usually any sort of harassment is not reported directly to the Forest Service because of the close-

¹¹ Dwyer, Jim. "Women Hold Up Half the Snub-Nose. 38s: Ecofeminism in Contemporary Western American Detective Fiction." *Counterpoise* 2, No. 3 (1998): 15.

¹² Brown, Greg, And Charles C. Harris. "The Implications of Work Force Diversification in The US Forest Service." *Administration & Society* 25, No. 1 (1993): 85-113.

knit relationships that the male coworkers, on the same jurisdiction level, have with one another¹³. According to Emma Weisner, who conducted a study on gendered harassment in the US Forest Service, the National Forest Service has tried to cut down on the harassment that occurs, but unfortunately their efforts seem to be unsuccessful as incidents are still being reported with little action being taken.¹⁴

Although female forest rangers are rarely mentioned in as many studies as male forest rangers are, there is some non-scholarly work that discusses the role of the forest ranger in 1960. Herbert Kauffman discussed the duties and obligations of forest rangers in his book *The Forest ranger*.¹⁵ The forest ranger's overall duty is to the forest and to protect it at whatever cost.¹⁶ They are to protect the environment from the public, and the public from the environment. However, as time went on throughout the twentieth century, their job and obligations began to shift to less about the forest and more about the people.¹⁷ People have become the biggest threat to the forest than ever before because of the increased popularity that the wilderness and national forests attract. And due to this increased popularity, patrolling the forests has become more difficult.¹⁸

¹³ Weisner, Emma. "Gendered Harassment in The US Forest Service." *Women Leading Change: Case Studies On Women, Gender, And Feminism* 3, No. 1 (2018): 73-81.

¹⁴ Weisner, Emma. "Gendered Harassment in The US Forest Service." *Women Leading Change: Case Studies On Women, Gender, And Feminism* 3, No. 1 (2018): 73-81.

¹⁵ Kaufman, Herbert. "The Forest ranger." *Soil Science*, 89, No. 6 (1960): 360.

¹⁶ Kaufman, Herbert. "The Forest ranger." *Soil Science*, 89, No. 6 (1960): 360.

¹⁷ Kaufman, Herbert. "The Forest ranger." *Soil Science*, 89, No. 6 (1960): 360.

¹⁸ Kaufman, Herbert. "The Forest ranger." *Soil Science*, 89, No. 6 (1960): 360.

In New York State, back in the 1970's the Forest rangers job began to change. It was argued that in order for the rangers to do their job effectively, they needed to take on a more explicit law enforcement role. This includes them carrying guns. This aspect of the job was not widely accepted back in 1974 when they were introduced as part of the job, but they have become a necessary item when asserting authority in dangerous circumstance and conditions. They have been groomed as law enforcement officers who are more or less police officers.¹⁹ Crime in the woods is a real issue because it is a common place for people to go and do illegal activities, it is necessary for forest rangers to have some leverage when dealing with dangerous people and situations.

Since the forest ranger job has shifted into a law enforcement position, it is necessary to look at gendered harassment on the law enforcement level to see if there are any parallels. There are women who currently hold law enforcement positions, however there are not a lot of them.²⁰

Though weapons can be helpful, others feel that the addition of fire arms have allowed the job to stray away from the roots of the forest ranger job, which is to manage the forest. Some scholars have explored the idea of disarming the

¹⁹ Tynon, Joanne F., Deborah J. Chavez, And Joshua WR Baur. "Crime in Woods: Role of Law Enforcement Officers in National Forests." *Managing Leisure* 15, No. 4 (2010): 251-263.

²⁰ Timmins, William M., and Brad E. Hainsworth. "Attracting and retaining females in law enforcement: Sex-based problems of women cops in 1988." *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 33, no. 3 (1989): 197-205.

rangers and how that would benefit their overall image.²¹ However, more times than not, the forest rangers encounter situations that are non-violent in the forest.²² Whether there is an altercation, a search and rescue mission, or somebody who made a violation, usually they do not call for weapons.²³ The public feels threatened and are less likely to respond in a calm way.

On a state level there is no scholarly work that addresses gender diversity in the DEC ranger force, however there is a brief article about the ranger School in Wanekena which discusses the first women who attended the two-year college. At this time it was a major requirement that each ranger had to complete the two-year program to be considered to become a forest ranger. The first females to graduate from the ranger School on a provisional basis at the end of the 1970's were Hildegard Kuhn-Webb and Kathy Gilda. They did not care that they were the first women, they just wanted to do their job right. Unfortunately they did not score high enough on the civil service exam to become permanently on the forest ranger staff, however their accomplishments are still notable and they were considered to be forest rangers.²⁴

There has been very little written about Patti Rudge who was the first permanent female forest ranger in the New York State protected forests. It is not documented in any scholarly work that she was the first female forest ranger, it

²¹ Pendleton, Michael R. "Crime, Criminals and Guns in "Natural Settings": Exploring The Basis for Disarming Federal rangers." *American Journal of Police* 15, No. 4 (1996): 3-25.

²² Interview with Paul Hartmann on July 30, 2018, Niskayuna, NY

²³ Interview with Paul Hartmann on July 30, 2018, Niskayuna, NY

²⁴ Coufal, James E., Et Al. "The ranger School: A Century in The Forest." *Dog Ear Publishing* (2012): 1-208.

was only found out by in-person interviews and word of mouth. This prompts the research question of how women are represented in New York State forests and how their job is today.

Female forest rangers make up a very low percentage of the overall forest ranger profession in New York State. Since they only make up such a small percentage, it is necessary to understand why there is such a gender gap in the profession. It is possible that females are not interested in the field just by the nature of the job, however there are many other factors that play a role in who fills the demanding position. There is a large physical aspect of the job which most believe is the reason for the lack of females who are interested in the job, though others claim that anybody could do it if they were physically able. It is also found that there is also a lack of interest in the profession from both males and females.

With regards to forest rangers nationally, there has been a decrease in the number of people who want to pursue a career in this profession. One hypothesis for this is the decrease in people's appreciation for nature.²⁵ Technology has begun to play such a large role in one's childhood that it is taking children away from the outdoors and keeping them inside.²⁶ More and more children are staying inside and are having a decreased interest of appreciating the outdoors, unlike

²⁵ Park, Sora. "Effects of home environment on Internet use and dependence of children and adolescents." *AoIR Selected Papers of Internet Research* 1 (2011): 11.

²⁶ Park, Sora. "Effects of home environment on Internet use and dependence of children and adolescents." *AoIR Selected Papers of Internet Research* 1 (2011): 11.

those back in the 1970's.²⁷ Due to this, it is very difficult to fill the forest ranger position because it is increasingly rare to find someone who is passionate enough to live in isolation in the woods. And even though the popularity of the Adirondacks and state forests have found an increase in attraction, there are not enough rangers to preserve and protect the environment. Thus, it has become harder and harder to enforce the rules and regulations of the Adirondacks, conduct search and rescue missions, and to assert authority in such a large piece of land.

There are few studies that talk about forest rangers in the Adirondacks and practically none that focus on women, only bits and pieces of their job. It was necessary to investigate different aspects of the Adirondacks to gain information about the broader areas that would be beneficial to my research. I found enough information to point me in the direction of wanting to focus on gender diversity in the forest ranger workplace and how it is still an issue today. It is necessary to dig deeper into the role of female forest rangers in the Adirondacks to produce scholarly work that would be worthy of merit.

For my thesis, I researched how women have impacted the forest ranger force in the Adirondacks, but also in other New York State protected forests. This is a particularly important topic to research because it shows how on a national level women are given certain rights and the workplace is expected to treat them

²⁷ Park, Sora. "Effects of home environment on Internet use and dependence of children and adolescents." *AoIR Selected Papers of Internet Research* 1 (2011): 11.

as equals, but on a state-level, women have not progressed as fast as what one may think and there is still discrimination based on sex and gendered harassment in the workplace.

As I have combed through scholarly works, I have found that the national forest service is quite different from the New York forest service. And while there is a lot of literature on the force on a national level, there is little to now information about forest rangers on the state level. It is necessary to understand why the female forest ranger is not as abundant as the male forest ranger. Through a lot of research and interviews, there is a rough pattern of why there are not as many females as males in the forest service.

Looking at the forest ranger job in particular, there is resistance from the state to appoint more rangers adds to the lack of opportunity for women in the Forest ranger field, and it especially discourages interest in the position. In order for more women to become interested in the position, it is necessary to know the make-up of the position and all the benefits that come with it. Understanding that the job is dangerous and taxing is important, but it is also important to know what the DEC is doing to help the Forest rangers and also to see how they can improve upon their efforts. The job consists of patrolling and managing 3.1 million acres of New York State Protected Forest which is split up by the 134 people who are on the force with 106 of them being Forest rangers.²⁸ The job of the the

²⁸ "New York Forest ranger Training and Degree Requirements." How to Become a Park ranger? 2019. Accessed March 14, 2019. <https://www.parkrangeredu.org/new-york-forest-ranger/>.

New York State Forest ranger is to protect these lands and keep them healthy.²⁹ They do this by doing search and rescue missions, educating the public on safety in the woods and natural resource care.³⁰ They also administer programs to help prevent wildfires and to also protect wildlife. However, their biggest task today, as it has shifted since the 1970's, is enforcing the laws that protect and preserve the state forests.³¹ Most of these tasks include putting the environment and their region before their own needs.

Female forest rangers are lacking in New York State, as well as the rest of the country, due to a gendered stigma around the job, traditional obligatory gendered roles still in place in society, as well as a lack of unisex education at a young age. With a lack of education that is not directed towards everyone, regardless of gender, this encapsulates the overall gendered stigmatization of nature, and thus, the gendered stigma around the New York State Forest Service.

It is also necessary to understand that this research is only the beginning of a much larger and in-depth problem surrounding New York State forest rangers. Due to a lack of secondary sources that pertain specifically to New York State female forest rangers, and the limited availability of current female rangers

²⁹ "New York Forest ranger Training and Degree Requirements." How to Become a Park ranger? 2019. Accessed March 14, 2019.

<https://www.parkrangeredu.org/new-york-forest-ranger/>.

³⁰ "New York Forest ranger Training and Degree Requirements." How to Become a Park ranger? 2019. Accessed March 14, 2019.

<https://www.parkrangeredu.org/new-york-forest-ranger/>.

³¹ "New York Forest ranger Training and Degree Requirements." How to Become a Park ranger? 2019. Accessed March 14, 2019.

<https://www.parkrangeredu.org/new-york-forest-ranger/>.

in New York State to comment, there is still much more of the story to be uncovered during future research.

Chapter One

New York State Forest ranger and the Introduction of Women into the Profession

In the New York State forest ranger force, gender diversity plays a large role. In this small profession where women are the minority, more and more women have started to become forest rangers in New York State, nonetheless the state is still lagging behind when it comes to the number of females who are on the force. It is necessary to understand why female numbers are lagging behind when in other areas of this profession, such as the National Park Service (NPS), the first female park ranger began in 1918 and females make up 37% of the ranger force yet it took the New York State Forest Service more than sixty years after establishing the force to have their first female forest ranger.³² Although the percentage of female rangers in the NPS is low, it is better than the 10% of women that make up the New York State Forest ranger force. It begs the question of if being defined as female puts one at a disadvantage if they are interested in nature and the environment and want to pursue a career as a Forest ranger.

In New York the Forest ranger force is rarely publicized and only a small amount of individuals who have an interest or personal connection to the Adirondacks or the Catskills pay attention to the kind of work the Forest rangers

³² National Park Service History, "Women in The National Park." *National Park Service* (2019): 1-9.

do. They are the policemen of the forest. They provide a very important barrier between the environment and humans as well as the other important barrier of humans to the environment. This is a job that most people don't know anything about even though they play an important part in protecting the forests.

New York State is unique specifically because most of the forest rangers who began in the Adirondack Park back in 1895, lived in the Adirondacks and were familiar with the region.³³ This presented immense challenges for further diversifying the workforce early on because there was a particular way that the Adirondack people went about protecting the area and their particular beliefs about government intervention. Their laissez-faire attitude was rejected when the New York State came in and regulated all of their natural resources.³⁴ The New York State ranger force is particularly isolated from the rest of the National Forest Service and that serves as one answer as to why they are so far behind the rest of the national efforts to diversify. Forest rangers have been a fixture in the New York State Forest Preserves since the creation of the Forest ranger force in 1912 and predecessor agencies. The Forest ranger force was comprised of men alone up until 1988 when women were first introduced into the system. The force slowly became more diversified, however there is still a gender gap that exists today.

³³ Kaufman, Herbert. *The Forest ranger: A Study in Administrative Behavior*. Routledge, (2010): 1-310

³⁴ Kaufman, Herbert. *The Forest ranger: A Study in Administrative Behavior*. Routledge, (2010): 1-310

The first permanent female forest ranger didn't arrive until 1988.³⁵ There have been slight advancements in diversify the force, but it is not a major concern, just as forest rangers in general are not widely discussed among the public. In order to understand how women are introduced on the force and all of the struggles that they endured, it is necessary to understand the functions of a forest ranger in New York State. The creation of the force could only begin by the creation of a place that needed to be patrolled, hence the creation of the Adirondack Park.

In 1882, New York State established the Adirondack Park. Influential leaders, including Theodore Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot helped to generally pave the way for this project.³⁶ Their efforts were to protect natural resources, wildlife, and scenery, in order to conserve them for future use. And in order to protect this area, they needed to introduce a unit of people who were willing to patrol the land to protect the environment from the people and the people from the environment.

This is an area that today totals six million acres which is bigger than most National Parks such as Yellowstone and Glacier.³⁷ In 1894, the government began to see the importance of the Adirondack Park and it was created to

³⁵ Interview with Patti Rudge on August 2, 2018, Big Indian, NY

³⁶ Wills, Matthew. "The Odd History of the Adirondacks." *Science and Technology*. (2018): 1-3.

³⁷ Wills, Matthew. "The Odd History of the Adirondacks." *Science and Technology*. (2018): 1-3.

regulate exploitation.³⁸ And after the Park was created they continued to see a need to tighten regulation.³⁹ The exploitation of these resources, such as timber, contributed to the forest fires and threatened watersheds of which they were trying to reduce. In order to try and preserve more of the forest and protect it from exploitation, Article 14 of the New York State Constitution was introduced in 1894 declaring 2.4 million acres of the Adirondacks as a New York State Protected Forest.⁴⁰ This meant that there could be no clear cutting or logging on publicly owned forest in the Adirondacks. Article 14 does not directly say that the forest is “forever wild”, but implies that its resources will be untouched.⁴¹

The Forest ranger job began in 1885 when they were first called Fire Wardens and were tasked with observing and containing the fires that they observed.⁴² Fire towers were built starting in 1909 and fire observation stations were created in 1912.⁴³ There were 57 steel fire towers created and 34 of those

³⁸ Karl Jacoby, “Crimes Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation,” (California: University of California Press, 2014), 18.

³⁹ Karl Jacoby, “Crimes Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation,” (California: University of California Press, 2014), 18.

⁴⁰ The Committee On the New York State Constitution “The Conservation Article in The New York State Constitution.” *New York State Bar Association* 11 (2016): 8.

⁴¹ The Committee On the New York State Constitution “The Conservation Article in The New York State Constitution.” *New York State Bar Association* 11 (2016):8.

⁴² Hartmann, Paul T. History - Page 3 - New York State FR's - 1926 To 1947. 2019. Accessed March 14, 2019.

⁴³ "Adirondack Fire Towers." Adirondack.Net. 2019. Accessed March 15, 2019. <https://www.adirondack.net/history/fire-towers/>.

are still standing today.⁴⁴ In 1899, the Fire Wardens were officially given the name rangers which was coined by William F. Fox, who was Superintendent of Forests (and a graduate of Union College in 1860.)⁴⁵ Fox had a vision to create the Forest ranger force since he did not believe that Fire Wardens were doing the job necessary to protect the forest since there were only there to find the problem rather than to prevent the problem. In 1912 the Forest ranger force was officially established, after the disastrous and destructive fires of 1903 and 1908, and was carried out by Fox's colleague Clifford R. Pettis since Fox had died a few years before in 1909.⁴⁶ The fires of 1903 and 1908 collectively burned over 600,000 acres of land and were mostly caused by the railroad lines that wove in and out of the forests. These coal or wood fired engines would send out sparks into the considerably dry forest and cause an uproar of flames. The Forest ranger force was created to prevent fires like these from happening.

The Forest ranger job has evolved a lot since 1912. In order to understand gender diversity and reasons behind the gender gap, it is necessary to understand the kind of work and responsibilities that the typical Forest Range has in New York State. For example, their responsibility to fight fires. Once fire prevention tactics were introduced, fires began to be drastically reduced throughout the region. They prevented fires by making sure that nobody was

⁴⁴ Hartmann, Paul T. History - Page 3 - New York State FR's - 1926 To 1947. 2019. Accessed March 14, 2019.

⁴⁵ Hartmann, Paul T. History - Page 3 - New York State FR's - 1926 To 1947. 2019. Accessed March 14, 2019.

⁴⁶ Hartmann, Paul T. History - Page 3 - New York State FR's - 1926 To 1947. 2019. Accessed March 14, 2019.

going in illegally and slashing and burning the forest for commercial gain, but there was still the issue of the railroads. However, once they began to begin containing and preventing fires more effectively, they began to see the benefit of fire.

They also began utilizing fire as a tool in the 1970's.⁴⁷ For example, they use fire to destroy invasive species that cause a threat to native species. The Forest ranger also helped to eradicate invasive species.⁴⁸ They are sometimes infested with White Cone Borers which damages cone production for the tree. They use fire to destroy the cone borers in order to enable more cone production. This was one way that the Forest ranger helped control environmental problems that were associated with the transferring of invasive species.

Although fires began to nationally decrease, the cause of fires began to shift and they were happening more mainly due to peoples' carelessness. This was a sign of an increase of recreational use of forests. To fix this problem and educate the public, in 1944 the national "Smokey the Bear" campaign spread across America started by the United States Forest Service in order to raise awareness about forest fires.⁴⁹ The big take-away of the campaign was to making sure people knew how to actively prevent forest fires. This included not burning your garbage in the backyard, making sure that camp fires are monitored

⁴⁷ Hartmann, Paul T. History - Page 3 - New York State FR's - 1926 To 1947. 2019. Accessed March 14, 2019.

⁴⁸ Hartmann, Paul T. History - Page 3 - New York State FR's - 1926 To 1947. 2019. Accessed March 14, 2019.

⁴⁹ Ballard, Heidi L., Emily Evans, Victoria E. Sturtevant, And Pamela Jakes. "The Evolution of Smokey Bear: Environmental Education About Wildfire for Youth." *The Journal of Environmental Education* 43, No. 4 (2012): 227-240.

and do not spread, and make sure that you put your campfire out effectively with water.

Due to all of these measures, forest fires in the Adirondacks have been reduced. In 1903 there were 643 fires which burned about 464,000 acres whereas in 2002 there were 324 fires which burned only 2,062 acres in the Adirondacks.⁵⁰ Between 1993 and 2017 there have been approximately 217 fires per year and about 95% of those are human caused.⁵¹ The forest rangers have been doing a great job in actively preventing fires by cutting the amount of fires in half over 100 years and reducing the amount of acres burned over 90%.⁵² Of the fires that do occur, these are contained and put out effectively and efficiently.

Outdoor recreation in the Adirondacks began to expand in the early 1900's. In 1917, when private individuals and groups began marking trails which was followed by the state officially marking them. This opened the door for more people to begin participating. What also led to the increase of hikers in the Adirondacks was the forty-sixers trend.⁵³ Though the forty-sixers were a small private group, they added to the popularity of the mountains and the larger trend of hiking in the Adirondacks. This is where you climb all 46 high peaks in the Adirondack region which are mountains totaling over 4,000 feet in elevation. This

⁵⁰ "Wildfire In New York State." Wildfire In New York State - New York State Dept. Of Environmental Conservation. 2019. Accessed March 15, 2019.

⁵¹ "Wildfire In New York State." Wildfire In New York State - New York State Dept. Of Environmental Conservation. 2019. Accessed March 15, 2019.

⁵² "Wildfire In New York State." Wildfire In New York State - New York State Dept. Of Environmental Conservation. 2019. Accessed March 15, 2019.

⁵³ Interview with Peter Fish on July 31, 2018, Keene, NY

trend began after the first people completed all 46 mountains in 1925 after they started in 1918.⁵⁴ They were brothers Robert and George Marshall along with Herbert Clark. The trend made people excited about hiking and populated many mountains in the high peaks including Cascade Mountain and Whiteface Mountain. Once there were a considerable number of people who completed all 46 high peaks, they founded a club in 1948. Today there are over 10,000 people who are forty-sixers and they do an excellent job at helping educate the public about how to hike the mountain safely, keep from harming the environment, and appropriate ways to conduct oneself while hiking.⁵⁵

The Adirondack mountains have gained a great amount of popularity over the years, specifically post World War II, which has made the environment in and around these mountains decline. In 1917 there were 20,000 hikers who frequented the Adirondacks, in 1920 it increased to 50,000 hikers, and in 2014 there were about 600,000 hikers and campers.⁵⁶ An increase in outdoor recreation led to shifts in the forest ranger job. This increase in people and popularity of being in the Adirondack forests has led to an increase in responsibility for the forest rangers and an increased need for law enforcement in the region. As early as the 1920's, Forest rangers began to educate the public on how to hike safely and also enforce the environmental laws and regulations that began to appear as needed due to an increased amount of foot traffic. These

⁵⁴ Interview with Peter Fish on July 31, 2018, Keene, NY

⁵⁵ Interview with Peter Fish on July 31, 2018, Keene, NY

⁵⁶ Interview with Paul Hartmann on July 30, 2018, Niskayuna, NY

laws included a need for hunting permits, boating permits, and an overall increase in public awareness of their impact on nature.⁵⁷

The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) was founded in 1970 due to the increase in outdoor recreation and the popularity of the mountains that posed a threat to the environment.⁵⁸ The DEC also has much broader responsibilities state-wide, however there is a special interest in the Adirondacks. Due to the public's interest in the wilderness and activities concerning the outdoors, the Parks and Recreation Department was founded in New York State in 1970 and this department added to recreational land-use with the desire to get more people outside. Though this is separate from forest rangers, it did increase people's interest in outdoor recreation. and to satisfy people's newly found interest in the Adirondacks.⁵⁹ This added to the increase in foot-traffic in the Adirondacks.

These shifts are often seen as negative which include an increase in trash and littering, feeding the wildlife, search and rescue, and law enforcement. Since there are more hikers frequenting the trails, there is more garbage that is left along the trails. Another issue along with littering is that this feeds the wildlife in the area, and in particular the bears. When bears start to become more comfortable around humans and eating their trash, they are more likely to go up

⁵⁷ "Marine and Coastal District Of New York Conservation, Education, And Research Grants Program." NY State Senate. March 02, 2019. Accessed March 15, 2019. <https://www.NewYorkStateenate.Gov/Legislation/Laws/ENV/13-0501>.

⁵⁸ Hartmann, Paul T. History - Page 3 - New York State FR's - 1926 To 1947. 2019. Accessed March 14, 2019.

to their campsite and rummage through their coolers and tent. This is both dangerous for the bear because it is becoming dependent on humans for food, and also dangerous for the human because bears are dangerous and can inflict serious harm on them.

The Forest ranger began to emerge as a necessity to the people in the forest and not just for nature. As more people frequented the hiking trails, it increased the need for search and rescue. As more and more inexperienced people go up into the Adirondacks, they find themselves in life threatening situations and in need of a search and rescue in the late 1960's and early 1970's. People do not observe the warning signs of when should turn back and forest rangers are doing less and less to warn and tell these hikers when it is unsafe to hike. Hikers are also not prepared enough to go hiking by either wearing blue jeans, cotton, or the wrong footwear. Educating hikers will decrease the amount of search and rescue missions.

Another issue that has increased search and rescue missions are cellphones. People think that if they find themselves in a situation where search and rescue is needed that the forest ranger will be there in under 10 minutes. This is called a "McRescue" where people expect the forest rangers to be like a fast-food service.⁶⁰ It takes rangers hours to find the lost party when they have to hike through miles of terrain while also being observant enough to find where they became lost. People are also using their cellphones to call the forest

⁶⁰Interview with Scott Van Laer on July 23, 2018, Niskayuna, NY

rangers in non-emergency settings which ends up taking the ranger away from other aspects of the job.

The rangers treat every mission as if it were an emergency and they respond as quickly as they can.⁶¹ Search and rescue missions had been happening since when people started to hike in the woods, however there was always a question of who should take the lead: police officers who are trained in search and rescue, or forest rangers who know the Adirondacks and where to go.

In the 1970's, there was a search and rescue mission for a young boy name Douglas Legg who separated from his family while in the Adirondacks.⁶² There was a delayed response time due to the power struggle between law enforcement parties about who should take the lead in a search and rescue for boy Douglas Legg. Some believe that this resulted in the boy never being found.⁶³ The state would not give the forest rangers the lead at first even though they were the most knowledgeable about the area. After this sad event, from then on it was written that forest rangers were to take the lead on all search and rescue missions in the Adirondack Park.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Interview with Peter Fish on July 31, 2018, Keene, NY

⁶² Norton, R. (2018, January 14). Douglas Legg - Strange Disappearances from U.S. Mountains. Retrieved from <https://www.Strangeoutdoors.Com/Mysterious-Stories-Blog/2018/1/13/Douglas-Legg-Strange-Disappearances-From-Us-Mountains>

⁶³ Hartmann, Paul T. History - Page 5 - New York State FR's - 1970 To 1980. 2019. Accessed March 15, 2019.

⁶⁴ Norton, R. (2018, January 14). Douglas Legg - Strange Disappearances from U.S. Mountains. Retrieved from <https://www.Strangeoutdoors.Com/Mysterious-Stories-Blog/2018/1/13/Douglas-Legg-Strange-Disappearances-From-Us-Mountains>

Forest rangers today having a much stronger law enforcement role than they did when they began in 1912. They are now required to carry guns on them at all times. This was a very controversial issue. The state purchased the guns in 1973 but they were not given to the rangers until 1974.⁶⁵ There were a few rangers who opposed this move so passionately that they resigned and took an early retirement. The reason why this was so controversial is because most rangers did not believe that this was part of the job. The job they signed up for was to protect and preserve the Adirondack forest and not to become a police officer of the forest, which the job has become.⁶⁶ The guns do allow the forest rangers to assert authority in inconvenient and dangerous situations, but according to retired forest rangers, it also encouraged them to put themselves in more dangerous situations.

Throughout all the changes that the forest rangers have endured over the years, it has caused a large shift in their job. It has transformed them from protectors of the environment to police officers due to the increase in people hiking in the Adirondacks.⁶⁷ There was a clear shift in the New York State Forest ranger job from resource management to recreation management. And for Forest ranger who were nearing their retirement, they did not see this as the kind of job

⁶⁵ Hartmann, P. T. (2018). History of New York State Forest ranger. Retrieved from [Http://New York Stateforestrangers.Com/rangers-Pictorial1.Htm](http://NewYorkStateforestrangers.Com/rangers-Pictorial1.Htm)

⁶⁶ Hartmann, P. T. (2018). History of New York State Forest ranger. Retrieved from [Http://New York Stateforestrangers.Com/rangers-Pictorial1.Htm](http://NewYorkStateforestrangers.Com/rangers-Pictorial1.Htm)

⁶⁷ Hartmann, Paul T. History - Page 5 - New York State FR's - 1970 To 1980. 2019. Accessed March 15, 2019.

they had signed up for back when their job was a responsibility to the environment, and now it was a responsibility to the people.⁶⁸

The job endured a transformational shift beginning in the 1970's with the job itself, but also the type of person that would be able to hold the job. Within the ranger force, there has been an increase in gender diversity beginning in 1970's. One critical factor was the opening of the ranger School to women as a result of the passage of Title IX, a federal civil rights law forbidding discrimination in any educational program receiving federal assistance. Title IX required equal treatment in the education systems to make it possible for women to go to school and gain an education. An issue was that higher educational places were not prepared for women to come because there was a lack of female dorms, notably in male-dominated professions like the Forest ranger.⁶⁹

The first barrier of women becoming forest rangers was the school. It would take a woman with a strong will to go to a school that did not have any buildings that were specific to female needs, and be able to go to school. However, Hildegard Kuhn-Webb applied to the school and became the first female to attend the ranger School in Wanakena and graduate in 1973. What drove her to desire becoming a forest ranger was watching her father in the position and sitting alongside her brothers who continued his legacy.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Interview with Peter Fish on July 31, 2018, Keene, NY

⁶⁹ Coufal, James E., Arnold H. Lanckton, And Brad Woodward. *The ranger School: A Century in The Forest*. Indianapolis, IN: Dog Ear Publishing, (2012): 1-208

⁷⁰ Coufal, James E., Arnold H. Lanckton, And Brad Woodward. *The ranger School: A Century in The Forest*. Indianapolis, IN: Dog Ear Publishing, (2012): 1-208

When she attended the school, they had not yet built any female dorms but she decided to attend anyways. She ended up staying with a family in Wanakena and she commuted to school each day.⁷¹ She is described as being built like a man, which is generally not how a female is described today.⁷² This is known as a masculine femininity that has its own derogatory stereotypes and assumptions.⁷³

Kuhn-Webbs dedication to the school and her will to go against tradition of male domination allowed her to open the doors and be a role model for women who were too afraid to go against gender norms. She was asked by local newspapers what it was like to be the first female to attend this school and her response was that it wasn't a big deal and that she didn't think it deserved such a big reaction from the public.⁷⁴ This highlights the reason for women going to the school was not for attention or to increase publicity. They genuinely wanted to do the job of the forest ranger.

Closely after Kuhn-Webb finished school, Kathy Gilda was the second woman to attend the school and she graduated a few years later.⁷⁵ In 1977 the

⁷¹ Coufal, James E., Arnold H. Lanckton, And Brad Woodward. *The ranger School: A Century in The Forest*. Indianapolis, IN: Dog Ear Publishing, (2012): 55-57

⁷² Dubai, James F. "Lessons Learned from The Man." *Forest History Today*, (2001): 1-7).

⁷³ Dozier, Raine. "Female Masculinity at Work: Managing Stigma On the Job." *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 41, No. 2 (2017): 197-209.

⁷⁴ Coufal, James E., Arnold H. Lanckton, And Brad Woodward. *The ranger School: A Century in The Forest*. Indianapolis, IN: Dog Ear Publishing, (2012): 55-57

⁷⁵ Coufal, James E., Arnold H. Lanckton, And Brad Woodward. *The ranger School: A Century in The Forest*. Indianapolis, IN: Dog Ear Publishing, (2012): 55-57

state appointed these women as the first female forest rangers on a provisional basis in New York. Another article was published in a local newspaper about this historic moment in history where two aspiring forest rangers had graduated from an all-male school which described them as being more manly than most women. At the time, and still today, people think that in order to have the slightest interest in being a forest ranger, you need to have some masculine traits. The article also discussed how since this was such an important moment in history, they were not able to start their job until the media hype died down. They are reported to have said that they were flattered by all of the publicity, but they wanted it to all end so that they could start their work.

Unfortunately, a requirement to become a permanent forest ranger is to place high enough on the civil service exam. These women did not score high enough on the exam so they were not made permanent rangers; however there may have been a bias in the civil service exam which was not an uncommon occurrence at the time.⁷⁶ The bias could have been the reason for why many other women were not involved in government jobs in the 1970's and 1980's.⁷⁷ This is not to say that women are not smart enough to take the exam, but in order to become a permanent forest ranger, they must score very high in competition with everyone else applying.

⁷⁶ Mckenzie, Beatrice Loftus. "The Problem of Women in The Department: Sex and Gender Discrimination in The 1960s United States Foreign Diplomatic Service." *European Journal of American Studies* 10, No. 10-1 (2015): 1-21.

⁷⁷ Mckenzie, Beatrice Loftus. "The Problem of Women in The Department: Sex and Gender Discrimination in The 1960s United States Foreign Diplomatic Service." *European Journal of American Studies* 10, No. 10-1 (2015): 1-21.

Another early female perspective of the ranger School is a Karen Cox who was a graduate in 1982 and attended the school when they had built a new building for female students, which included 12 dorm rooms.⁷⁸ She discussed how the men tended to mind their own business, however there would be vulgar and derogatory language used towards her and the other women. It was mainly whispers; however, everyone knew that the stigma was there. She is still very connected to the ranger School in Wanekena's alumni network.⁷⁹ Karen Cox had graduated the school in 1982 and at this point there had not been a permanent female forest ranger who worked in the New York State Forest Service. Cox did not go on to become forest rangers and instead, like many others attended more schooling and go into other administrative practices which is what Karen Cox did.⁸⁰

It was not until 1988 when the first permanent forest ranger Patti Rudge joined force and paved the road for women in the field. Patti Rudge is quite an accomplished woman who was said to "break the ice for the women in the force".⁸¹ Rudge is talked well-known in the forest ranger community, not by just women, but men included. She was an influential figure head who was passionate about her work.

She faced doubt among her peers which forced her to work harder than the others to prove that she had the same right to be there as any of her male

⁷⁸ Interview with Karen Cox, 2018, Schenectady, NY

⁷⁹ Interview with Karen Cox, 2018, Schenectady, NY

⁸⁰ Interview with Karen Cox, 2018, Schenectady, NY

⁸¹ Interview with Scott Van Laer on July 23, 2018, Niskayuna, NY

colleagues did. She endured a lot of verbal harassment because she was a woman and she did not believe she was treated fairly by her co-workers or by the Department of Environmental Conservation. She feels that she had to work twice as hard as anyone else in order to prove herself and she was just as skilled, but most likely more skilled and educated than any of the other forest rangers in the force.⁸² This is not to say that every male forest ranger held the same kind of outlook on Rudge because she was a female, but there was a large number who took time to accept the fact that she belonged there. There is no media coverage of Rudge when she began. The only recognition that she gets is an article that is written about her educating the public on the Backwoods area and winter survival which was written in 2018, 30 years after she began.⁸³

There was a lack of respect from certain individuals which led her to feel like she had an increased accountability for her actions. It could be speculated that this is one reason why women were not interested in this kind of work because of the negative work environment that could arise where they would feel resented or a feeling of resistance from their coworkers to trust them. You had to be strong mentally and physically and be willing to go above and beyond in the job. Men should have the same expectations but due to the constant doubt that surrounded women with the job, which created a different kind of forest ranger

⁸² Interview with Patti Rudge on August 2, 2018, Big Indian, NY

⁸³ Snow, Violet. "Forest ranger Patti Rudge Teaches Backwoods Basics and Winter Survival." Hudson Valley One. January 18, 2018. Accessed March 15, 2019. <https://Hudsonvalleyone.Com/2018/01/19/Forest-ranger-Patti-Rudge-Teaches-Backwoods-Basics-And-Winter-Survival/>.

job. However, Rudge endured it and proved to herself and others that she was just as capable and qualified to be there as anyone else.⁸⁴

Although it seems that there were a lot of disadvantages to being a woman in this profession at the time, there were other advantages that being a woman brought. During search and rescue missions it has been commented by Rudge that the male forest rangers are less sympathetic than females are. Rudge believed that since she was a woman, the public was more receptive to her when conducting search and rescue missions and she was able to sympathize and comfort the victims party.⁸⁵ In efforts to emphasize the need for an increase of gender diversity in the force, both sexes bring a different energy to the table.

Rudge also started the conversation about therapy. Being a forest ranger brings a lot of unexpected events to the table with unexpected consequences. The job is very unpredictable and the forest rangers put their own lives on the line every time they go on a search and rescue mission or patrol their areas alone. And when some unexpected and unpredictable happens, it can be physically, mentally, and emotionally draining. Therapy is not a sign of weakness, but a sign of strength that was shown by Rudge after an incident. This is another potentially positive aspect of gender diversity which is that women are more likely to adapt. They adapt through asking for help after trauma which allows them to fully work through the stress and trauma.

⁸⁴ Interview with Patti Rudge on August 2, 2018, Big Indian, NY

⁸⁵ Interview with Patti Rudge on August 2, 2018, Big Indian, NY

Rudge was mauled by a bear while on the job where she was very badly injured. On top of almost dying, she had endured a lot of search and rescue missions that did not go well where victims were never found, or they found them, but they were too late. Because of all of this, she struggled with bouncing back mentally from these situations. Even though she was with others who witnessed the same heartbreak and disappointment that she did, omitting the bear incident, she was the only one, at the time, to admit that the job was difficult and didn't find asking for help as a sign of weakness.⁸⁶ The department offered support for the rangers after traumatic events and she was one of the only ones to take part in the therapy. She said this allowed her to cope with loss and make sure that she was mentally prepared to do the best job she could.⁸⁷

Women have continued to shape the force and contributed to their success. And although Rudge felt like she had to prove herself to all of her male co-workers, there were a lot of people who admired her and who saw her as the hardest working forest ranger that they had ever come across.⁸⁸ She was respected among many, but she also challenged a lot of her male co-workers with her sense of humor and impeccable intelligence.⁸⁹ This is one of the reasons, according to her, that men were intimidated by her.⁹⁰

Rudge's courageous leap into the Forest ranger force was the beginning of the New York State female forest rangers. She allowed others to see that it

⁸⁶ Interview with Patti Rudge on August 2, 2018, Big Indian, NY

⁸⁷ Interview with Patti Rudge on August 2, 2018, Big Indian, NY

⁸⁸ Interview with Paul Hartmann on July 30, 2018, Niskayuna, NY

⁸⁹ Interview with Scott Van Laer on July 23, 2018, Niskayuna, NY

⁹⁰ Interview with Patti Rudge on August 2, 2018, Big Indian, NY

was possible to do the job, and to do it well. In all instances where women have to enter a male-dominated field, they have to have tough skin and a will to prove themselves. Although it is sexist to say that women have to try harder than men in this job, that is the nature of it and it will be a long time before that feeling leaves this community.

Rudge retired in 2013 and she found a lot of problems with the job and the administration. She loved the work that she did and the people that she was able to help when she could, but she saw major flaws in the system. She believed that there were not enough women who were acquiring leadership and general positions in the DEC. This point was argued by the DEC that there were not enough women interested in the position, which begs the question of why this is. Another flaw is that there are not enough positions to fill since the state does not recognize this job as a top priority when protecting the environment.

The gender gap is very slowly becoming smaller as more women begin to become interested in this kind of profession, but it cannot continue to get smaller if there is a lack of job availability. Rudge influenced many women to take a job as a forest ranger, and those women helped influence others. People like Karen Glessman,⁹¹ who was the second permanent forest ranger in 1992, and current forest rangers today such as Nancy Gandswindt who owe their current position to her.⁹²

⁹¹ Interview with Paul Hartmann on July 30, 2018, Niskayuna, NY

⁹² Interview with Nancy Gandswindt on January 4, 2019, Schenectady, NY

Anyone who has a passion for nature and the environment has a right to consider this job without being scared away by the lack of diversity. Women who hold this job today have a lot to say about their own experiences and how it has helped shaped them. Rudge opened up doors for women to feel comfortable taking the position, but unfortunately today there are still areas of the job that are discouraging to women due to national agencies and state agencies.

Chapter Two

Current Views from Female Forest rangers

In New York State, the forest ranger job is not widely diverse as discussed in the previous chapter. There are many reasons why it is not diversified in the job itself, however it is necessary to look at the issue in a broader context of the United States.

As a nation, the United States has taken action to diversify education in order to not discriminate against someone based on gender, race, and sexual orientation. Title IX of the Civil Rights Act in 1972 which was a big triumph for women who participated in the women's movement.⁹³ This act encouraged everybody to look for an education past high school and opened up many more opportunities and beyond into a higher education. This act primarily focused on education and providing education for everyone regardless of race or gender. In the 1970's is when women began to seek education to become Forest rangers such as Hildegard Kuhn-Webb and Kathy Gilda. What they did not realize was that this pushed more women to pursue higher education which in return started to introduce them into the work force and away from their traditional role as being a stay at home mother. The Forest ranger job gained popularity because it allowed women who enjoyed the outdoors an opportunity to pursue their passion, while also gaining an income.

⁹³ Valentin, Iram. "Title IX: A Brief History." *Holy Cross JL & Pub. Pol'y* 2 (1997): 123.

This push began right after the second wave of feminism started to have more of an influence and more of an impact on society. This wave of feminism brought about massive changes that would allow women to feel more comfortable following a certain passion even if it were not socially acceptable before. The issue that is arising today is that yes, women have entered into the workplace, however there are many gender stereotypes that surround throughout the workplace.

Women are still faced with many gendered stereotypes in the workplace. Many people, men and women, still see women belonging in their traditional role as a wife and mother. Therefore, when women enter fields like the forest ranger job where it is primarily populated with men, they struggle to prove themselves as being qualified for the job even though they already are. This stigmatization causes women to constantly feel like they have to prove themselves.

In 2017, only 6.6% of women in the workforce were in male-dominated fields of work.⁹⁴ Although this might not seem like a lot, this is about a quarter of a million women who face gendered stereotypes and harassment when they go to work. These women are included in the National Park Service, the National Forest Service, and the New York State forest service.

These women are continuously breaking the traditional norms of male-dominated workplaces in order to overcome this kind of emotional and physical harassment. It is necessary to encourage more women to become involved in

⁹⁴ Ariane Hegewisch and Emma Williams-Baron, *Fact Sheet: The Gender Wage Gap by Occupation 2017 And by Race and Ethnicity* (Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2018): 1-9.

different professions that aren't historically female populated positions.⁹⁵ More women in the workforce holding jobs will give them more of a voice and an influence on the job.⁹⁶ Forestry is one example of a profession where more women should be involved in because of the benefits of a more diversified workplace.⁹⁷

From the outside, it always looked like men were the only ones who had an interest in the outdoors, so it seemed like females did not belong, however this was not the case. There were many women who were interested in the outdoors and had a connection with it, however they were not as vocal as the men. There was also the viewpoint that women belonged inside with the children and the men belonged outside doing the work.⁹⁸ This appeared to be the case until women began to become involved in outdoor recreation early on. Women like Anne LaBastille began to write about their connection to nature.

Anne LaBastille was an influential female figure in the Adirondacks who turned a lot of heads by her isolated lifestyle living in Black Bear Lake in the Adirondacks. She is referred to as the Woodswoman.⁹⁹ She lived a life of isolation in the woods, however she still presented herself as extremely feminine

⁹⁵ Hakim, Catherine. "Women, Careers, And Work-Life Preferences." *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling* 34, No. 3 (2006): 279-294.

⁹⁶ Hakim, Catherine. "Women, Careers, And Work-Life Preferences." *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling* 34, No. 3 (2006): 279-294.

⁹⁷ Brown, Greg, And Charles C. Harris. "The Implications of Work Force Diversification in The US Forest Service." *Administration & Society* 25, No. 1 (1993): 85-113

⁹⁸ Showalter, Elaine. "Feminist Criticism in The Wilderness." *Critical Inquiry* 8, No. 2 (1981): 179-205.

⁹⁹ LaBastille, Anne. *Women and Wilderness*. Random House, 1980.

by having long blonde hair and wearing bright pink lipstick.¹⁰⁰ She wrote many books where she explained her own connection with nature and how it was therapeutic and benefited her mentally and emotionally.¹⁰¹

Anne LaBastille not only bridged the gap between women and the environment, but she also shed light on the importance of conservation. In her books such as *Woodswoman*, *Women and the Wilderness*, and *Beyond Black Bear Lake*, she clearly stated why it was important to protect the environment with her descriptions of the areas, the pure beauty that she saw, and the negative effects of unregulated practices in the forest such as hunting and an increase in outdoor recreation.¹⁰² Some may say that she was fake or a phony,¹⁰³ by not truly having a connection with nature, but that is purely an opinion. She had her own personal experience that did have a positive impact on women and different environmental policies that would soon begin with the Environmental Movement in the 1970's.¹⁰⁴ Her overall impact on women pushed them to become more publicly involved in the outdoors and made more women interested in forestry as a potential profession.

The New York State Forestry Service's evolution from 1912 to present day has made strides that are parallel, on a much smaller scale, to the National Park

¹⁰⁰ LaBastille, Anne. *Women and Wilderness*. Random House, 1980.

¹⁰¹ LaBastille, Anne. *Women and Wilderness*. Random House, 1980.

¹⁰² Payne, Daniel G. "'Talking Freely Around the Campfire': The Influence of Nature Writing On American Environmental Policy." *Society & Natural Resources* 12, No. 1 (1999): 39-48.

¹⁰³ Interview with Peter Fish on July 31, 2018, Keene, NY

¹⁰⁴ Nelson, Valerie J. "Anne LaBastille Dies at 77; Naturalist Inspired Women to Explore Outdoors" *Los Angeles Times* (2011): 1-9.

Service and the National Forest Service when looking at gender diversity. The Forest Service was founded in 1905 by Theodore Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot and the National Park Service was established in 1916. These national agencies are different from the state departments. They are held to federal regulations and are much bigger whereas the state departments tend to be lagging behind when it comes to environmental regulations or workforce diversity.

In the National Park Service, women are defying and testing the bounds of femininity and masculinity as well as the bounds between gender and nature.¹⁰⁵

In the National Park Service, women have made a dent in their system long before the New York Forest Service introduced women. Through support of clubs like the National Women's Club and the Garden Clubs, it helped establish the National Park Service in 1916 through lobbying and establishing the importance of conserving the parks as well as educating the public on what would happen if there was no regulation in these areas.

Elite women were already behind the movement of establishing the National Park Service in order to preserve and protect the environment. They were mainly upper-class women who were wealthy enough to travel to different national parks to fully appreciate the beauty of these places, and saw a direct need to protect these places from exploitation. However, through the trickle down effect in social classes, women in lower classes looked at the wealthier women

¹⁰⁵ Sapp, Emily. "Emerging Discourses of Gender and Women in the National Park Service: An Ecofeminist Analysis of Ranger Newsletter from 1979 to 1999." (2018): 331.

and began to adopt some of their same practices which allowed them to have more of an appreciation for nature as well.¹⁰⁶

Females were allowed to serve as park rangers in the National Park, but they were not allowed to wear the same uniform as men were. It was not until 1978 when all forest rangers wore the same uniform. Before 1978 women had to wear skirts which resembled stewardess uniforms. This was one way that the job was clearly gendered. This caused the public to see them as conducting two different jobs even though each gender did the same job due to their appearance. A piece of clothing should not dictate one's professional abilities, however the skirt produced a feminized stigma towards women that made them seem less serious and less qualified in the eyes of the public.¹⁰⁷

As female park rangers in the NPS began to slowly increase and be referred to as permanent park rangers rather than naturalists or temporary employees, the role of the wives of male park rangers were also changing.¹⁰⁸ In a handbook written for the wives of the park rangers, it states that the wives were not allowed to intrude on their husband's job and made it a point to say that the job is theirs and not yours.¹⁰⁹ Even though female park rangers were gaining more of a positive image, the traditional role of the wife and homemaker seemed

¹⁰⁶ Jennifer Price, "When Women Were Women, Men Were Men, And Birds Were Hats" (1999):1.

¹⁰⁷ Joyce, Kathryn. "Out Here, No One Can Hear You Scream." *The Huffington Post* 16 (2016): 1-22.

¹⁰⁸ National Park Service History, "Women in The National Park." *National Park Service* (2019): 1-9.

¹⁰⁹ National Park Service History, "Women in The National Park." *National Park Service* (2019): 1-9.

to be viewed as the submissive and their only job was to obey their husband and to not invade or intrude on his very important work of the park ranger. Today the park ranger's wives have more of a voice and are looked at as people who add to the job, instead of inhibiting their husbands from performing to the best of their abilities.¹¹⁰

There is a very important double standard that lies here because as more women became park rangers, their husbands were never expected to “obey” them or to not intrude.¹¹¹ The rangers were typically out during the day and would come back at night to be with their family, but they were always on call. The role of the wife also poses the question of the role of the husband. The husband did not nearly have as much of a role as the wife did because the husband usually had his own job, where the wife's job was to take care of the kids. In any job, but especially the ranger job, a supportive partner is extremely necessary to carry out the job effectively¹¹². Since there were many more male park rangers to female park ranger, the male park rangers saw women as staying home with the kids instead of out in the wilderness. This attitude was carried over to how they view their female colleagues due to the job, and the societal stigma of the traditional female role.

Women were an important force in conservation and preservation because of their strong abilities and determination to prove to society that the

¹¹⁰ Email Conversation with Louis Curth in August, 2018, Schenectady, New York.

¹¹¹ National Park Service History, “Women in The National Park.” *National Park Service* (2019): 1-9.

¹¹² Interview with Aimee Bills on January 21, 2019, Schenectady, NY

environment was worth protecting, and they were able to do that particular job. In 1918, the first woman to assume the role of a park ranger in Yosemite National Park was Claire Marie Hodges who was a school teacher in California.¹¹³ Many females assumed roles of park rangers during this time because of World War I with the shortage of men for jobs due to the war, however these positions were only temporary. Claire Marie Hodges only worked as a park ranger from May 1918 until September 1918 when her services were no longer needed. Even though female park rangers were only temporary jobs at this time, it allowed for the public to see women assume the role of the park ranger and to see them in an outdoor setting, defying traditional roles and gendered stereotypes that women do not belong in the wilderness.¹¹⁴

Although the first female park rangers were in the National Park Service temporary due to the war, it did appoint influential women to administrative positions. Isabelle Story who wrote press releases for the National Park from 1919 to 1954, was an influential character in the appearance of the National Park because of her ability to help establish a positive image for the National Park Service.¹¹⁵ The first female superintendent for the National Park Service was Gertrude S. Cooper in 1950.¹¹⁶ The superintendent manages NPS and overlooks

¹¹³ National Park Service History, "Women in The National Park." *National Park Service* (2019): 1-9.

¹¹⁴ Sapp, E. (2018). Emerging Discourses of Gender and Women in The National Park Service: An Ecofeminist Analysis of ranger Newsletter (1979 To 1999): 1-310.

¹¹⁵ National Park Service History, "Women in The National Park." *National Park Service* (2019): 1-9.

¹¹⁶ National Park Service History, "Women in The National Park." *National Park Service* (2019): 1-9.

the programs, and helps educate the community on how to effectively preserve and protect the environment. These women helped establish an image for the National Park Service that was inclusive and accepting of all employees, especially after Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which prohibited discrimination on the basis of sex, race, or religion.¹¹⁷ This opened more opportunities for women. Before this law was put into place, federal agencies were allowed to not offer a job based on gender.

When comparing the ranger on the national level and a ranger on the state level, there is quite a lag for those on the state level. Female park rangers also have a better chance of moving up in the professional levels of the Park Service than those in the New York State Forest Service. For example women in the Park Service represented 16% of park superintendents in 1994, which is the most desired position by park rangers, and by 2004 they represented 25% of the park superintendents.¹¹⁸

In the New York State Forest Service today, there is only one female superintendent out of 100 forest rangers. Although it is a small number compared to the NPS ranger force of 28,000 employees, for women aim to reinvent the phrase of, “the first woman to serve as”, it is still quite a triumph. As a whole

¹¹⁷ Vaas, Francis J. "Title VII: Legislative History." *BC Indus. & Com. L. Rev.* 7 (1965): 431.

¹¹⁸ Kaufman, Polly Welts. *National Parks and The Woman's Voice: A History*. UNM Press, 2006: 1-312.

however, the National Park Service still has a long way to go in diversifying their workforce.¹¹⁹

The United States Forest Service is much further behind with only 13% of women making up their staff.¹²⁰ The United States Forest Service (USFS) is farther behind NPS even though they are both federal agencies. The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) is entirely different sector of the government from the New York State Forest Service. The USFS was founded in 1905 by Theodore Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot with the desire to protect the forests assets from exploitation for economic benefit.¹²¹

There is a possibility that National Parks are more organized or have a stronger aim to diversify their workplace however there is a larger question that is unanswered: why is there such a disconnect between parks and forests? Why are forest services on the national and state level struggling to diversify their workplace? It is possible that the park ranger is a more attractive job to females however there have not been enough studies done to come to an accurate and impactful conclusion. Nonetheless female park rangers in NPS are surpassing the numbers in the National Forest Service.

As a woman in a male dominated field (with female park rangers only making up 37% of the park rangers) women confront sexual harassment in the

¹¹⁹ Kaufman, Polly Welts. *National Parks and The Woman's Voice: A History*. UNM Press, 2006: 1-312.

¹²⁰ Brown, Greg, And Charles C. Harris. "The United States Forest Service: Changing of The Guard." *Nat. Resources J.* 32 (1992): 449.

¹²¹ Steen, Harold K. *The US Forest Service: A Centennial History*. University of Washington Press, 2013: 1-372.

NPS. In 2016 many cases of sexual harassment came to light in both the National Park Service and the National Forest Service.¹²² People joked about how this kind of behavior was never considered sexual harassment before, and it was only considered sexual harassment if there was obvious evidence of forced sexual intercourse.¹²³ And when women reported the instances of sexual harassment, they were never taken seriously and they were punished for speaking out.¹²⁴

Many female rangers are discouraged for speaking out. For example, NPS ranger employee Kate Watters complained about some point service employees for harassing her. Watters went to her supervisor who encouraged her to talk it out with the employee instead of filing a report.¹²⁵ When incidences like this are not reported, there is a skewed interpretation of the amount of sexual harassment going on in any sector of employment. However even when incidences are reported, they still are not taken seriously.¹²⁶

Another example is Lesa Donnelly, who was a former USFS administrator from 1978 to 2002 reported harassment from three of her male colleagues, she received calls from women in the USFS who said they filed

¹²² Joyce, Kathryn. "Out Here, No One Can Hear You Scream." *The Huffington Post* 16 (2016): 1-22.

¹²³ Joyce, Kathryn. "Out Here, No One Can Hear You Scream." *The Huffington Post* 16 (2016): 1-22.

¹²⁴ Joyce, Kathryn. "Out Here, No One Can Hear You Scream." *The Huffington Post* 16 (2016): 1-22.

¹²⁵ Joyce, Kathryn. "Out Here, No One Can Hear You Scream." *The Huffington Post* 16 (2016): 1-22.

¹²⁶ Joyce, Kathryn. "Out Here, No One Can Hear You Scream." *The Huffington Post* 16 (2016): 1-22.

complaints and they were punished for them for speaking out.¹²⁷ Donnelly compiled all of the complaints of the women and filed a class-action lawsuit against the NFS. After this female's ranger's complaints were taken more seriously, however in one instance a woman reported that her manager was stalking her and harassing her. He was forced to resign, but six months later the NFS tried to bring him back. This kind of behavior makes females in the NFS and NPS feel unsafe.

Female Park rangers in NPS take great pride in their work because of there physical, mental, and emotional abilities.¹²⁸ They perform heroic acts in situations where they put their lives at risk to save people in danger in the parks. However, all of these tasks are in the shadows of the humiliation that they suffer when it comes to sexual harassment. Even in this day and age where sexual harassment is taken so seriously in more traditional work place settings, the rights of women seem to be forgotten about, like those of Kate Watters and Lesa Donnelly, in the male-dominated forestry professions.¹²⁹

Today women have a much larger role in outdoor recreation than they did back in the early twentieth century.¹³⁰ Especially in the National Park Service, they play a larger role, partly caused by the push from the Civil Rights Act, to

¹²⁷ Joyce, Kathryn. "Out Here, No One Can Hear You Scream." *The Huffington Post* 16 (2016): 1-22.

¹²⁸ Joyce, Kathryn. "Out Here, No One Can Hear You Scream." *The Huffington Post* 16 (2016): 1-22.

¹²⁹ Joyce, Kathryn. "Out Here, No One Can Hear You Scream." *The Huffington Post* 16 (2016): 1-22.

¹³⁰ Kaufman, Polly Welts. *National Park and The Woman's Voice: A History*. UNM Press, 2006: ix-xi.

make male-dominated fields more diverse. Since women were allowed to get their foot through the door, it allowed them to show that they were just as capable of doing the job as men were. More women are willing to speak out about their experiences of the difficulties of working in a male dominated field on the national level than they are on the state level partially because female rangers make up a much smaller amount of the state level than they do on the national level. Perhaps the issue is that those on the state level have never been asked about their experiences. The National Forest Service is so far behind the National Park Service when it comes to gender diversity within the ranger workforce. And if the National Forest Service is so far behind, that proves a difficulty for the state level to catch up in this particularly male-dominated profession.

In the United States, typically male-dominated jobs are slowly being diversified as more women are leaving their traditional role behind and pursuing a more advanced career.¹³¹ In the forestry profession in particular, women like Patti Rudge paved the way and opened the door for women in the Forest ranger force in New York State. The force has evolved since 1988, however many of the gender stereotypes have not left the job. And on top of the stigma, there is also the actual work of the forest ranger where rangers are faced with physical and mental challenges.

¹³¹ Greenfeld, S., Greiner, L., & Wood, M. M. (1980). The "Feminine Mystique" In Male-Dominated Jobs: A Comparison of Attitudes and Background Factors of Women in Male-Dominated Versus Female-Dominated Jobs. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 17(3), 291-309.

The public rarely hears anything about the rangers on the state level even though they are doing just as much work as any other ranger at the national level.¹³² Scholars have not taken an interest on state level forest ranger positions in New York for reasons that are unknown. New York State forest rangers have been a muted topic which leads to no one really knowing a lot about the New York State rangers. Nobody has taken an interest in their job and how their job is unique to New York State and the Adirondack region.

She started her career with the Department of Conservation where she worked with fisheries. During this job she loved to be outside and she ended up meeting forest ranger Adam Pickett who influenced her decision and inspired her to become a forest ranger beginning in 2013.¹³³ She does not believe that there is a clear answer as to why it took so long for women to join the force. In her view women are perfectly fine and perfectly capable at performing the job to the abilities of any male forest ranger.¹³⁴ In her position she has witnessed men making derogatory comments about women's abilities to perform the job correctly because they always think they can do it better. This kind of mindset of their male counterparts gives women the idea that they need to prove themselves everyday when they go to work where they conduct search and rescue mission and in their overall work ethic.¹³⁵

¹³² Interview with Paul Hartmann on July 30, 2018, Niskayuna, NY

¹³³ Interview with Aimee Bills on January 21, 2019, Schenectady, NY

¹³⁴ Interview with Aimee Bills on January 21, 2019, Schenectady, NY

¹³⁵ Interview with Aimee Bills on January 21, 2019, Schenectady, NY

It could be claimed that the reason that more women do not pursue a job as a forest ranger in New York State is because of their obligation to take care of their children, however Aimee Bills is a mother and also a forest ranger. Having these two very demanding jobs is a plausible reason why women interested in the job do not pursue a career in forestry, however Bills proves that it is possible to do it- but it is more challenging than what men face because of continuing expectations of women and home and on the job: she is able to balance a demanding toddler with a very unpredictable job.¹³⁶ The schedule of the forest ranger is always changing. The job is an eight-hour job during the day however, a requirement of the job is that the ranger always has to be on call. rangers are expected to drop everything and attend to the the emergency. In Bill's opinion however, it's necessary to learn how to say no to the job when there are more pressing matters.

The biggest problem for a female is how they could be looked at as "weak" by their coworkers. There are times where they must reject a call due to other impeding responsibilities, however, for females specifically, their co-workers think that it is because they cannot handle the job.¹³⁷ There is a huge double standard when it comes to female forest rangers and male forest rangers. Bills believes that if a male forest ranger turns down a call, it is never really questioned, but if a female forest ranger turns down a job, it is because they cannot handle the intensity of it.¹³⁸ Older men will laugh and whisper under their breath if a woman

¹³⁶ Interview with Aimee Bills on January 21, 2019, Schenectady, NY

¹³⁷ Interview with Aimee Bills on January 21, 2019, Schenectady, NY

¹³⁸ Interview with Aimee Bills on January 21, 2019, Schenectady, NY

has to leave early for other obligations making the impression that they don't think that they can do the job correctly.¹³⁹

In another instance, if women ask for help or call for help in emergency situations, they are looked at as not being strong enough or smart enough to get themselves out of whatever dangerous situation they are in.¹⁴⁰ Patti Rudge said "You better crawl out of the woods on her broken stumps before you call for help."¹⁴¹ This applied back in 1988 and unfortunately it still applies now.

Doubt by coworkers is the biggest problem for the female forest ranger.¹⁴² For instances if a female ranger makes a mistake and takes a wrong trail, they are more ridiculed for their mistake than the men are.¹⁴³ Not all male forest rangers treat female forest rangers this way, however it is notable that enough do to cause a stigma around female forest rangers.

The forest ranger job is difficult, especially when faced with gendered harassment therefore, in order for the forest ranger to perform to the best of their abilities they need to have a supportive partner. If the partner does not understand the demands and the intensity of the job, it is nearly impossible for the forest ranger to be as available as they need to be. It is a constant struggle that they must address and internally battle. Without a supportive partner, the job is nearly impossible.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁹ Interview with Aimee Bills on January 21, 2019, Schenectady, NY

¹⁴⁰ Interview with Aimee Bills on January 21, 2019, Schenectady, NY

¹⁴¹ Interview with Aimee Bills on January 21, 2019, Schenectady, NY

¹⁴² Interview with Nancy Gandswindt on January 4, 2019, Schenectady, NY

¹⁴³ Interview with Aimee Bills on January 21, 2019, Schenectady, NY

¹⁴⁴ Interview with Aimee Bills on January 21, 2019, Schenectady, NY

Another issue that is believed to be a root cause of this kind of behavior by the public and by male forest rangers is the way that young children are educated and how they are trained to perceive the forest and the wilderness. Bills believes that there are major problems in the way that the Boy Scouts of America are taught in comparison to the way that the Girl Scouts of America are taught.¹⁴⁵ The generally upbringing of children and their perception of the forest is extremely gendered and that is another reason for the stigmatization.¹⁴⁶

In New York State, Robbi Mecus is the first openly transgender woman on the ranger workforce in New York State. Her story is particularly different from other female forest rangers' stories because she began the job as a male and then transitioned to a women during her job. She began her job in 1999 after she had met a ranger in the High Peaks in 1993 and listened to him describe the job. This is when she realized that she could be paid for doing something that loved.¹⁴⁷ She has a very interesting point of view both as being on the job with the gender of a male and then also now with her as a female forest ranger. She also has the point of view from a transgender woman and her own experience through enduring the forest rangers' negative reaction to her transition.¹⁴⁸

She believes that the forest ranger job allows her the freedom to focus on specific parts of ranger work that suit her personality and abilities.¹⁴⁹ It is by and large a group of independent people, who excel at working on their own with little

¹⁴⁵ Interview with Aimee Bills on January 21, 2019, Schenectady, NY

¹⁴⁶ Interview with Aimee Bills on January 21, 2019, Schenectady, NY

¹⁴⁷ Interview with Robbi Mecus on February 8, 2019, New York.

¹⁴⁸ Interview with Robbi Mecus on February 8, 2019, New York.

¹⁴⁹ Interview with Robbi Mecus on February 8, 2019, New York.

supervision.¹⁵⁰ She believes that the job has allowed her to grow as an individual, and has helped her grow into the person that she always knew that she was, however there she sees a lot of negative language being used that is rooted in the societal upbringing of children.

While she thinks that most men in her agency understand why discrimination and harassment in the workplace is not acceptable, she believes that there are still subtle behavior with the underlying implications that leads to the bigger issues.¹⁵¹ Language and commonly accepted terms and phrases are used daily by men and women without even knowing what they are implying. Foul phrases that mention particular aspects of males and females, or a simple phrase as, “Man up” are subtle phrases that are rooted in the misconception that women are weak. And when they hear it enough, they begin to believe that they are fragile, and not capable of courage or strength. They don’t outright say that women are not as strong as men, but when a male or female coworker says to grow a pair of balls as a metaphor for having courage, it corrupts the mind.¹⁵² People who don’t have balls aren’t courageous. Calling a group of people “you guys”, using male pronouns and masculine forms of words as the standard reinforces a patriarchal system that inevitably spills into the workplace. It is these little commonly used phrases that are strung throughout our society as deemed acceptable, however they just continue the stigma that women are not as strong as men.

¹⁵⁰ Interview with Robbi Mecus on February 8, 2019, New York.

¹⁵¹ Interview with Robbi Mecus on February 8, 2019, New York.

¹⁵² Interview with Robbi Mecus on February 8, 2019, New York.

Other female forest rangers, such as Nancy Gandswindt, have similar experiences as Robbi does. Nancy currently patrols Region 5 of New York State Protected Forests and she does not notice outright discrimination or harassment, but she does believe that there is subtle reflection of sexism in the workforce.¹⁵³ They use phrases such as “Don’t be such a girl,” that are derogatory but very rarely seen as being sexist because they are sayings that everyone has grown up with and they are part of societies vocabulary.¹⁵⁴

Simple societal sayings like “I throw like a girl” are used by both men and women. Although these are not outright discriminatory, they have a negative connotation associated with them that say that women are not as strong or as skilled as men. As Robbi Mecus pointed out, in the Forest ranger workplace these kinds of sayings are said all the time.¹⁵⁵ This kind of language and stigmatization begins with children’s upbringing and education.¹⁵⁶ And once a someone hears something long enough and it is used in their own vocabulary, they, and society begin to believe it.¹⁵⁷

Aside from sexist attitudes of co-workers, the job is not only physically difficult, but it takes a mental toll on the Forest ranger, especially in life-threatening situations. Therapy is something than many men do not discuss, and

¹⁵³ Interview with Nancy Gandswindt on January 4, 2019, Schenectady, NY

¹⁵⁴ Interview with Nancy Gandswindt on January 4, 2019, Schenectady, NY

¹⁵⁵ Interview with Robbi Mecus on February 8, 2019, New York.

¹⁵⁶ Dozier, R. (2017). Female Masculinity at Work. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 41(2), 197-209.

¹⁵⁷ Dozier, R. (2017). Female Masculinity at Work. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 41(2), 197-209.

studies prove that more women seek out therapy, even when men suffer from the same symptoms, such as depression.¹⁵⁸

Patti Rudge started the conversation about therapy. Being a forest ranger brings a lot of unexpected events to the table with unexpected consequences. The job is very unpredictable and the forest rangers put their own lives on the line every time they go on a search and rescue mission or patrol their areas alone. And when some unexpected and unpredictable happens, it can be physically, mentally, and emotionally draining. Therapy is not a sign of weakness, but a sign of strength that was shown by Rudge after an incident.

Rudge where she was very badly injured. On top of almost dying, she where victims were never found, or they found them, but they were too late. Even though she was among others who witnessed the same heartbreak and disappointment that she did, omitting the bear incident, unlike others, she didn't find asking for help as a sign of weakness.¹⁵⁹ As many other women such as Aimee Bills, Robbi Mecus, and Nancy Gandswindt who don't find asking for help as a sign of weakness, and who constantly use each other for therapeutic support.¹⁶⁰ If more women were aware of the benefits of the job itself then it would open up a lot more interest in the position.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ Birnbaum, Howard G., Stephanie A. Leong, And Paul E. Greenberg. "The Economics of Women and Depression: An Employer's Perspective." *Journal of Affective Disorders* 74, No. 1 (2003): 15-22.

¹⁵⁹ Interview with Patti Rudge on August 2, 2018, Big Indian, NY

¹⁶⁰ Interview with Nancy Gandswindt on January 4, 2019, Schenectady, NY

¹⁶¹ Interview with Patti Rudge on August 2, 2018, Big Indian, NY

If more women became interested in the position, it would help break ground and fight gendered stereotypes.¹⁶² More women are needed on the force because they are proven to be more open with the public and better leaders. They use their compassion as a tool to get through tough situations. If New York State Forest Service start breaking the gender norms and become more normalized towards female forest rangers, it must start with educating people on the New York State forest service and branching out with who the people who hold the jobs are in the forest service.

The gender gap that exists is only part of the problem with the New York State Forest Service.¹⁶³ Since it is so small compared to the national level, it is very difficult to find jobs as a forest ranger. There are people interested in the position, however there are not nearly enough spaces to effectively do the job to the best of their ability.¹⁶⁴ The lack of female forest rangers leads to a much bigger discussion of societal gender norms from gendered environmental education.

¹⁶² Interview with Aimee Bills on January 21, 2019, Schenectady, NY

¹⁶³ Interview with Aimee Bills on January 21, 2019, Schenectady, NY

¹⁶⁴ Interview with Aimee Bills on January 21, 2019, Schenectady, NY

Chapter Three

Changing the Stigmatization of Female Forest rangers

Female Forest rangers in New York State are not well represented within the Forest Service. They do not have enough recognition for everything they do. From many female Forest rangers who I talked to, they all felt like they had to prove something everyday that they were on the job, when men did not. They have had to fight harassment and foul language, while also slashing the stigmatization surrounded by the female Forest ranger.

When it seems like society is taking a step forward in the right direction of change and acceptance, it tends to take two steps back as well. George Orwell discussed in his book of 1984, that whoever controlled the past will indeed control the present.¹⁶⁵ This is a way of thinking that it continually seen in male-dominated work environments. Once women feel more widely accepted in a male-dominated role, studies show that when there is an equal amount of gender representation in the workplace, the workplace is more likely to succeed than others who are dominated by one sex.¹⁶⁶ Society must be challenge the way of thinking and that begins with education.

Children are very impressionable and susceptible to gender stereotypes, so if the education system centered around equality and a non-gender biased

¹⁶⁵ Orwell, George. "New York: Signet Classic." (1984).

¹⁶⁶ Merrick, Beverly G. "The Ethics of Hiring in The New Workplace: Men and Women Managers Face Changing Stereotypes Discover Correlative Patterns for Success." *Competitiveness Review: An International Business Journal* 12, No. 1 (2002): 94-114.

kind of curriculum, it might be possible to change the minds for the next generation. In relation to gender and nature, if children are taught to have the same kind of relationship with nature regardless of sex, it might be possible for the next generation to be on a more level playing field. In order to do this, the teachers need to be giving a non-sexist approach to their teaching.¹⁶⁷ By providing teachers with a teacher training program that prepares them with how to deal with sexist situations and sexist curriculums, it will help the children not assign a gender to a particular activity.¹⁶⁸ Things will not change overnight, but we can slowly chip away at the traditional role of women. If a woman chooses on her own to play into the traditional role, that should be her choice, and not one of the society.

In the New York State Forest ranger Service and other agencies, the male-dominated workplace is an indication that men feel as if they are the protectors of nature where they endure the most physical and difficult task of providing a well-maintained environment while protecting people from nature. However there is the other argument that it is a woman's job to protect nature due to motherhood and their nurturing nature.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ Gómez, Sara Cordon, Prudencia Gutiérrez-Esteban, And Sixto Cubo Delgado. "Development of Sexist Attitudes in Primary School Teachers During Their Initial Teacher Training." In *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol. 72, Pp. 32-39. Pergamon, 2019.

¹⁶⁸ Gómez, Sara Cordon, Prudencia Gutiérrez-Esteban, And Sixto Cubo Delgado. "Development of Sexist Attitudes in Primary School Teachers During Their Initial Teacher Training." In *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol. 72, Pp. 32-39. Pergamon, 2019.

¹⁶⁹ Buckingham, Susan. *Gender and Environment*. Routledge, 2005: 1-15.

Aimee Bills commented that breaking the gender stigma around the environment starts from a young age.¹⁷⁰ One way that the the United States has tried to introduce children into nature is through the Girl Scout and Boy Scout programs. The Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts organizations are after school initiatives to allows children of all backgrounds to learn different kinds of skills about the outdoors and self sufficiency, with the overall goal to activate children physical abilities.¹⁷¹ There has long been a divide between what the Girl Scout learns and what the Boy Scout learns. Part of this comes from the people who are directing these groups and their assumptions about how gendered they are. If more women were Boy Scout leaders, it would give boys a different perspective of what they are learning, and vice versa for Girl Scouts. If a man was a Girl Scout leader, this would allow girls to get a male perspective on certain activities that they do.¹⁷²

There are major gender issues with how Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts are trained. The boys are most often taught the more physical and scientific side of nature, while the girls are taught the artistic side.¹⁷³ Both messages are very important, however they should not gear one towards one particular gender.

¹⁷⁰ Interview with Aimee Bills on January 21, 2019, Schenectady, NY

¹⁷¹ Roetert, E. Paul, And Russell R. Pate. "A Century of Physical Activity in The United States." *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance* 90, No. 1 (2019): 3-6.

¹⁷² Denny, Kathleen E. "Gender in Context, Content, And Approach: Comparing Gender Messages in Girl Scout and Boy Scout Handbooks." *Gender & Society* 25.1 (2011): 27-47.

¹⁷³ Denny, Kathleen E. "Gender in Context, Content, And Approach: Comparing Gender Messages in Girl Scout and Boy Scout Handbooks." *Gender & Society* 25.1 (2011): 27-47.

When girls are not taught the historically more masculine practices, girls are not viewed as physically strong or mentally tough like boys are.¹⁷⁴ In order for these kinds of gender stereotypes to be broken at such an advanced age, children must be taught a wide range of skills when they are younger that are not geared towards gender, but mainly sparked by an interest. If a girl wants to learn how to build a fire or fish, she should be able to without feeling isolated or out of place.¹⁷⁵

Boys are taught how to be masculine and girls are taught how to be feminine, when the children should be taught how to be self sufficient.¹⁷⁶ If they teach boys how to build a fire they should teach girls survival tips as well, and if they teach girls how to sew, they should teach boys how to sew. Gendered activities should not be assumed anymore because once children become well-rounded with a vast amount of outdoor skills, regardless of the gender that is historically associated with them, we are going to have a new generation full of more well-rounded people.¹⁷⁷ It is not to say that women should not be taught feminist values in Girl Scouts, but it means that these new activities that they are

¹⁷⁴ Denny, Kathleen E. "Gender in Context, Content, And Approach: Comparing Gender Messages in Girl Scout and Boy Scout Handbooks." *Gender & Society* 25.1 (2011): 27-47.

¹⁷⁵ Interview with Aimee Bills on January 21, 2019, Schenectady, NY

¹⁷⁶ Denny, Kathleen E. "Gender in Context, Content, And Approach: Comparing Gender Messages in Girl Scout and Boy Scout Handbooks." *Gender & Society* 25.1 (2011): 27-47.

¹⁷⁷ Beames, Simon, Chris Mackie, And Matthew Atencio. "Adventure and Personal and Social Development." In *Adventure and Society*, Pp. 137-156. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2019.

learning will further solidify what it means to be a feminist, where you believe that you should have the same opportunities regardless of sex.

Since girls are not trained at a young age to expect much of themselves when it comes to their physical capabilities, it causes them to doubt themselves and question all of their decisions in all aspects of their lives.¹⁷⁸ However, once women do push themselves outside of their gendered comfort zones, they end up surprising themselves, just as female forest rangers do. Even though a majority of the population still has the mindset that a woman is meant to stay at home and take care of the family, the female forest rangers are defying that norm, especially in the New York State Forest Service where they are significantly behind on the times.¹⁷⁹

Steps need to be taken now to try to begin to change the mindset of people, but it is very difficult to change someone's old ways. Steps that could be done now in the New York State Forest ranger service within the DEC are to try and create an educational program for female Forest rangers rooted in diversity, inclusion, and acceptance. If there were more programs for women on the job where they were supported, it could possibly be more appealing to women, while also reaching more women than the Forest ranger Service already is. If there was an outreach program for recruitment in schools where Forest rangers go to schools in the surrounding area to make their job known to kids, it would help

¹⁷⁸ Denny, Kathleen E. "Gender in Context, Content, And Approach: Comparing Gender Messages in Girl Scout and Boy Scout Handbooks." *Gender & Society* 25.1 (2011): 27-47.

¹⁷⁹ Interview with Aimee Bills on January 21, 2019, Schenectady, NY

gain more interest in the job in general and increases the pool of potential female applicants.

Even though women clearly face bigger challenges than male Forest rangers do, what is universal in the Forest ranger force is the lack of recognition that Forest rangers as a whole receive. The amount of work that they do goes unnoticed a lot of the time for all the tasks importance of their job. There are a lot of people who don't even know that they are a part of their community, or have misinterpreted situations where a Forest ranger had to intervene because there was a danger to their safety or the well being of the environment. The whole Forest ranger force is not well recognized within New York State nor are they viewed as a necessity by the public and by the state-level government. This is seen through the lack of recognition they receive by the media, and also by the lack of urgency that the New York State government feels towards them. In Governor Cuomo's budget proposal for 2019, he is not adding any more Forest rangers positions, even though multiple Forest rangers believe that more jobs will make them conduct the job more effectively.¹⁸⁰

Forest rangers are needed now more than ever because they are constantly utilized and they are being stretched too thin. In 2017 they performed 177 search missions, 146 rescue missions, and 22 recoveries. There were a total of 346 incidents in 2017 and most of them were from hiking.¹⁸¹ That is at a rate of

¹⁸⁰ Interview with Paul Hartmann on July 30, 2018, Niskayuna, NY

¹⁸¹ "Forest ranger Annual Report Statewide Highlights for 2017." *SEQR - New York State Dept. Of Environmental Conservation*, [Www.Dec.Ny.Gov/Regulations/2371.Html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/regulations/2371.html) 2017.

about one rescue mission a day.¹⁸² When Forest rangers go out into the woods to look for hikers, it takes a lot of power and energy to find the lost hiker. They have to survey miles of terrain and most of the time it is in sub-zero weather in the dark¹⁸³. Rangers in the view of one report, are stated as being, "Overworked, stressed and unable to focus on public education and stewardship programs."¹⁸⁴ Despite the increase in search and rescue mission and the recent addition of 200,000 more acres of land to patrol in 2007, the staffing levels of Forest rangers remain unchanged.¹⁸⁵ They are no longer able to put the necessary amount of time to education programs and protecting the environment because of all the life saving missions they have to conduct.¹⁸⁶

An editorial in the Daily Gazette argued, "If the state can come up with the millions required to build a lavish rest area that includes a children's play area with zip line and selfie wall, it ought to be able to direct a little more money toward the Adirondacks' most urgent need: boots on the ground."¹⁸⁷ The state needs to understand why there need to be more Forest rangers so that they can complete all the additional work that they are being tasked with. And if more

¹⁸² Foss, Sara. "Foss: The Adirondacks Need More Forest rangers." The Daily Gazette (2019): 1-7.

¹⁸³ Interview with Paul Hartmann on July 30, 2018, Niskayuna, NY.

¹⁸⁴ Foss, Sara. "Foss: The Adirondacks Need More Forest rangers." The Daily Gazette (2019): 1-7.

¹⁸⁵ Foss, Sara. "Foss: The Adirondacks Need More Forest rangers." The Daily Gazette (2019): 1-7.

¹⁸⁶ Foss, Sara. "Foss: The Adirondacks Need More Forest rangers." The Daily Gazette (2019): 1-7.

¹⁸⁷ Foss, Sara. "Foss: The Adirondacks Need More Forest rangers." The Daily Gazette (2019): 1-7.

Forest rangers were appointed, there could be a mission to bring on more women to the force.

The advocates for the Forest rangers proposed to the State to increase the job by 40 Forest rangers in New York State.¹⁸⁸ Considering the amount of responsibilities they have, included the amount of land they are responsible for, this is a reasonable proposal. They also would like the assistance of local police for some of their law enforcement responsibilities as well as more educational hiker programs to limit the amount of search and rescue missions there are.¹⁸⁹ The State is spending money on aesthetic and publicizing the the forest rather than the actual upkeep of it.¹⁹⁰ They would rather build 16 million dollars worth of welcome centers than use the money to fund Forest ranger jobs to ensure the beauty that these people will see while they pass by the welcome centers.¹⁹¹ If they hired more Forest rangers, they would also save money on overtime that they are currently paying the the Forest rangers who are being overworked.¹⁹²

In New York State, the environment is considered very heavily when making decisions and a lot of money is put toward it to protect it and find new ways of how to protect it. In the Adirondacks in particular, there are a lot of

¹⁸⁸ Foss, Sara. "Foss: The Adirondacks Need More Forest rangers." *The Daily Gazette* (2019): 1-7.

¹⁸⁹ Foss, Sara. "Foss: The Adirondacks Need More Forest rangers." *The Daily Gazette* (2019): 1-7.

¹⁹⁰ Viewpoint: New Cuomo Budget Misses Major Adirondack Priorities. (2019, January 17).

¹⁹¹ Foss, Sara. "Foss: The Adirondacks Need More Forest rangers." *The Daily Gazette* (2019): 1-7.

¹⁹² "Editorial: State Needs More Forest rangers, Volunteers." *Daily Gazette*, June 3, 2018: 1-7.

problems and issues that need to be addressed but the biggest one is how human foot-traffic has diminished the trails in the Adirondack parks.¹⁹³ In the upcoming state budget for 2019-2020 in New York released by Governor Andrew Cuomo, it was proposed that there would be money put towards green initiatives, particularly in New York City, but the major environmental needs for the Adirondack Park and the Adirondack community were not met. Major needs include adding more funding to build a trail network in the High Peaks that could sustain the amount of people that it endures.¹⁹⁴

Another area that was ignored in the proposed budget was the need to combat climate change in the Park. There are major challenges of climate change that reveal themselves with the increase in temperature where the ice melts faster and the rivers, streams, and lakes end up flooding the trails. The request to add more funding to the Environmental Protection Fund to meet the needs of increased climate change were not met.¹⁹⁵ Climate change is something that has been debated and battled by the political agenda when in reality it is a scientific fact that it is occurring. Even a Democratic governor will not address the realities of climate change in the Adirondack park. This would have been beneficial for Forest rangers because they patrol the lands that are being affected by climate change. When a river floods, it floods trails which the Forest

¹⁹³ Viewpoint: New Cuomo Budget Misses Major Adirondack Priorities. (2019, January 17).

¹⁹⁴ Viewpoint: New Cuomo Budget Misses Major Adirondack Priorities. (2019, January 17).

¹⁹⁵ Viewpoint: New Cuomo Budget Misses Major Adirondack Priorities. (2019, January 17).

rangers have to take care of. And a flooded trail means that hikers cannot hike, which means they lose tourism which leads to a lose of money. Over the years advocates continually put in the proposal for more Forest rangers, but it always get denied.¹⁹⁶

Though the job does require a lot of discipline from an individual, as discussed with Aimee Bills, it is possible to have a family and do the job. It is possible to do this through the support of other Forest rangers and also through the support of the DEC. New York State is home to many forest preserves that need to be taken care of by forest rangers because they are home to indigenous species, pristine waters, and gorgeous scenery. And with the high demand of tourism in New York State forests, it is necessary that forest rangers increase as well.

People want to come and experience these views for themselves of which they should be able to. When more people come to areas like this, it boosts the economy for towns around the State Forests and brings in healthy revenue. Tourism is critical for the towns that the parks are in because most of them are not very wealthy. Tourism is a driving factor for why the state wants to publicize places like the Adirondack Park and the Catskills to bring in revenue and to create more employment opportunities, supposedly.¹⁹⁷ However, if the

¹⁹⁶ "Editorial: State Needs More Forest rangers, Volunteers." *Daily Gazette*, June 3, 2018: 1-7.

¹⁹⁷ Vidon, Elizabeth S., And Jillian M. Rickly. "Alienation and Anxiety in Tourism Motivation." *Annals of Tourism Research* 69 (2018): 65-75.

government is bringing all these people in, they have to remember what kind of toll all these people take on the places that they are visiting.¹⁹⁸

If the Forest rangers want more of a presence and a voice, they need to be seen as an element of economic development. The government needs to see how they would be an asset to bringing in revenue with an emphasis on gender diversity since a gender balanced workplace increases productivity.¹⁹⁹ If there were more Forest rangers, they would be able to keep the land cleaner and more attractive to the tourists who come just to see the views and the sites. This will intrigue them and make them want to continue to come back and to tell others about their experience. If the the Forest ranger is being stretched too thin, they won't be able to perform their job to the best of their ability and that may mean that the grounds are not as clean as they could be. If there were more Forest rangers, they could conduct more educational programs about safety in the woods. This would reduce the amount of search and rescue missions which would reduce the cost of resources that they would need for the missions because they would not be doing as many.

People break the rules all the time, sometimes on purpose and other time by accident. Forest rangers are the backbone to these places by protecting the areas and land that they patrol. If there were no Forest rangers, there is

¹⁹⁸ Dendrobatidis, Batrachochytrium. "No Safe Space: Prevalence and Distribution of." *Herpetological Conservation and Biology* 13, No. 2 (2018): 373-382.

¹⁹⁹ Brown, Greg, And Charles C. Harris. "The Implications of Work Force Diversification in The US Forest Service." *Administration & Society* 25, No. 1 (1993): 85-113.

absolutely no way that these parks would be in the shape that they are in today. Forest rangers combat threats to the environment such as littering, they lead and provide assistance on search and rescue mission, they help prevent life threatening events from happening by educating the public through on-site advice and also detailed talks at the Adirondack Museum.²⁰⁰ They are the insurance to the Adirondacks. They make sure that if there is something that is threatening the livelihood of nature, it is their job to fight it and protect it. They commit to the job knowing all the hardships that come with it, and knowing that it will continually become more challenging.

It is necessary to create more programs for Forest rangers in general to actively try to eliminate some of the stigmas that come with the job itself because some Forest rangers do seek help, but it is unclear as to whether the DEC pushes to make that known as much in the Forest Service and also to the public. In order for the New York State Forest Service to succeed, there needs to be more gender diversity in the workplace and there need to be more jobs available for Forest rangers in general. The State needs to see that as an irreplaceable necessity that needs to continue to grow as more and more responsibilities present themselves. Hopefully by telling the Forest rangers stories and experiences will help the public and the state understand that they are extremely valuable to the protection of the New York State Protected Forests as well as our safety.

²⁰⁰ Interview with Peter Fish on July 31, 2018, Keene, NY

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