

Christina Kakoyannis

2005-2007 AAAS Fellow at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Office of Environmental Policy Innovation; Evaluation Support Division

After receiving a PhD in forest resources from Oregon State University in 2004, Christina Kakoyannis was looking for opportunities to apply her skills and knowledge to a “real-world setting.” Her graduate school colleague, Patrick Smith, a 2004-06 AAAS Fellow at the U.S. Agency for International Development (see page 9), alerted her to the AAAS Fellowships.

Christina now is serving as a second-year AAAS Fellow in the Evaluation Support Division of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) Office of Environmental Policy Innovation. “People often move very quickly into producing a product,” she says. “As a scientist, I feel that I can contribute by taking a step back, looking at the larger objectives, and asking questions to assess whether our efforts are being executed most effectively.”

One of her most significant accomplishments during the 2005-06 fellowship year was organizing the Environmental Evaluators Networking Forum, which brought together 90 environmental evaluators and evaluation consumers from the U.S. and abroad to network and share ideas. The next gathering is scheduled for June 2007.

Christina also traveled to Belgium, the United Kingdom, and Germany to interact with academics and government officials to discuss opportunities for collaboration and exchange of environmental innovations that address EPA management priorities. “There are many lessons to be learned from how other countries have designed and implemented innovative environmental approaches,” she says.

During summer 2006, Christina spent eight weeks working with the Office of Management and Budget’s (OMB) Budget and Performance Integration team to gain firsthand knowledge of the Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART) that OMB uses to assess federal programs. She took that knowledge back to EPA to improve the program evaluation and performance measurement training for their offices.

Christina renewed her fellowship for the 2006-07 year to gain a more solid understanding of how the federal system operates. She currently is working to improve the scientific rigor of program evaluations by providing training and technical assistance to EPA programs participating in evaluations.

After her fellowship ends, Christina would like to work for a foundation or a government agency involved with environmental or natural resources management, perhaps continuing to use her skills in program evaluation. “I enjoy my work the most when I see a link between my efforts and improvement on the ground,” she says.

