

JOSH TRAPANI

2006-08 AAAS Fellow at the U.S. Department of Agriculture
Forest Service Office of Research and Development

2005-06 AGU Congressional Fellow
Office of Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA)

Josh Trapani was only a week or so into his 2005-06 Congressional Fellowship, sponsored by the American Geophysical Union (AGU), when he was inspired to apply for a 2006-07 AAAS Science & Technology Policy Fellowship in the executive branch. During fellowship orientation, the class visited the U.S. Department of State where they met with several high-ranking officials.

“When we visited State, I realized that agencies think scientists have contributions to make that transcend our specific areas of expertise. Before that, I never thought that my scientific background would fit in with the mission of many agencies,” says Josh, who holds a PhD in geology from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, and was trained as a paleontologist.

As an AGU Congressional Fellow, Josh worked on climate change, public lands usage, and space issues for Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA). Now in the executive branch, his AAAS Fellowship placement in the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Forest Service Office of Research and Development has enabled him to gain a deeper agency perspective to complement his experience on Capitol Hill. As part of the Forest Service Office’s Policy Analysis Team, Josh has tracked congressional activity on climate change and energy and has regularly briefed agency leadership on climate change mitigation and adoption options. He also has worked more broadly on determining markets for ecosystem services.

Direct interaction with top decision makers also was important to Josh. “The answers to many of their questions often have some scientific compo-

nent, but scientific information in raw form is rarely usable for their purposes,” says Josh. “I’ve learned how to cut to the chase and get the most important stuff out there first—how to get beyond simply presenting data to addressing: ‘What does this mean for the issue at hand?’ By learning to frame scientific information in the context of policy issues, AAAS Fellows can serve important advisory roles.”

Josh decided to renew his fellowship at the Forest Service for 2007-08. Following the end of this year, he wants to continue in a position that enables him to help translate science for decision-makers, and perhaps also interpret the “mysterious world of policy” for scientists. “Thanks to my AAAS Fellowship, there are many career options available to me now—a much broader array than I could have dreamed of when I was focused on an academic career,” he says.



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