

## Jason Thomas



Jason Thomas was born in Anchorage, Alaska, but he has lived in Boise, Idaho for most of his life. He oversees his activities as a student employee at Reclamation.

I started at Reclamation as a Student Trainee Engineering Technician through the Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP). I converted from a STEP to a Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) trainee in January of 2010. I was promoted to a SCEP

Student Trainee Civil Engineer in February of 2011 and am still in this position.

I applied for the initial position at Reclamation through the office of my two-year Drafting Program at Boise State University (BSU). My application was prompted by advice from my father (Bureau of Land Management) and my step mother, who graduated from the same Drafting Program in 2007. I figured it was worth a try, and I was caught off guard--but elated--when I was offered the position in January of 2009. I still had one semester until I graduated with the required Associate's degree.

I accepted the position under the condition that I would complete my Associates of Applied Science in Drafting Technology. I graduated with the required degree on May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2009, and I am currently continuing my education to earn a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering at BSU.

I work in Reclamation's design group, which consists primarily of engineers, engineering technicians, technical writers, Information Technicians, and Geographic Information System (GIS) specialists. My proficiency in AutoCAD has served me well. I use the software to create, revise, and update drawings for new designs and modifications for existing structures. My background in drafting allows me to focus on the Engineers' intent or goals for a project throughout its development rather than trying to learn AutoCAD on the job. The experience of working first hand with Professional Engineers and Engineers in Training is invaluable as I work towards my Civil Engineering degree.

I have had the opportunity to be involved with field work, such as site surveys and geology assessments. Reclamation also sent me to a three-day, intermediate AutoCAD Civil 3D class, which is the primary supported Drafting format my group uses for official drafts.

Everyone I have met at Reclamation has always been open and reasonably willing to help me with school or work by advising me or answering questions. My supervisors and the staff in Human

Resources place a strong emphasis on education and provide resolutions for conflicts between study and work.

My duties have been primarily focused on using AutoCAD. My work has evolved from drawing and notation only to include quantities and volume calculations via surface modeling, grading, and profiling in AutoCAD Civil 3D. Some of my drawings have offered alternative design options for model corridors, such as footpaths, roads, or waterways. My work has allowed me to make the transition from knowing *how to use* this enormous design tool to using its applications in the real world.

In addition to advancing my skills with AutoCAD software, I am learning how to integrate it with Environmental Systems Research Institute GIS to produce drawings. I have also been tasked with plotting signed drawings, such as preliminary designs, final designs, official revisions, and As-builts, and entering them into Reclamation's Electronic Documentation System (REDS).

I plan to graduate with a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering in May of 2013. I have not ruled out graduate school, but I would like to get my feet wet first by developing a civil engineering specialty. My short-term goals include being more involved in the mechanics of a project while maintaining a skill set in AutoCAD. I also want to learn more about GIS, Light Detection And Ranging, and survey data.

In the long-term, I would like to enter into some of the design work and assist other Engineers in Training through project development. I expect that Building Information Modeling will soon be the standard for project analysis. I will keep an ear to the ground and adjust my short-term goals for a long-term career.