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## Preparing the next generation of public land managers: A collaborative approach to summer internships

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## **Preparing the Next Generation of Public Land Managers: A Collaborative Approach to Summer Internships**

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In the late 1990s, the growing disconnect among agency managers, academics, and students had become apparent. Managers and educators grew concerned about the supply of experienced replacements, the lack of focused efforts to introduce new graduates into the federal workforce, and the decreased transfer of institutional knowledge within an agency and between an agency and academic institutions. Tehabi, filled this void with an internship program focusing on the technical aspects of management and the coping strategies needed to “survive” and even “thrive” in an agency culture. The program emphasizes collaboration among students, managers and educators and provides an experience with the larger organizational and environmental context of land management as well as day-to-day activities.

Now in its sixth year, Tehabi includes elements not commonly found in other academic or seasonal employment programs. Students begin with a two-week field course where they learn about organizational culture, community context, and systems theory as well as valuable field skills. Students are assigned to an agency mentor as well as a Tehabi staff “guide” with whom they will work closely all summer. In addition to performing duties ranging from resource management to interpretation, students complete weekly assignments and a final project of their own design that benefits the agency while building on aspects of their daily jobs. The results include enhanced transfer of institutional memory, completion of on-the-ground projects, and an applicant pool with the necessary skills and confidence to hit the ground running.

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