

# DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION



## OFFICE OF GENERAL COUNSEL



# Who we are...

The Department of Environmental Protection is the lead agency in state government for environmental management and stewardship and is one of the more diverse agencies in state government, protecting our air, water, and land.



# What that means to DEP's attorneys...



- Each attorney has the potential to explore all areas of environmental protection.
- Each attorney has the potential to make real and positive changes to their environment.
- Each attorney gets to tap into a wealth of scientific and legal expertise.

# Being an attorney for DEP

- There are three primary types of attorneys at the Office of General Counsel:
  - Permitting
  - Programmatic
  - Enforcement
- Each attorney serves a vital part in protecting the environment and the laws of the state.



# Enforcement attorneys



- Enforce our rules and laws.
  - Pursue penalties from as low as \$500 to millions, depending on the seriousness of the violation(s).
  - Pursue corrective actions.
- Litigation-based, but always optimistic for a settlement.
- Unparalleled experience. You are the litigator. You will run discovery, take depositions, and go to trial.

# Permitting attorneys



- They ensure everyone abides by the laws by defending permit challenges. Sometimes this will be to defend a permit that was denied; sometimes it will be to defend a permit that was granted.
- The issues are often complex and this, too, is great litigation experience.

# Program Attorneys

- These attorneys answer the day to day questions of various programs.
- These attorneys also often put out fires before they get to either an enforcement or permitting attorney.
- They get to research novel legal arguments.
- They get to write law (rule making).
- They get to defend our rules when challenged.

# Program areas

- In addition to dividing DEP's attorneys by type, they are often divided by program area.
- This allows people to become experts in their area.
- Programs include “state lands,” “water,” “air,” “waste,” and “hazardous waste,” to name a few.
- This allows you to explore your interests and find a niche you love.



# Culture

- Open door policy
- “Back up” – you are never left stranded
- Casual, but professional
- Courteous
- Friendships
  - Softball
  - Happy hours
  - Work day celebrations
- Quality of life



Photo Credit: John Moran

# Tallahassee

- Young attorneys and other professionals
- Great music
- Sports
- Culture
- Close to numerous state parks



# Student Loans

- The College Cost Reduction and Access Act of 2007
  - Work for a non-profit or government
  - Covers all federally-backed student loans (cannot, at this time, include private loans)
  - You have to consolidate with Direct Loans or other lender involved in this program.
  - You pay (as of July 2009) 15% of your salary a month.
  - After 10 years in government, and 10 years of payments, the federal government pays off the rest.
  - You're out of student loan debt in 10 years and your payments are manageable.
  - When contemplating a private, higher-paying job over government, don't forget to add in this benefit IF it is still in place at the time you start working!

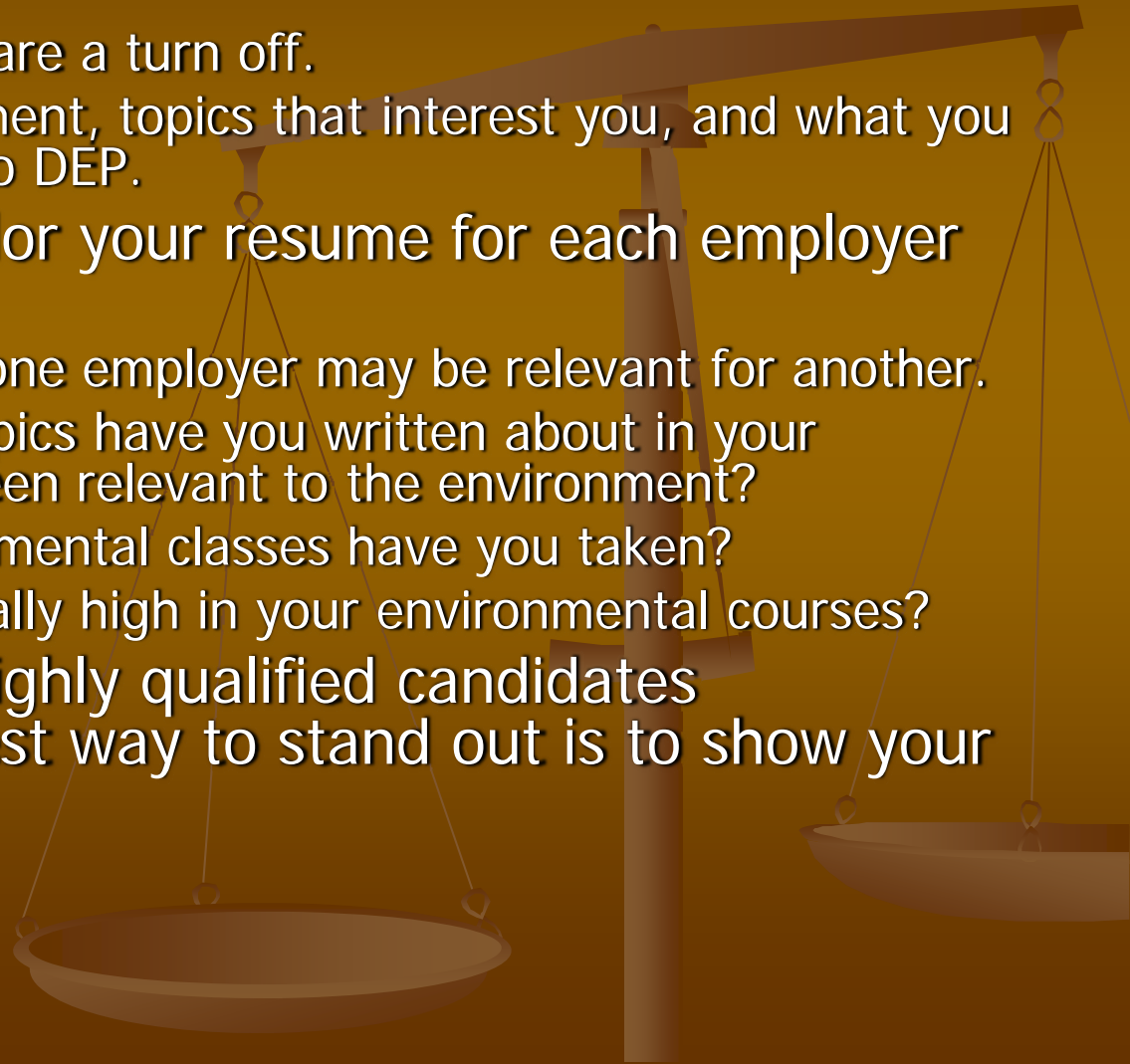
# Recruitment

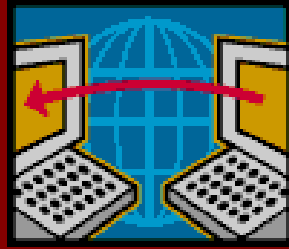
## TRUE OR FALSE?

- As a state agency, DEP must publish its open positions.
  - **FALSE.** DEP often does not publish open positions, which means you should not wait until you see an open position to apply.
- DEP has a high turnover.
  - **FALSE.** DEP's attorneys are committed to a better tomorrow. DEP looks at resumes and tries to find a good match for the Department who will stay *at least* 2 years.
- Because it's a state position, I'd get great benefits.
  - **DEPENDS.** Be sure to ask about what kind of benefits are available when you interview. Most attorneys get benefits and those include: 4.5 weeks of vacation a year, 3.5 weeks of sick leave a year (plus a sick leave "bank" option), full medical insurance, and partial dental and vision insurance.

# Advice before you apply...

- Have a cover letter specifically addressed to the General Counsel.
  - Generic cover letters are a turn off.
  - Explain your commitment, topics that interest you, and what you feel you could bring to DEP.
- Don't be afraid to tailor your resume for each employer you send it to.
  - What's mundane for one employer may be relevant for another.
  - For example, what topics have you written about in your classes? Have any been relevant to the environment?
  - What specific environmental classes have you taken?
  - Was your GPA especially high in your environmental courses?
- DEP has extremely highly qualified candidates interviewing. The best way to stand out is to show your dedication.





# Links

- For DEP's OGC recruitment page:
  - <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/legal/recruitment/recruitment.htm>
- For information on the College Cost Reduction and Access Act of 2007:
  - <http://www.equaljusticeworks.org>
  - You may also want to call your lender and Direct Loans to have your personal questions answered.