AggieAir Employee Spotlight: Shannon Syrstad | AggieAir

10/14/2019

Each month AggieAir likes to take a minute to highlight an important member of our team, who without their contributions we wouldn’t be where we are at today. This month’s spotlight is on Shannon Syrstad, our resident photogrammetrist and GIS Analyst. Shannon’s not only been with AggieAir since its inception in 2006, but is also celebrating 20 years of work at the UWRL this year.

Shannon first came to the UWRL in 1999 after graduating from Indiana University. She completed an AmeriCorps GIS Internship with Ashley National Forest and the moved to Logan after the internship was over. Within a week of arriving in town, the UWRL hired Shannon to work on photogrammetric tasks on imagery flown with manned aircrafts with the INSE (Institute for Natural Systems Engineering) Service Center. Regarding her first job, Shannon said, “Technology was very different then. I wore heavy 3D goggles for stereoscopic viewing when working with the imagery. This was several years before AggieAir was even an ideal!”

Shannon holds degrees in Environmental Management, Public Management, and a minor in Spanish from Indiana University where she graduated in 1999. She then went on to receive a Master’s degree in Water Resources Engineering from USU in 2012, while also working at the UWRL. For AggieAir, Shannon uses this education to perform photogrammetric, remote sensing and GIS tasks using imagery collected from our missions. This imagery requires correction, orthomosaicking, and conversion into meaningful and actionable scientific data for our clients.

AggieAir Service Center Manager Ian Gowings commented on working with Shannon, saying “Shannon is an integral member of the AggieAir Service Center and a wonderful colleague to work alongside. Her in-depth knowledge of image post-processing and Agisoft, has been invaluable to AggieAir's success. She is extremely conscientious, hard-working and always striving for perfection”.

We recently sat down with Shannon to learn more about her research and experience:

What inspired you to choose this field of study?

While at Indiana University, my favorite courses were stream ecology, watershed management, and lake management. I told myself one day I would continue my education in something pertaining to water. While working at UWRL, with an undergraduate degree, I helped many graduate students with their projects which gave me the motivation to continue my education. After 8 years of being employed at the UWRL, I decided to continue my education which began with a several undergraduate engineering courses before I could apply to the College of Engineering at Utah State University. It took just over 5 years in all, but I am thrilled I was able to obtain a Master’s in Water Resources Engineering while being employed at the URWL.

What is your favorite part about working with AggieAir?

The science produced by AggieAir is amazing and cutting edge. I am proud to be part of this service center. There are always problems to solve along the entire process from collection to deliverables. I still learn new things every week even after working at the UWRL 20 years.

What’s the most challenging part of the work you do with AggieAir?

The technology and science are always evolving so that is a challenge in itself.

What’s the most important thing you’ve learned during your 20 years at the UWRL?

Over the last 20 years, I have learned that nothing is static. Everything changes constantly (people, software and technology), so one must be flexible, adaptable and
continue the learning process. If you’ve dialed in a method, it’s going to be different by next year!