



LRIGS PhD candidate Sebastian Dietrich.

Mr Sebastian Dietrich is a PhD student in the Department of Renewable Resources. He joined LRIGS and started his PhD program in April 2014, coming from a job with a mining and environmental consulting company in Germany. He had completed an MSc degree in Natural Resource Management at the Dresden University of Technology, in Germany.

Sebastian has always been fond of the outdoors. For most of his life he has enjoyed hiking, camping, fishing and hunting; hobbies that he still pursues in Canada. He is an active member of the Sherwood Park Fish and Game Association. Land reclamation is a logical extension of his passion for nature.

He developed his interest in land reclamation while studying forest sciences and natural resource management and visiting lignite coal, uranium, sand and gravel, quarry and pot-ash mines in eastern Germany. The various scales and types of operations helped him to recognize the importance of reclaiming landscapes disturbed by human activities and provided insight into different strategies for land reclamation.

He is currently working with Dr Derek MacKenzie. His research involves using spatial pattern analysis of soil plant relations to determine land reclamation success and refinement of substrate for upland oil sands mine reclamation. The work excites him because it could lead to improving placement of capping material and tailoring its characteristics to improve establishment of native species. This could lead to earlier reclamation certification for disturbed lands and better ecological functioning of the resulting post reclamation landscapes.

Sebastian's earliest influences were his father, a high school biology and chemistry teacher, and his grandfather, a passionate hunter and land





steward. Both men provided Sebastian with opportunities for hands on learning in the outdoors and to learn more about the science behind his experiences. Later influences included his employers in Germany, Frank and Gunther Galinsky, who helped him to recognize and appreciate the multidimensional nature of land reclamation, and his current PhD supervisor, Dr Derek MacKenzie, who has helped him to develop and improve his skills and to think outside the box.

His time in LRIGS has been very enjoyable. Sebastian has appreciated his exposure to a diverse spectrum of land reclamation projects being carried out by his fellow LRIGS participants that range from animal habitat restoration to degradation of hydrocarbon pollutants. LRIGS has provided him with good opportunities to network with land reclamation professionals in industry, government, consulting and academia both at events on campus and through the annual LRIGS trips to domestic and international destinations.

Sebastian is making very good progress on his PhD research and anticipates finishing the degree early, sometime in 2017. Afterwards he plans on either doing postdoctoral work or work in land reclamation consulting in an English or German speaking country.