

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Ranger Intern, Summer 2020

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Background

- Over the summer, I worked as a Ranger Intern for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) at Alum Creek Lake. This is a dammed reservoir located north of Columbus in Delaware County.
- USACE is a federal agency with over 400 lake and river projects across the nation. They are a leading provider of outdoor recreation, with visitation number around that of the National Park Service. Many of their projects employ rangers. They are tasked with maintaining the park and ensuring safety and enjoyment for all visitors.
- My internship was also provided by the Student Conservation Association. This organization partners with many different agencies to help provide student with meaningful internships and experiences.
- I was notified about this internship opportunity by one of my former professors, Sue Rasche. I reached out to the contact that she provided and was hired by the end of the week. I am very grateful to have been provided this opportunity on such a last-minute basis.

Welcome to the Visitor Center



Myself (right) and co-intern Tucker Green in front of the visitor center at Alum Creek Lake.

On the Job

Interpretation

- Created interpretive program about native tree identification
- Provided visitors with guided tours of the dam
- Helped produced web ranger videos for the USACE Facebook page

COVID-19 Response

- Frequently sanitized restrooms and other facilities
- Ensured visitors wore face coverings while exploring the visitor center

Daily Tasks

- Patrolled the lake to ensure areas are being properly maintained
- Interacted with visitors to help them locate areas of interest or recreation opportunities
- Staffed the visitor center

Water Safety

- Set up booths around the dam to give information about water and boat safety
- Handed out free items, like cups and frisbees, that promoted water safety
- Provided courtesy vessel inspections to ensure safety and compliance with boating regulations

Native Sensory Garden



This garden was composed off all native species and over 400 individuals. Its purpose is to show the importance of planting native and to have visitors to interact with plants relating to all five senses.

Monarch Rearing and Tagging



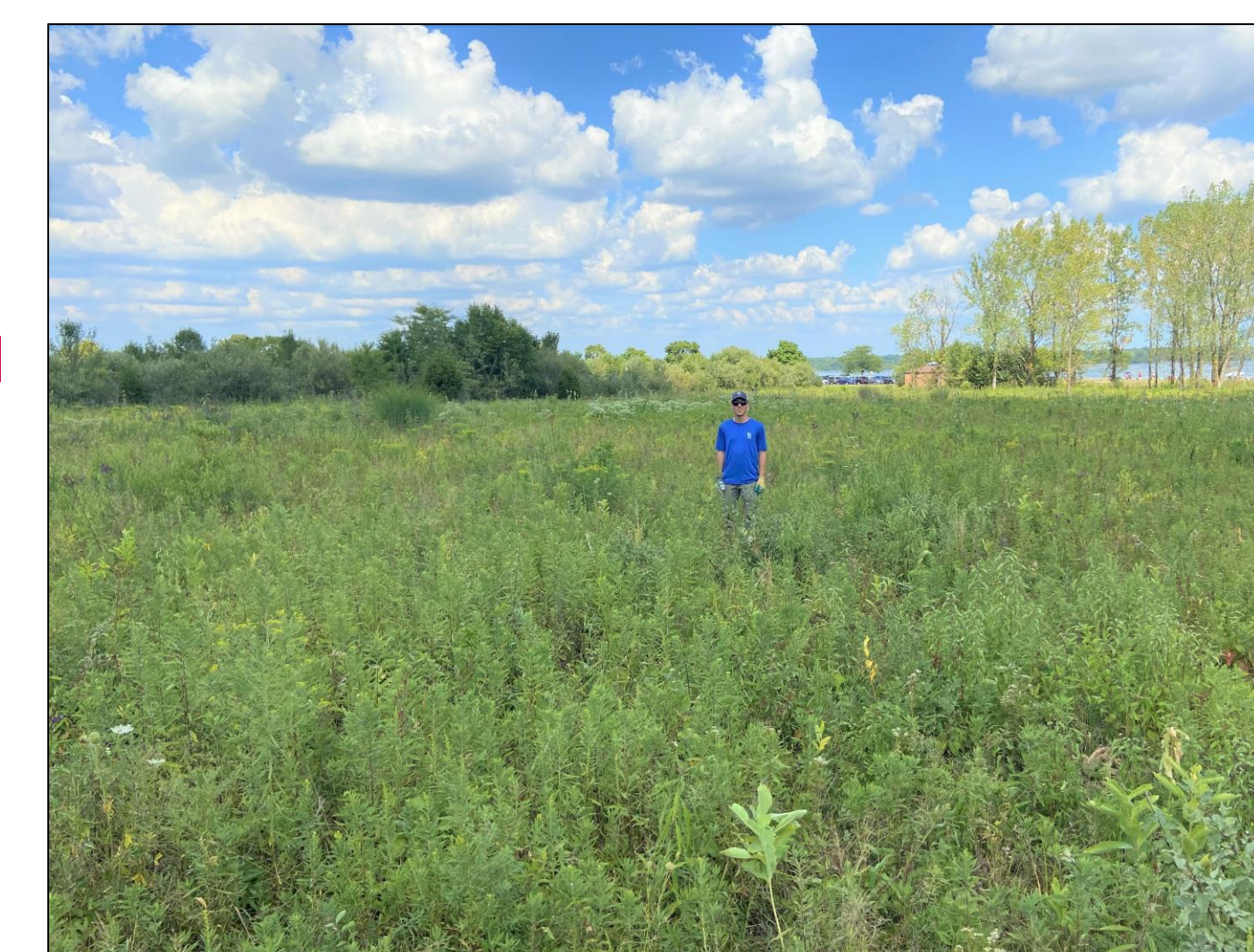
Environmental Related Tasks

- Removed invasive species from the local prairie
- Helped plant over 400 native species to act as a sensory garden in front of the visitor center
- Reared monarch butterflies from the local garden and tagged them upon release for research purposes
- Took biweekly reads of the lake and outflow stream water quality



Before Invasive Teasel Removal

After Removal



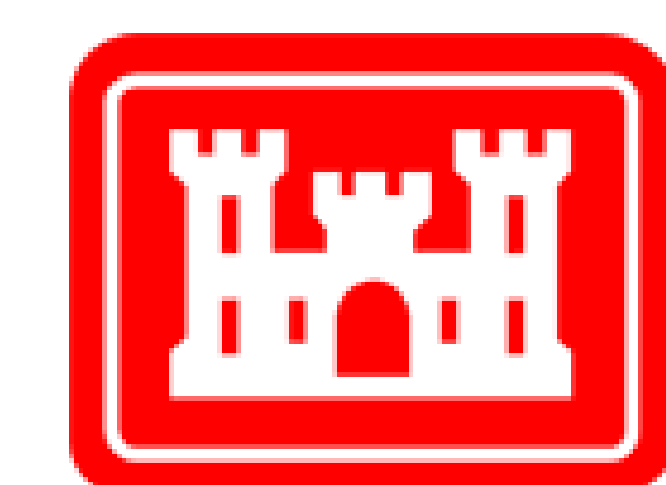
Patrols



Patrols were a daily occurrence for the internship. Sometimes they would be by boat on the water, but most time they would be in the ranger truck. I would drive through most of the areas and parking lots around the lake to ensure everything was being properly maintained. It also served the purpose of displaying a presence for USACE and the rangers.

Reflection

- I am very happy that I took part in this internship over the summer. I got to take part in some great projects. I am grateful to have gotten lots of first-hand experience in the interpretation and visitor services area, and I think it will help me immensely. While I could see it being a future career, I am still going to keep researching and gaining experience in the plethora of areas in the environment and natural resources field.
- For any students interested in a similar experience be prepared for anything. Your day to day will have some routine to it, but you will constantly be working on new tasks or making some up yourself. If it also was not clear, make sure you have honed your communication skills. Talking to visitors and helping them with questions will quickly become second nature.



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