Background:
For my internship this summer, I worked as a Timber Sale Preparation Student Trainee for the USDA Forest Service on the West Zone of the Hiawatha National Forest. I was working out of the Rapid River / Manistique Ranger District Office located in Rapid River of Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. The Forest Service is responsible for caring for our nation’s vast National Forest System. The Forest Service’s motto is “Caring for the land and serving people,” and I was blessed with an opportunity to fulfill this motto while improving my timber management knowledge.

Getting the Job:
I was fortunate enough to hear about the application deadline for the job I got through networking. Before hearing about the job deadline, I was checking USAjobs.gov multiple times a week. This was the best way to make sure that I did not miss any application windows. Applying to jobs can be a tedious process, but it is well worth it. Another important factor to getting the job was being prepared for interviews over the phone and having a neat and complete resume. My advice to anyone considering applying to the Forest Service is to be sure you do everything correctly on USAjobs.gov while applying and to apply as early as possible!

A Day in the Life:
My primary duty over the summer was to mark timber in preparation for a future timber sale. This involved following prescriptions that were created specifically for each unique sale unit. The instructions included information about which trees should have priority in being cut (damaged, dying, etc.) which species to target and leave behind, and the residual basal area to be left behind. Depending on the prescription for a given unit, I would be either instructed to mark trees to be cut with a slash of blue paint or mark trees to leave behind with a band of orange paint.

Reflection:
This summer was an amazing experience for me. I learned and sharpened many skills that are basics of forestry. This internship showed me what it is like to work as a forester under the government, and I learned that working for the USDA is something I wholeheartedly enjoy. I will return to work in Rapid River the following 2 summers under the Pathways program, and I can not wait! For anyone interested in an experience like this, my advice is to apply right away, and not be afraid of ending up far from home. Also be sure to look into other agencies who hire forest professionals, such as the BLM.