

Natural Resource Steward

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Background

This past summer I worked as a **Natural Resource Steward for the New York Department of Environmental Conservation**. The position was also facilitated through the **Student Conservation Association**. I worked in the St. Regis Canoe Area and Saranac Lakes Wild Forest in the Adirondack Park in upstate New York, about 20 minutes outside the town of Saranac Lake.

NYS DEC's mission is "to conserve, improve and protect New York's natural resources and environment and to prevent, abate and control water, land and air pollution, in order to enhance the health, safety and welfare of the people of the state and their overall economic and social well-being."

SCA's mission is "to build the next generation of conservation leaders and inspire lifelong stewardship of the environment and communities by engaging young people in hands-on service to the land."



On the Job

On a typical day, I would start work at the St. Regis Canoe Area ranger station. At the station I would gather my gear, load my canoe onto my vehicle and make my plan for the day. One of the perks of working in the canoe area was every day started with a paddle on a scenic Adirondack lake or pond.



Everyday started with a scenic paddle.

Main job duties included:

- Maintaining hiking and canoe carry trails.
- Patrolling backcountry campsites – ensuring visitors are following all the rules and regulations.
- Educated visitors on Leave No Trace Principles.
- Performing environmental restoration on closed and heavily impacted campsites.
- Assisting Forest Rangers responding to emergency situations.

Accomplishments by the numbers:

- Maintained 21,089 feet of hiking trails and canoe carry trails.
- Utilized the authority of the resource technique to educate over 200 visitors on Leave No Trace principles.

Reflection

Working as a Natural Resource Steward allowed me to explore a variety of different potential career paths. My work allowed me to spend time with foresters, forest rangers, wildlife technicians and biologists and professional trail crews, getting firsthand insight into their work responsibilities. Additionally, the main area of focus of the internship was recreation management, giving me a deeper understanding of what goes into recreation management.

Moving forward, I do plan on applying to some positions with NY DEC following graduation. I would very much enjoy returning to the Adirondacks for another season, as either a forestry tech, wildlife tech or assistant ranger.

I would also consider serving another term with SCA following graduation. SCA has a wide variety of internships all over the country. Another term with SCA would allow me to explore other types of jobs before I start seeking more specialized, permanent positions.



Environmental site restoration work included closing the site, transplanting seedlings, soil scarification and working to control shoreline erosion.

Clearing blowdown on trails was made easy by the high-quality saws provided to me by DEC.



The only difficulty associated with my internship experience was the lack of supervision or guidance from the agency. Identifying and completing work tasks was done entirely independently. It was up to me to find work to do and complete it. At times, it would have been beneficial to have more guidance from my supervisors.

For anyone considering completing this same internship I would only recommend it if they are comfortable with a high degree of independence. In order to be successful, I had to take a great deal of initiative in finding and completing work tasks. Additionally, the high level of independence made communication with my supervisor's paramount to my success. Communicating my struggles to my supervisor and asking for more learning experiences was crucial to my success in this position.



Some days I had the opportunity to serve as a summit steward, talking to hikers on St. Regis Mountain and answering any questions they have.



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