

Ohio Department of Natural Resources: H2Ohio

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OHIO DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

- Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) is a state government agency
- I worked at the main branch in Fountain Square in Columbus, OH, but there are many branches across the state
- Their mission statement is “to ensure a balance between the wise use and protection of our natural resources for the benefit of all.”



The Ohio Department of Natural Resources logo, courtesy of <https://ohiodnr.gov/home>

THE H2OHIO PROGRAM AT ODNR

- Gov. Mike DeWine’s statewide water quality initiative
- Collaboration between three government agencies
 - ODNR: wetland creation, restoration
 - OEPA: lead contamination, septic systems
 - ODA: BMPs for agriculture
- So far, ODNR’s H2Ohio has created or restored 113 wetlands across the state
- Projects are collaborative efforts with either internal (Divisions of Wildlife, Engineering, etc.) or external (Black Swamp Conservancy, TNC, etc.)



The H2Ohio logo, courtesy of <https://h2.ohio.gov/>

THE IMPORTANCE OF WETLANDS

ODNR chose to focus on the creation and restoration of wetlands to improve water quality because they ...

1. Are a natural water filtering system
2. Remove sediments, nutrients, and other pollutants
3. Create habitat and provides ecosystem benefits

Over 90% of Ohio’s original wetlands have been drained and our waterways have suffered (especially HABs). By restoring the landscape back to its natural state, we can improve the health of our aquatic systems.



A beaver pond adjacent to a brand new H2Ohio wetland site, Trumbull Creek. An old agricultural field was taken out of production and turned into a flow-through wetland.

WORKING ENVIRONMENT

My workspace consisted of an office that I shared with one of my bosses. The ODNR H2Ohio administration consists of only two employees, so they appreciated having an intern to help. My bosses were passionate, flexible, and great people to work for. I did not get to work with other interns, but I met a ton of professionals from all kinds of backgrounds and organizations.



Wetland sampling at Brooks Park Wetland with the LEARN team. Here, a researcher from Wright State University is using a Sonde to take water quality measurements.

AN AVERAGE WEEK ON THE JOB

There was not a single week that I spent every day in the office. Most weeks, I would be in the office for three days and traveling the other two days.

Travelling Days

- Visiting H2Ohio wetland sites
- Wetland sampling
- Meetings
- Conferences

Since H2Ohio has projects and partners all over the state, most trips took all day.

Office Days

- Updating our website
- Writing project descriptions for our new projects
- Reading and reviewing project descriptions
- Emailing partners or constituents
- Sitting in on Zoom meetings
- Organizing our project information and metadata

REFLECTION: GOING FORWARD

Future career goals – I would like to pursue research, either in academia or in a national government agency such as NOAA or USGS. I appreciated this internship, but I learned how much I value the hands-on work and in-the-field experiences that office jobs can’t offer.

Next steps – Instead of seeking out similar internship experiences, I will be looking for research experiences going forward. I’m also hoping to go to graduate school.

Advice – do your research before going to an interview! Make sure you know enough about the organization to ask and answer some basic questions about the work being done there. Knowing what you’re applying for and why will help your chances of getting the job!



One of my favorite site visits was at a future H2Ohio project site. This was an overgrown golf course that our partner acquired a year ago. We got a tour of all 300-acres of the property. It was amazing to see how quickly nature can reclaim the landscape.

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