

Interpretive Intern, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

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BACKGROUND

This summer, I took a paid internship with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at Deer Creek Lake in Mt. Sterling, OH. I was hired through the Student Conservation Association and was eligible for an Americorps service award, which provided me with a \$1,700 scholarship at the end of my 12 week, full-time position.

How I Found the Position:

- I learned of the internship during a class of ENR 4611 with professor Sue Rasche, who had received a request from the staff at Deer Creek for student interns. I got in direct contact with the manager and we set up a phone interview, which followed with my formal application.
- The internship was posted through the Student Conservation Association on thesca.org, which is an amazing organization with an array of environmental internships across the country!

About the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers:

- Agency under the U.S. Army and Department of Defense, formed in 1802.
- Primary function is to manage infrastructure in the U.S.
- Provides flood risk management structures and solutions, also managing many waterways and surrounding lands—over 400 projects!

Manning an information and water safety outreach booth with the Student Ranger for a triathlon event at the park.



ON THE JOB

As a water safety outreach and interpretive intern, I took control in developing an interpretive program for the summer rec season. This included many emails and phone calls to create partnerships with local organizations that could benefit from naturalist programming and events with water safety messages.

Daily Tasks:

- Accompany rangers on boat and land patrols.
- Create program flyers and outlines.
- Hike the trails; engage with park's recreators
- Aid rangers in projects, such as replanting and tending to pollinator gardens.
- Assist in dam operations to understand the inner workings of the system and be a knowledgeable park resource.



Two honeybees stopping by to check out our pollinator gardens exhibit!

PROGRAMS

- In all, the Student Ranger and I led 11 programs through the summer on water safety and topics of our special interests, such as camping, Leave No Trace principles, creeking and civilian science, Tree ID, and what makes a habitat.
- We had programs that reached all age demographics, but most frequently saw preschoolers and school-aged children, as well as families.
- Created Facebook posts highlighting days, events, and programs such as National Endangered Species Day and Boating Safety Booths.
- Personally engaged with nearly 700 community members across two county fairs while tabling.

Dressing up as Bobber the Water Safety Dog to teach kids water safety and how to properly wear a life jacket.



REFLECTION

In the academic year before taking this position, I learned of environmental interpretation and took a large interest in it. I've always enjoyed working with people and wanted to combine that with my love of education and advocacy for the outdoors.

Through this position, I gained insight into the federal side of natural resource management and got to work with the Student Conservation Association and Americorps. All of these agencies have a host of opportunities I look forward to exploring further.



Seining for macroinvertebrates during a civilian science creeking program to examine water quality

The best (and cutest) visitor to Deer Creek Lake!



Myself and the rangers posing with two participants that were eager to have our Junior Ranger program!

A campground program flyer I designed for our one of our first programs.



LOOKING AHEAD

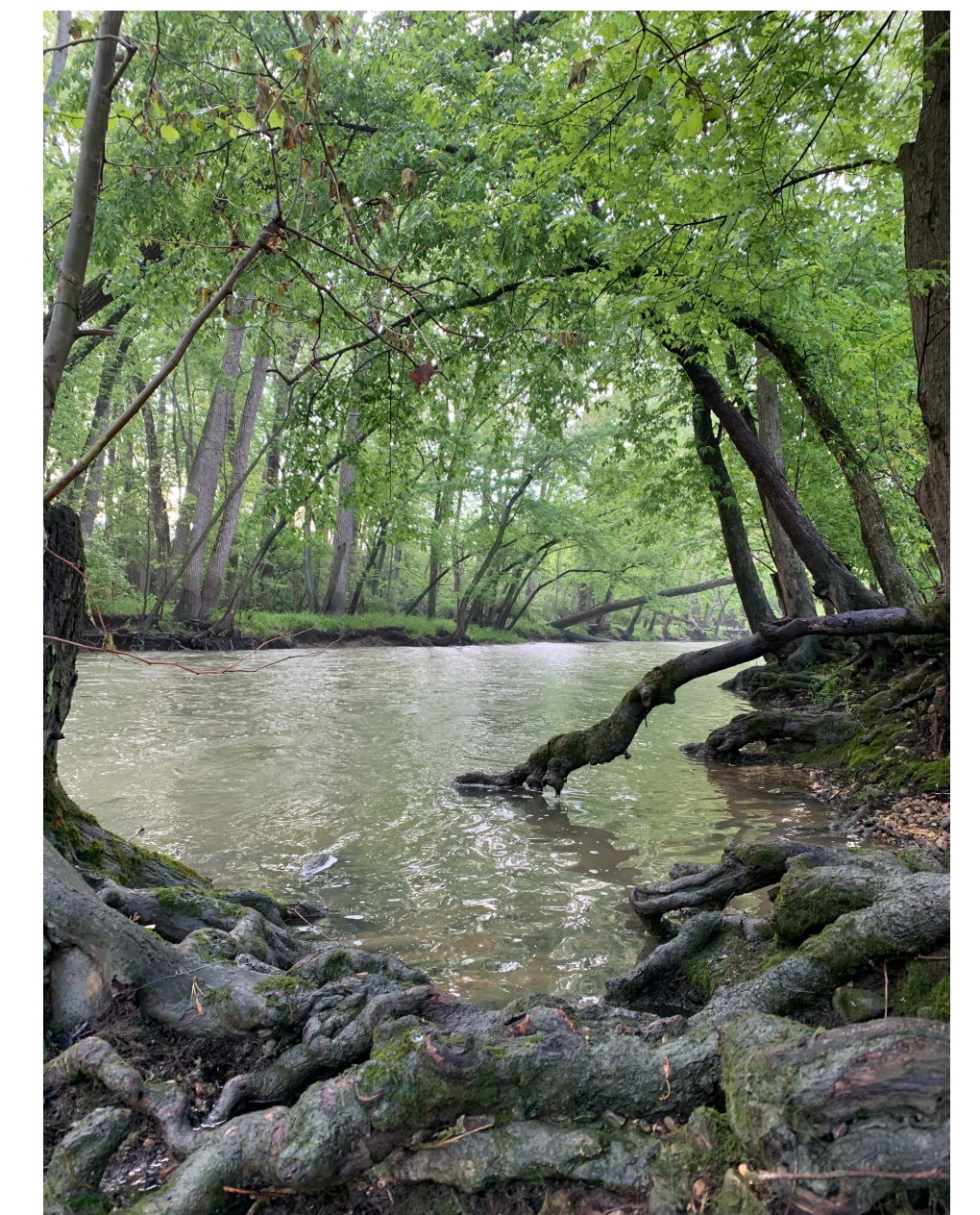
The experiences in my internship provided me with guidance and reassurance regarding my potential career path. This was my first time working in a professional setting and in natural resource management, and I feel much more confident in my ability to positively contribute to the field than I did when I stepped in.

In the following season, I hope to explore natural resource management opportunities that will continue to take me out of my comfort zone and provide the space for me to develop my skills. I see myself pursuing more interpretive work, likely at the local level through the Metro Parks or a similar organization.

ADVICE

- 1 Don't get disheartened if your internship search isn't panning out right away! Start the search early, but keep in mind that more job postings will approach with the season. I found and was hired for this position roughly a month before its start.
- 2 Aim for an internship that allows you to *do* something, especially the flexibility to work independently on passion projects that will also meet a need in the organization.
- 3 **STAY OPEN MINDED.** Initially, I thought I would not be well-suited to a park ranger job, but it is now a career interest for me. I also really wanted to get out of Ohio, but this position was a very practical fit for me, and I'm so glad I did it.
- 4 Connect to faculty resources, and even other students—connections are key!
- 5 In a position, *stay organized.* Keep detailed notes of position-long objectives and achievements, as well as daily tasks. You'll look back on these a lot when describing your experience for a resume or poster like this.

A glimpse into my favorite area downstream from the dam. I came here often to relax and watch the herons.



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