Ohio SWCD
Ohio Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) are in every county throughout the state. These government organizations focus on supporting soil and water health throughout the counties, aiding landowners in doing what is best for the environment.

Monroe County SWCD
The Monroe County SWCD is located in Woodsfield, Ohio, the county seat. Organized in 1942 as the 9th district of Ohio, their goal is to develop and implement programs for the conservation of soil, water, and related resources. They can be found on Facebook or online, at monroeswcd.org. They are administered by a board of elected supervisors and currently employ 3 full time technicians.

Finding a Position
This internship position was recommended to me by a previous intern pursuing a degree in agriculture. She had filled the position the year before but would not be returning, suggesting I ask about the job. There was no application process, but I talked to the supervisor many times over the phone and then had to be approved by the board. While no prior experience was necessary, they were looking for an intern who was focused on an environmental field of study/career.

Agriculture
Monroe County is one of the largest in Ohio in terms of land, while being one of the least populated. Located in Appalachia, most residents work in blue collar jobs, including farming. The SWCD caters to these farmers, renting equipment, helping to build barns, and offering crop, forest, and irrigation advice.

Surveying
Throughout the course of the summer, I was able to learn a little about land surveying using the county’s laser level survey.

Education
Educational programs and workshops were offered throughout the summer, both to the youth in the community and the SWCD employees.

Wildlife
I spent much of my internship shadowing the Wildlife and Forestry Technician, Christina Slover, as she visited properties to assess pests, boundary lines, and logging concerns. An avid birder, Christina offered an abundance of knowledge on animals and plants alike, leading bird walks and hikes for the local community.

Responsibilities
I worked on a few projects throughout the summer, such as planning workshops and field days. I also cared for a handful of fostered animals in the SWCD office.

How Did It Go?
Pros:
• This position was educational and rewarding, and I would recommend it to anyone interested in the environmental field. I learned more about the county I grew up in than I have ever known.
• The staff was welcoming and allowed me to shadow and ask questions on any visit or job.
• The hours were flexible, giving me the opportunity to work on busy office days and have time off for slower ones.
• I met amazing people and loved the Summer School experience, as well as the webinars.

Cons:
• There were periods of downtime where my day would only be spent in the office with little to do.
• The commute to work was about 45 minutes in both directions.

Forming Connections
I had the opportunity to meet ODNR representatives for a local school Wildlife Site, as well as county Wildlife Officers and SWCD Board Members. This allowed me to network, as well as learn about potential career fields within my area of study.

For the Future
In my future career, I will most likely not find a similar position. This is only because Soil and Water Conservation Districts in rural areas focus on farming and agriculture, which is not exactly what I plan to pursue. However, I gained experience in Carbon Credit programs and sustainable land use. This is much closer to my future goals, and the internship only strengthened those interests.

Always take advantage of an opportunity such as this one, even if you have reservations. While there were some aspects that did not interest me as much, others reassured me that I am headed in the right direction with my career goals.

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