

Ohio Environmental Protection Agency

Department of Environment and Financial Assistance

Tabitha Straub/ School of Environment and Natural Resources, Kottman Hall, 2021 Coffey Rd., Columbus OH, 43210

Ohio EPA

The Ohio Environmental Protection Agency protects Ohio's environmental and the public health of its citizens. They set regulations relating to the physical environment and monitor compliance by people and corporations throughout the state. Located in downtown Columbus, the Ohio EPA can serve the entire state and ensure environmental health.



DEFA / OFA

The Division of Environmental and Financial Assistance is a unique department within the agency that offers financial and technical assistance to customers and their infrastructure requirements. Within this division is the Office of Financial Assistance who aid Ohio communities in funding wastewater and clean water projects. By awarding loans at below-market interest rates, Ohioans can ensure environmental compliance without extreme financial hardship.

After an online application and a series of interviews, I was offered the position of a college intern in DEFA. I worked alongside environmental planners, engineers, and other EPA employees as they helped Ohio communities in meeting environmental standards and regulations.

I was one of two college interns working for DEFA this summer.



Environmental Planning Unit

One of the units in DEFA I worked with the most was the Planning Unit. These employees focused on environmental reviews of projects, as well as historical preservation work and direct communication with communities.

I worked alongside these people in helping to gather project and environmental information to ensure EPA compliance. Some of my responsibilities included:

- Collecting project planning information for wastewater and drinking water.
- Contacting communities to clarify project data.
- Attending planning meetings to discuss progress.
- Writing public notices for completed water projects.



Scioto Effluent

Environmental Engineers

I also had experience with the engineering group. These employees focused on the detailed planning of projects and which technologies would serve the communities best.

My main duty with the environmental engineers was helping to organize the Clean Watershed Needs Survey (CWNS) for the EPA, a survey to collect data on financial need regarding home sewage treatment systems (HSTS). I am still working on this project as my internship continues into the fall.

Site-Visits

My supervisors put emphasis on allowing me to accompany the team on site-visits. These day trips included wetlands in Findlay, Ohio, a wastewater treatment plant under construction in Nelsonville, Ohio, and RCAP training workshops.



Nelsonville, Ohio



RCAP Training

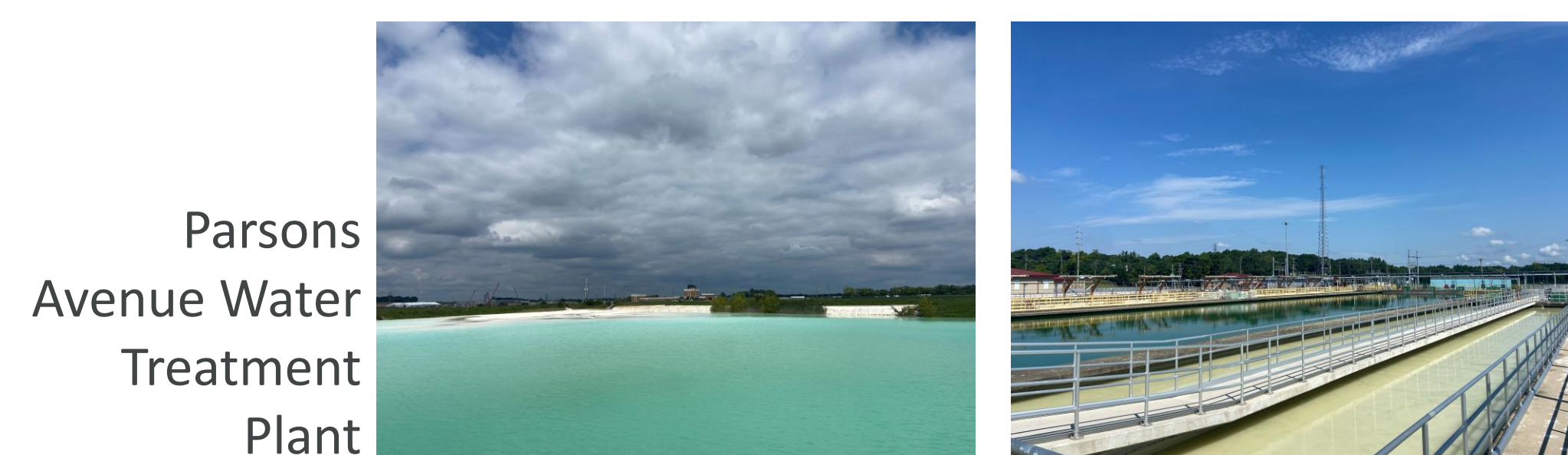
Columbus Water Treatment

I was also given the opportunity to tour two of Columbus's largest wastewater treatment plants, Southerly Wastewater Treatment plant and Jackson Pike Wastewater Treatment Plant. This offered a great educational experience into how large amounts of wastewater are managed in the city.



Jackson Pike Wastewater Treatment Plant

These tours also included ones to water treatment plants in Columbus, Hap Cremean Water Plant and Parsons Avenue Water Plant. These offered two different technologies, ground water retrieval and well water retrieval.

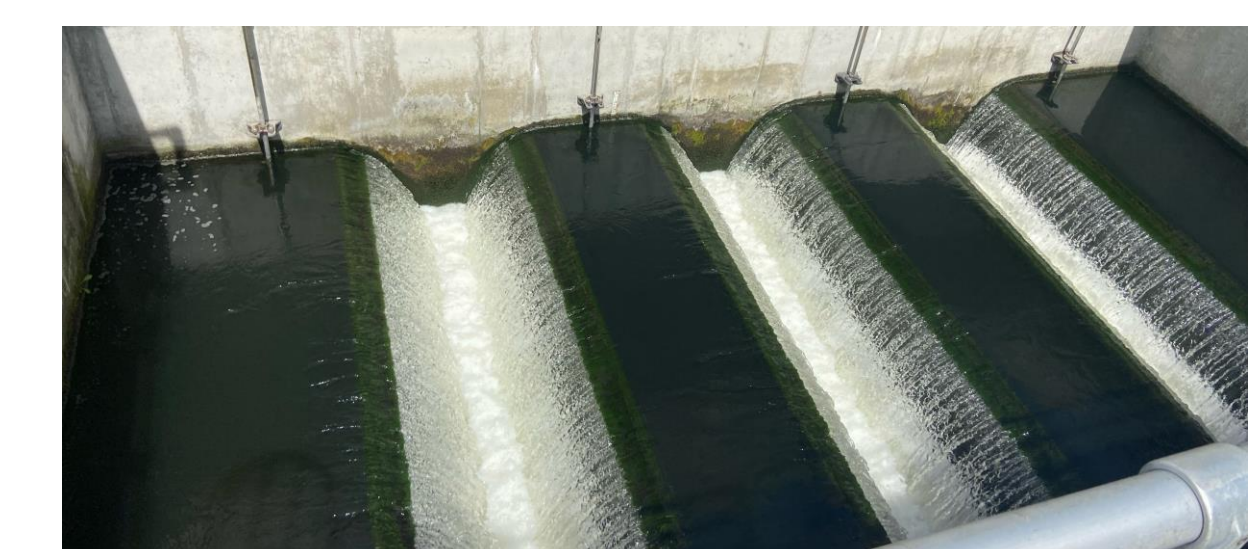


Parsons Avenue Water Treatment Plant

Reflection

This internship offered a great deal of experiences and learning. I enjoyed being able to work both in the office and in the field. The people I worked with were so welcoming and excited to show me their own work and interests. Their willingness to teach and answer any questions made this experience even more rewarding.

I found a love for water quality and how it fits into the needs of communities. I enjoyed working with multiple departments and learning about others, forming connections with many Ohio EPA employees. I was even able to attend an internal career fair within the agency, opening my eyes to everything they have to offer in terms of environmental health.



Oxidation Basin

Future

As a result of this internship, I have gained a much better understanding of what career fields I am interested in. Rather than looking at the "big picture" of climate and the environment, the projects I worked with at The EPA sparked an interest in public health and water quality issues that are happening in the now. I would love to continue working with the EPA, and even consider a graduate degree in environmental public health sometime in the future.



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL,
AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES



Straub.100@osu.edu