

This summer I had the great opportunity to work as the communications intern for the Tennessee branch of The Nature Conservancy. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is addressing the world's most pressing conservation challenges with solutions that benefit people and nature. The Conservancy impacts conservation efforts in 69 countries around the world. Their main goal is to preserve the animals, plants and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive. In Tennessee, TNC has conserved more than 300,000 acres in Tennessee for nature and people. Working across the entire state, the Conservancy has helped create or significantly expand 29 State Natural Areas, 12 State Wildlife Management Areas, and 2 National Wildlife Refuges. Across West, Middle, and East Tennessee, as well as the Cumberland Plateau and in caves, The Nature Conservancy strives to protect the land that the state depends on.

Working as the communications intern, I was responsible for a wide array of tasks including posting on social media, website maintenance, creating webpages, and making informative videos to be shared on our social media accounts. My main project of the summer was to film and edit a 3-5 minute thank you video for large donors to the Tennessee branch of The Nature Conservancy. While still in the first week of my internship, I edited a video from GoPro footage of the Caving Program Director Cory Holliday spelunking through various caves. From this video project, my supervisor Paul Kingsbury noticed early on that I enjoy filming and editing videos, so he determined I was the person most fit for the job of the Thank You video. Over the course of a month, Paul and I traveled all over Tennessee in order to film fellow Nature Conservancy employees thanking their major donors. We met with TNC employees at state lands at preserves all over the state, including the Duck River, New Mammoth Cave, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Shady Valley, The Hatchie River, and others. This project allowed me

to experience many different areas of this beautiful state, and to work in and alongside nature. While on location, Paul would provide the TNC employee some short sentences for them to memorize, as each employee only had about 15 seconds to say thank you and provide a brief description of how donors have helped their individual cause/project in Tennessee. After filming each employee, I edited the video to be released to major donors of the Tennessee branch of The Conservancy. I was honored to be featured on such a large project, and I felt like my skills were actually needed and put into action. I am so grateful that I had the opportunity to work for an organization that valued my time and skills, and saw me as an individual, not just an intern.

When I was not working on the Thank You video, I was often creating webpages and slideshows for The Nature Conservancy's website. I took a training course on their website program for several hours during my first week at the internship, so I learned the ins and outs of website maintenance and creating webpages. I built several webpages from scratch, including this webpage about how to find and sell heat-treated firewood (<http://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/northamerica/unitedstates/tennessee/heat-treated-firewood.xml>). On several occasions, I interviewed other TNC employees in order to get just the right information for the webpage. For example, this slideshow about prescribed burns required me to go back and forth with TNC employee Katherine Medlock, who gave me correct information to share with loyal readers of the Conservancy website (<http://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/northamerica/unitedstates/tennessee/explore/2016-cades-cove-prescribed-burn-1.xml>). The webpages I created allowed me to learn so much more about conservation and preservation in Tennessee, a subject I did not know a lot about before starting this internship. I feel as if I have taken a crash course on the major conservation

challenges in the state, and I am thankful to be so aware of these problems so I can spread awareness to my classmates when I return to Sewanee.

As an International and Global Studies major, learning about the world is a passion of mine. This includes the world that we are closest to, the state in which we live. I believe that in order to understand places far away, we must first learn all that we can about the place nearest to us. This is exactly what this internship provided for me. Although I am from Texas, I have called Tennessee home for the past three years, but I was only able to experience a small section of it. Through this internship, the state has become familiar to me, and I feel passionate about the thousands of acres of beautiful land this state has to offer.

The main thing I noticed while working at The Nature Conservancy is that everyone in the office shares the same passion and love for nature, and are dedicating themselves to a cause that they care about deeply, making their work worthwhile and fulfilling. This internship gave me the confidence I need to go out into the “real world” after only one more year at Sewanee. I feel confident that Sewanee has given me the skills I need to find a job I am passionate about, and I am so grateful for that. The internship funding program that Sewanee offers has given me one of the best opportunities I’ve ever experienced. Being able to pay for my own rent without the help of my parents was a huge deal for me, and allowed me to live in Nashville, a city that I have been considering as a place to live after graduation. Thank you so much to the donors that contributed to my internship funding – I would not be able to have this amazing opportunity without you!