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Duck Unlimited ACE Internship
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Internship Final Report

Over the summer, I was an intern at Ducks Unlimited in the DC Government Affairs Office. The Government Affairs Office is responsible for federal wetland conservation policy advocacy. This small, six-person office seeks congressional appropriations, reauthorization, and the formation of federal conservation laws. As for policy priorities, the office primary interests lie within the Farm Bill, North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA), Federal Duck Stamp, Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act, and conservation easements. Working closely with Members of Congress, their staff, government agencies, businesses, other non-profits, volunteers, and stakeholders throughout the country, the government affairs team brings national attention, federal dollars, and concrete action to wetland conservation problems across the continent. Looking towards the 2018 Farm Bill, DU is already examining ways to direct more funds to conservation programs. Bipartisan effort is required to accomplish DU's public policy goals. DU works on both sides of the aisle, occupying a middle ground with Congress and the Administration that leads to results.

After spending my four years studying environmental policy and economics, I found this experience to be relevant to my academic concentration, engaging on a daily basis, and conducive to my future career plans. On a regular basis, I was tasked with policy research pertaining to federal conservation legislation, strategic government communications (e.g. social media use and infographic development), hearing coverage on the Hill, general support work, and some administrative work that comes with being an intern. Meeting with the Virginia Congressional delegation to discuss Chesapeake Bay conservation efforts in relation to DU was

perhaps the most exciting part of my work. In a general sense, this internship exposed me to the legislative and government affairs process, in addition to life on Capitol Hill. A large portion of my time was spent on long-term projects. My first project addressed federal agricultural easements. Another examined public stream access at the state level, and a third involved updating NAWCA information. Whether it was routine day-to-day work or a long-term project, I found nearly every aspect of this internship to be valuable, and I'd like to believe that I provided value to those around me. On both personal and professional levels, the Government Affairs Office team was a fun, cohesive group to work with. These are people who take their work seriously, but also find time to have fun and enjoy each other's company.

This experience taught me how mission-driven government affairs works at the federal level. It taught me the importance of one's professional reputation, gained through diligence and a willingness to try new things. On a more technical level, I learned how to read complex policy and glean the important elements out of large pieces of legislation. I also learned how important money (in terms of federal appropriations and fund reauthorization) is to conservation efforts, as it takes a primary role in government affairs. The most rewarding aspect of interning for the DU Government Affairs Office was supporting staff on a daily basis and leaving with a stronger grasp of the policy process. A challenge was the timing of the summer internship with August Recess diminishing the work load on interns. This internship certainly helped lay a clearer path of my eventual career goals. I know I want to continue work in the environmental policy field, especially in a consulting or government affairs capacity. Also, my work at DU connected me with people with many relevant career interests and jobs; some of whom are helping me navigate the job search. I fully anticipate this experience to help lead to a permanent job down the road.

Living and working in DC is a wonderful way to spend a summer. Although an expensive city to live, there are many opportunities, in various fields, for students and interns. While I was expected to work hard in the office, we were able to enjoy much of what Washington has to offer. For example, our office was given a private tour by a Member of Congress of the National Archives Vault; we visited the Supreme Court and US Capitol Buildings; the interns regularly attended free and informative luncheons on the Hill. Additionally, the Tonya Public Affairs stipend is immensely helpful in covering living expenses. Sewanee adeptly prepared me for this internship. It is a position that one must approach with an open mind, genuine interest, and a willingness to learn and adapt to the needs of others. I would recommend this internship to anyone interested in the legislative process, lobbying, and environmental policy (with a focus on conservation and agriculture). Anyone interested in learning more about this internship should not hesitate to reach out to me.