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While working for Environmental Services Inc., I learned what it means to be an environmental consultant. I learned that environmental consulting is a tedious job, which requires you to trek through abandoned sites which have been overgrown with grapevines and invasive exotic shrubs or hiking through water knee-deep that could have water moccasins in it, all so you can delineate a wetland. You'll most likely have chiggers the next day from hiking through the middle of the Florida woods or perhaps you'll get stung by some yellow jackets after accidentally coming upon a nest (although I can happily say this never happened to me). Or maybe you mistakenly touch a Poison Sumac tree hoping to identify it but not knowing that you'll wake up tomorrow swollen like a balloon from your body reacting to the poison. And if you're not out in the woods fighting nature then you're inside writing documents or talking to employers about what the next step is in the strenuous process of trying to get anything finalized in the painstakingly slow legal system. Yet, what I learned most was that you deal with these things and you certainly don't complain because that's your job. All of my coworkers decided to become an environmental consultant not because they were forced to but because the outdoors appeals to them and the very idea of working with nature is fascinating. Environmental consulting truly is a 'renaissance' job because it allows you to work outside, work inside, and deal with clients, possibly all in one day.

So what did I do while shadowing my coworkers for eight weeks? I relocated gopher tortoises, delineated wetlands, observed and calculated champion trees, helped with a prescribed fire in the middle of summer (you don't know hot until you have 20ft flames in front of you while the temperature is 96 degrees Fahrenheit and humid), and delineated more wetlands. If I wasn't outside working with someone, then I was inside catching up on the legalities and terms of which environmental consultants are so familiar with. They taught me the steps that one must go through to get a project finalized and where projects can go wrong, they taught me how finicky clients can be and how unpredictable the profession of environmental consulting can be, and they taught me the proper ways to go about meeting clients and coming to an agreement. But what my coworkers taught me most was how to be comfortable in an office environment. While I was certainly the young goose of the office, they treated

me with respect and held me to the level as an equal adult. Whenever the guys and I went out to lunch, we all had a hoot and would talk about those subjects that all guys talk about. They became my family and every day when I walked through the door at 8am, I may have been groggy and sleepy but seeing everyone else and the genuine way they said hello to me made everything so much better. If I had to go look at a piece of property and it was just myself and one other coworker, I would have the best conversations with them about their family and how they came in to the business of environmental consulting. So our conversations were not professional all the time, but that made me feel so much more comfortable around my coworkers. And we certainly would have conversations that were important to the idea of learning about environmental consulting such as “so what are they trying to do with this piece of property?” or “what stage are we currently on in trying to finalize this project?”, which would always be followed by an extensive breakdown into what the project and goals were all about. But this interspersion of professionalism and social banter was what made my internship not only unique, but fun. Would I do it again? Absolutely. Just the opportunity to hang out with my coworkers again would be such a treat.

Furthermore, they even told me that I brought energy into the office. Having a young person who wasn't so bound into the 9 to 5 workday brought hope to them. My coworkers saw a piece of their younger selves in me when the working environment was still being explored and college was still a thing. And whenever I heard that I brought a certain new energy into the workplace, it made me feel like I had done something for the office. Even if I didn't sit down and write a comprehensive plan for one of their projects, I was the energy in the office that everyone seemed to admire.

How this internship affects me in the future is clear. I am now comfortable in a work environment so that I won't be that awkward kid when I land a job in the near future, and I now know the energy one must put into a job to be truly successful. My internship taught me about different habitats and new tree species that I was originally unaware of, as well as taught me the biodiversity Florida has to offer. I feel more comfortable with the legalities that are tied to wetland delineation and environmental consulting in general, as well as being able to accurately delineate wetlands in a plot of bottomland. The internship made me a more confident person, not only in my academic abilities, but in more personal traits and what I can bring to an office environment.

All this being said, I will back up Environmental Services Inc. until the day I die. The people who work for the company are unbelievably awesome and truly are the most professional and familial people I have ever met. If this report made being an environmental consultant sound miserable, then I

do apologize. My internship was one of the most eye-opening and exciting experiences I've ever had. Each day you had no idea what new piece of property was going to bring you, albeit mosquitos or recently established longleaf pine. My internship was a journey, whether it was in the office or out in the field. And the best part about it was that I had coworkers that I could share that journey with, and they had me so that they could share and explain that journey as well. I would do it again in a heartbeat, for the consulting and for the ability to sit down and talk with my coworkers again. Any job can be fun, so long as you have a group of the right people doing it with you.