

This summer I worked at the Fish and Wildlife Service's National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, in the Division of Education and Outreach. The Fish and Wildlife Service is a bureau within the Department of the Interior, whose mission is "working with others, to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people". The Division of Education and Outreach (DEO) works to develop programs and tools that engage, educate and employ youth, which is defined as young children through 30 year olds. The Division also provides a wide range of training for Service professionals on environmental education and engagement topics.

My internship began on May 30th and concluded on July 17th. During that time, I served as a program assistant for a variety of Division initiatives as well as the lead USFWS program logistics and social media coordinator for the 5th annual Student Climate & Conservation Congress (Sc3). Some of my responsibilities included, coordination of rooming and group rosters for all registered students and faculty; troubleshooting myriad agenda details; speaker biographies and printed agenda development; the conception and execution of the final campfire program: a complex set of activities which served as the culmination of the week's activities; creation of a Facebook group to be used by the students and faculty participating in Sc3, maintaining the Facebook group, adding all the students and faculty members to the group, and ensuring its usefulness and sustainability before, during, and after the event.

As program coordinator for Sc3, I was part of a wide range of projects, working to solve problems and ensuring that the many details of the event were discussed and

covered. I helped to develop programs, and worked with our partner, The Green Schools Alliance (GSA). I helped to formulate and edit the agenda, designed the Sc3 t-shirts, analyzed and collected student data, and communicated with GSA throughout the event-planning process. I also arranged all the participants' lodge, rooming, and dorm group assignments. Once Sc3 began, I helped at the registration desk by greeting the students, answering their questions, making sure each student received a "swag bag", and noting which community service project and workshops each student signed up for. During Sc3, I helped to ensure everything went smoothly, working with my boss and a few other FWS staff behind the scenes. Seeing how successful the event was gave me a sense of accomplishment. Knowing that the students learned something new during the week, and hearing that Sc3 had inspired them, made all my hard work worth it. It is wonderful to know that I was part of something the students called "life changing".

The Sc3 program included many hours of student driven activity using Open Space Technology group activities. At the start of the week, all students were brought together in a large circle. After a several hour process where students respond to "the big question", they break out into topic areas called "mini circles". They then work in their mini circles to develop tools, resources, and action plans that they can bring back to their school and communities. The final campfire ceremony served to bring the mini-circles back together into the large circle, and express to the students that they were part of something rare and special. I developed the framework for this final program, working with other Division staff. We collected river stones from the nearby Potomac River; these stones served as the "glue" that brought the circles back together, something to connect the students to each other. A co-worker and I worked together to write a short speech we

would both present during the final ceremony. This oration spoke of place, and connections, and commitment. Following our speech, dozens of students entered the circle, one after another, to speak about the week and their commitment to conservation issues. It was an amazing experience for me to be a part of.

The job of social media coordinator was made up of many pieces. I set up the original Facebook group and managed the invitation process. Once the group was populated, I was responsible for prompting the students to introduce themselves, engage in discussions about environmental issues, share relevant articles and websites, and ask questions about Sc3. The purpose of the Facebook group is to allow students and faculty to begin getting to know each other before Sc3, communicate easily with each other during Sc3, and to keep in touch and support one another after Sc3 concludes. I was responsible for posting the agenda in the group each day of the event; I was also responsible for taking photos throughout the week and posting some of them in the group. The bulk of my social media duties took place before Sc3 began – after a week or so, the students and faculty were using the group regularly for sharing photos, links, and ideas without my encouragement. I also wrote articles for local newspapers, and FWS social media sites about Sc3.

Working for the Fish & Wildlife this summer didn't change my career goals, but rather, reinforced them. I knew going into the experience that I didn't want to work for the government, but that I did want the opportunity to interact with youth and be part of a team in the workplace. I always thought I wouldn't like working in a cubicle from 9 to 5, but now I'm know that it is not for me. After interacting with all the students at Sc3, I am sure that I want to pursue a PhD in Clinical Psychology to become a therapist. I love

working with children and teens, and I would like to focus on individuals of that age group in the future. Although many people may not see the connection between the Fish & Wildlife Service, the environmental movement, social media, and psychology, I do. I believe my experience working for the FWS has taught me many things applicable to my future career in Psychology. I learned how to interact with different kinds of people in a brand new environment. I also had the opportunity to observe myriad social interactions, inner-office politics, and a unique social hierarchy. So, even though I may never be in a job like this again, I believe the lessons I learned this summer will prove invaluable.