

This summer, I served as the general intern at the Land Trust for Tennessee in Nashville. My experience at the Land Trust helped me to explore further my interests in conservation, non-profit work, sustainable and green planning through research and interactions with the staff, landowners, and conservation advocates.

The Land Trust for Tennessee works throughout the state, conserving working farmlands, historical, recreational, and open space lands. The Land Trust interacts directly with landowners to obtain conservation easements on the land, a legal agreement that permanently limits the uses of the land in order to enhance and increase its conservation value. This allows landowners to receive federal tax cuts (if the land is donated) and protects the land for generations to come from development. Conservation through easements is beneficial not only for environmental reasons but also for the landowner, making them exceptionally appealing. The Land Trust currently protects 88,000 acres in 54 of Tennessee's 95 counties.

Prior to this summer, I was unaware of how a conservation easements function as well as all of the requirements and restrictions. I always viewed conservation as occurring at the national or state level within the park systems. During my two months at the Land Trust for Tennessee, I drafted baselines, created extensive maps using GIS technology, researched various areas within the Land Trust Alliance, organized volunteer and stewardship events, conducted site visits to current and potential future conservation sites, wrote real estate classifieds for land for sale, and assisted in office organization and management. In this process I learned valuable lessons about the inner-workings of a non-profit organization and their every day operations. For example, I was fortunate to

contribute to the development of the Glen Leven (a historical property protected under the Land Trust) educational outreach program, which resulted in tremendous change and growth at the Land Trust this summer. I was also fortunate to spend time assisting the Facilities Coordinator, Christine Burk, and the Educational Outreach Coordinator, Katie O' Bryan, in the development and design of the educational vegetable garden and pumpkin patch established for use by elementary classes this fall.

I particularly enjoyed and benefited from the research I conducted on the economic benefits of land conservation in Tennessee. As I compiled information from various sources and databases to explore statewide statistics regarding the conservation impacts on health, food and water costs, property values, storm-water treatment, forest protection, eco-tourism, and recreation, I learned more about the different angles of environmental studies and policy and potential career paths for the future. I became particularly interested in urban green development.

In the office, I experienced first-hand the interaction between policy-makers, conservationists, Land Trust staff, and landowners when creating easements as well as baseline reports. Conducting site visits to landowners properties in order to attain photo documentation and signatures as well as stewardship annual visits helped me understand the importance of building networks and continuing relationships in order to continue this valuable work.

Working on various GIS projects, such as property location maps, hydrology maps, aerial maps, topography maps will greatly benefit me in the future with my interest in urban planning and environmental policy and has been a great learning experience for me

this summer. It will be particularly beneficial considering I am enrolled in a Sewanee GIS course this fall. I learned the importance of diligent documentation and the value of staying organized and flexible, especially when working with a non-profit where the everyday tasks are never-ending and ever changing.

I am so grateful for this experience, this was knowledge gained that was unavailable to me in just a classroom environment. I have a clear vision after this summer experience of what I want to do in the future and will take the skills and knowledge that I gained forward into all of my future career endeavors.