



Wetland program internships provide hands-on experience

January 2016 Snapshots

Internships can be a rewarding experience as students begin the challenging process of building their careers in natural resources. At the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR), we strive to give students tasks and projects that provide real world experiences outside of academia. We match their skills and professional goals with projects that are compatible with our mission and provide useful information for our programs.

Students travel all over the state, interacting with private landowners, local governments, and field staff. They learn skills in assessing wetland condition, such as evaluating embankments and outlet structures and vegetative cover. Their experiences include:

- Plant identification and community mapping
- Aerial photo interpretations
- Assessing wetland functions
- Wetland delineations
- Installing monitoring wells

They also learn from other aspects of the job, such as reporting their time and expenses, transporting field equipment, and the value of interagency coordination to accomplish goals. This hands-on training gives them a better understanding of the work being done by state agencies and local government partners both to get conservation practices on the ground and make sure they're holding up over time.

Interns also pass on knowledge to each other. A few years ago, a pair of BWSR interns from UM-Morris were asked to write down advice for

future students involved in wetland monitoring. They gave the interns that came after them useful advice – both technical and non-technical – for working successfully in a wetland program.

The interns also receive mentoring from BWSR staff, while gaining hands-on experiences related to soil and water resource management. It puts the classroom work in a real-world context, and it's an opportunity that benefits both the interns and our agency. We have been fortunate to have dedicated students employed with us over the years and we look forward to continuing to work with Minnesota's future conservation leaders.



During his BWSR tenure, Andrew Papke-Larson, pictured above, helped refine a resiliency calculator developed to evaluate existing or potential wetland restorations.



This past year Elsa Eshenaur used a vegetative assessment tool developed by the Pollution Control Agency to categorize vegetative quality on wetland mitigation bank sites.