

SCA Program Attracts Interns to Pacific Northwest Naval Installations

Projects Include Wetlands Restoration Monitoring and Surveys for Terrestrial & Marine Mammals, Bald Eagle & Fish Vegetation

STUDENT CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION (SCA) interns from the Naval Facilities Engineering Command (NAVFAC) Northwest are providing valuable assistance to full-time Navy and Marine Corps environmental experts and specialists in areas including wetlands restoration monitoring and wildlife surveys.

Originally founded in Washington State in 1957, SCA's internship program is America's first youth conservation program and has been implemented across the Navy and Marine Corps through a cooperative agreement.

The cooperative agreement between SCA and the Navy/Marine Corps is managed by Cindi Kunz, Senior Biologist at NAVFAC Northwest. Through this program, the interns deliver nearly 8,400 working hours annually to Navy Region Northwest. The interns conduct surveys and studies to inform Navy Environmental Impact Statements, Environmental Assessments and Integrated Natural Resources Management Plans. The cooperative program supports the Navy's mission while providing the

interns valuable work experience in the natural resources field.

Through this program, SCA interns are selected to support Navy and Marine Corps installations throughout the country and around the world, including postings as far away as Japan and Guantanamo Bay. The SCA has long pursued the mission of "building conservation leaders" and recently surpassed 75,000 interns.

Interns provide natural resources assistance to full-time environmental experts and specialists employed by the Navy and Marine Corps. The students' projects in NAVFAC Northwest include wetlands restoration monitoring and surveys for terrestrial and marine mammals, forage fish, bald eagles and vegetation.

With an annual funding limit of \$600,000, Kunz works with SCA coordinators, natural resources staff, and NAVFAC Northwest acquisition personnel to develop and award individual intern agreements for the Navy. These agreements contain the intern's position description,

appointment duration and a stipend for food and housing.

"The program provides a mutual benefit for the Navy. The SCA interns obtain valuable experience working in their field of interest and the Navy completes needed field work toward the completion of ongoing environmental objectives," Kunz said.

"Projects supported by SCA interns demonstrate to future employers that these interns have an interest in working in this field," Kunz explained. "When we review a stack



After supporting Navy wetlands restoration monitoring and vegetation efforts as an SCA intern for three years, Brendan Himelright accepted an environmental planning position at Joint Base Lewis-McChord in June 2017.



Sarah Maher, a graduate of James Madison University, has been completing marine mammal surveys by observing harbor seals and sea lions at NBK installations and Manchester Fuel Department. She's also performed forage fish surveys at Bangor, Manchester, and NAVMAG Indian Island.



Jennifer Stottlemeyer, a graduate of Western Washington University, completed vegetation surveys, marine mammal and forage fish studies during her SCA internship at NBK properties and Manchester Fuel Department. She's also performed vegetation surveys and forage fish surveys at NAVMAG Indian Island.

of applications and our candidates have similar educational backgrounds, the difference between those who get the job and those who do not, is their relevant experience and interest in natural resources conservation.”

This formula worked for recent SCA Navy intern Brendan Himelright.

Himelright, 28, has a bachelor's degree in wildlife science from Virginia Tech. He earned a master's degree in biology from California State Univer-

sity—San Marcos, in 2014. He worked for the Navy as a SCA intern for three years. Most of his work was related to wetlands restoration monitoring and vegetation surveys at Naval Base Kitsap (NBK) Bangor, Naval Air Station (NAS) Whidbey Island, and Naval Magazine (NAVMAG) Indian Island. He was offered and accepted an environmental planning position at Joint Base Lewis-McChord in June 2017.

Some of Himelright's fondest experiences of his Navy SCA internship were at NAS Whidbey Island.

“It was awesome to hear those jets flying overhead,” he said. “Being an SCA intern has proven to be a good first step toward getting experience in the environmental world.

Employers require education and experience. We have the education, but not the experience. This SCA internship opportunity helps fulfill the requirement.”

Sarah Maher, 24, earned her bachelor's degree in biology from James Madison University in 2015. In order to participate in her internship,

The Basics About the Student Conservation Association

SCA IS A national non-profit that engages high school and college-age member volunteers in conserving natural resources through internships, conservation jobs and crew experiences. Founded in 1957, the SCA has grown from 53 volunteers working in two national parks to more than 4,000 active members on federal, state and municipal lands, annually performing more than



1.6 million service hours across the United States. SCA has formed partnerships with governmental agencies, environmental groups and corporations. They complete projects in every conservation discipline, including ecological restoration, GIS/Global Positioning Systems, wildlife management and interpretation.



For more information, visit www.thesca.org.

she drove 2,800 miles in her beat-up Hyundai Sonata from her home in Fairfax, Virginia, to Silverdale, Washington. Maher calls herself an “Army brat” so moving was no big deal for her. Maher has been completing marine mammal surveys by observing harbor seals and sea lions at NBK installations: Bangor, Manchester Fuel Department, and Bremerton. She’s also performed

forage fish surveys at Bangor, Manchester, and NAVMAG Indian Island.

“It’s interesting, fun work,” Maher said. “Every day it seems we are doing something different. I’ve observed sea lions and starfish for the first time while working here.”

Jennifer Stottlemeyer, 25, graduated from Western Washington University with a bachelor’s degree in environmental studies and a minor in environmental policy. Like Maher, Stottlemeyer has seen sea lions near Manchester. “The sea lions get pretty loud,” Stottlemeyer said with a smile. She has completed vegetation surveys, marine mammal and forage fish studies at NBK properties, Manchester and NAVMAG Indian Island during her internship.

“Even a single SCA experience has a powerful influence on our participants,” said Jaime Berman Matyas, SCA president and chief executive officer. “We instill broader leadership traits, which enable youth to excel in school, at work and in life.”

NAVFAC Northwest has administered cooperative agreements with SCA since 1991. The current 10-year agreement between the Navy and SCA runs through 2019.

“There is obviously a national need for SCA interns within the Department of Defense,” Kunz said. “It’s a very popular program for recruiting environmentally-focused interns for the Navy.”

SCA internships appeal to a diverse group of people. Sixty-six percent are enrolled in college, thirty-eight percent hold bachelor’s degrees, two percent have master’s degrees, and one percent have a doctorate degree.

The SCA and Navy partnership provides these interns with valuable experience that propels them into the environmental field of their choice.

“I love this program,” Kunz said. “We’ve had excellent interns from the SCA program who are eager to learn and eager to work. We all appreciate mentoring these young people who have such enthusiasm and passion for conducting natural resources projects in support of the military mission.” 

For Another Example

FOR ANOTHER EXAMPLE of how the Navy is effectively using SCA interns, read our story “Helicopters & Terrapins Share Space at NAS Patuxent River: Pilots & Natural Resources Staff Find Creative Compromise & Further Turtle Research” in the spring 2017 issue of *Currents*. You can browse the *Currents* archives at the Department of the Navy’s Energy, Environment and Climate Change web site at <http://greenfleet.dodlive.mil/currents-magazine>.



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