

Volunteer Gains Valuable “Real World” Work Experience

By: Jennifer Salak, Earth Team Volunteer

As a graduate student studying public affairs one of my degree requirements was to complete an internship. I wanted to intern at an organization that was dedicated to conservation and the environment.

One agency immediately came to mind – the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). I went to the Nebraska NRCS web site and came across the Earth Team information and, I knew that NRCS was absolutely the right place for me.

Several months later I attended the 2006 Soil and Water Conservation Society’s (SWCS) annual conference where Bonnie Allely, NRCS Volunteer Liaison, had an Earth Team display. We talked about my desire to work for NRCS as a public affairs intern/volunteer.

Bonnie forwarded my application to Pat McGrane, State Public Affairs Specialist for NRCS in Nebraska where I was accepted as an intern/volunteer.

Over the next 14 weeks, I was involved in numerous public affairs projects. I wrote stories for the NEB NEWS newsletter and press releases. I also helped update the Nebraska NRCS web site. My favorite job involved going out into the field and interviewing and photographing landowners who have successfully utilized NRCS’ wetland conservation programs. (*Side note: one of Jennifer’s stories is featured as a “landowner success story” for the national campaign*). It was extremely gratifying for me to see conservation practices in action and to see how passionate these landowners were about conservation.

After my internship was finished, I received a glowing evaluation and an ‘A’ for the course. I also gained confidence in my writing ability, learned about how public affairs works in the ‘real world,’ and networked with great people. I also realized how important the NRCS public affairs staff is in educating the public on the agency’s conservation programs and the benefits of those programs.

Even though my internship is officially over, I plan to continue working as an Earth Team volunteer with the public affairs staff, and hopefully in the future I can work for NRCS as a full-time public affairs specialist. ♦



Earth Team volunteer Jennifer Salak assisted the Nebraska NRCS Public Affairs staff with several tasks like web design, news writing and reporting, display coordination and more, during her 14-week internship with NRCS.