INTERN IMPACT SPOTLIGHT

Our Voice, Our Power in Action

In 2026 MPA again partnered with the National Links Foundation to host the Masonville Cove Links WildSTEM Summer Internship, recruiting local college students and giving them practical experience, career exposure, and leadership mentoring opportunities.

This year, three interns gained insight into conservation careers and built valuable soft skills such as networking, public speaking, and professional etiquette. Their meaningful connections and feedback inspired us, reinforcing the program's potential to develop future environmental leaders.

Bryan Mendoza-Turcios, an Environmental Science and Policy major at the University of Maryland, College Park, participated in fieldwork to document wildlife at Masonville Cove and supported a revegetation survey. He said of the experience, "This internship gave me a sense of confidence in myself and my future that I never possessed beforehand. I was able to fully envision myself in a conservation career."

Another student from the University of Maryland, College Park, Courtney Scott, is studying Environmental Science and Technology. She sought to "understand and adapt to the conservation needs of various communities and provide an avenue for their voices to be heard, improving their quality of life." Her internship experience helped her understand that "the only way to properly serve a community is by listening to their needs and informing them of the opportunities that come from them."

The University of Delaware Environmental Science major, Jacob Thompson, worked to activate Masonville Cove as a new Chesapeake Gateways Network place by advancing the installation of signage and other visitor amenities that come with being part of the network. He finished the program feeling energized, saying, "I've experienced so much inspiration in this program, and it gives me a lot of motivation and hope."

In addition to hands-on work, interns gained insight from professionals. Maggie Ostdahl, the Director of Ocean Policy at the National Aquarium, shared how informed voices grounded in science, collaboration, and public participation can create lasting environmental change. Frederika Moser, Director of Maryland Sea Grant, connected with the group to underscore that lasting change happens when knowledge, mentorship, and civic participation come together. Finally, Camera Thomas-White, Vice President for Communities and Partnerships at the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and a powerful voice for initiatives that make conservation more equitable, showed that lasting policy change is built through inclusion, partnerships, and ensuring every community has a seat at the table.

By the program's conclusion, the interns returned to their schools with far more than technical experience. They gained confidence, leadership skills, professional networks, and the ability to contribute meaningfully to environmental science and conservation from day one.

This year, each intern received a Governor's citation from Governor Wes Moore celebrating the interns' high integrity and ability. This citation highlights the program's significance and success, reinforcing its role in addressing disparities and encouraging future investment in environmental education.



Brian Mendoza-Turcios



Courtney Scott



Jacob Thompson

