

MEET REECE BANTA AQUATICS & FISHERIES FIELD FELLOW

Hiking to a remote lake and landing a muskie in Voyageurs National Park is a seasoned angler's dream. For Reece Banta, backcountry fishing is part of her summer job. Reece put her love of fishing, ecology, and the outdoors to work, joining as the Voyageurs Conservancy's first Aquatics Field Fellow.

A recent environmental chemistry graduate from the University of Wisconsin - La Crosse, Reece was looking for field experience to apply her studies when she discovered the Aquatic Ecology & Fisheries Field Fellowship. Reece secured the fellowship and joined the park's Aquatic Ecology team to assess the health of Voyageurs' waters. Reece's summer was filled with enriching experiences in resource monitoring, aquatic invasive species prevention, and outreach.

"I easily met my professional goals for the season. A majority of the work was water quality sampling, which excited me originally when I saw the advertisement for the position. I'm able to add many brand-new experiences to my resume including fish tagging, cyanotoxin work, vegetation mapping, and dragonfly larvae sampling,"

Reece's fellowship also included critical work with Voyageurs National Park's muskies. Little Shoepack Lake's muskie population has caught the Aquatic Ecology team's attention, as they learn more about this potentially genetically distinct population. By tagging, taking scale samples, and measuring Little Shoepack's muskies, the Aquatics team is providing crucial insight into the health and dynamics of the population. Banta recounts, "I have really enjoyed the muskie study because I love to fish. I was finally able to land my own muskie, tag it, collect all the measurements, and then release it!"

Reece's tangible skills helped her land a position in an analytical lab in northern Wisconsin performing metals work and water testing. Her experience at Voyageurs this summer paves the way for future Field Fellows to gain valuable, hands-on ecology experience in a field often left inaccessible to many.

"The Field Fellowship was a very positive experience for me on many levels. Professionally, it was a great way to build my resume and gain lots of hands-on experience from people who have been in the Park Service for decades. Voyageurs National Park is a very special place." - Reece Banta.

ABOUT VOYAGEURS FIELD FELLOWS

THE CONSERVANCY'S EMERGING VOYAGEURS FIELD FELLOWS PROGRAM SEEKS TO INCREASE ACCESSIBILITY AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES AT VOYAGEURS NATIONAL PARK. THE FELLOWSHIP OFFERS STUDENTS AND RECENT GRADUATES A STIPEND-PAID INTERNSHIP TO ENGAGE IN REAL WORLD, HANDS-ON WORK IN AREAS SUCH AS PRESERVATION, NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT, ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND MORE.

