

Maddie Cotter Alumni Spotlight

Tell us a little bit about yourself:

I'm originally from the south shore of Massachusetts. I moved to Vermont to attend UVM and graduated with a Bachelor of Science in environmental studies in 2015. Since moving to Vermont, I have fallen in love with the mountains, rivers and lakes that make Vermont so special. I spend a lot of time walking, skiing, swimming, and biking in this beautiful place.



What inspired you to serve with ECO?

After graduating from UVM I wasn't sure what next steps I wanted to take. I knew I wanted to work in an environmental field, but I didn't have any concrete plans. I decided to pursue AmeriCorps because of the great professional development experiences it could provide me. The incentive of an education award that can be used to pay down student loans was also influential in my decision to serve with AmeriCorps.

Where did you serve? How was this experience?

I served two terms with the ECO AmeriCorps program. My first year of service (2015-2016) was the first year of the program and I served with the Clean Water Initiative Program through the Department of Environmental Conservation. In this position, I created a logo for the program, as well as an email list and social media presence. I managed the Watershed Management Division blog and worked with a variety of stakeholders to talk about the, at the time, new Vermont Clean Water Act.

My second term (2016-2017) was with the Intervale Conservation Nursery (ICN). At the Nursery, I learned how to grow trees and shrubs for restoration projects, manage volunteers, and how to identify plants. This year of service was so successful that I was hired on full-time, and I'm currently the Production & Volunteer Coordinator at ICN.

Can you share a favorite memory from ECO or your service?

We spent a day removing water chestnut from a small pond. I can't remember where we were, but it was such a rewarding day. Everyone was having fun paddling around and we pulled a ton of water chestnut out of the pond.

What position are you in now, and how do you feel ECO helped get you there?

I am currently the Production and Volunteer Coordinator at the Intervale Conservation Nursery. If it wasn't for ECO, I wouldn't have this job. During my year of service my, now, boss offered me the job, and I was so excited. Planting trees is the number one thing you can do today that will make a positive lasting impact on the planet. The best time to plant a tree was 10 years ago; the second best time to plant a tree is today.

Any advice to current or future ECOs?

Network with everyone you get to meet. If you want to work in Vermont, everyone knows everyone. It pays off to ask lots of questions and follow-up with people if you are really engaged by what they say. Find something you enjoy doing. But most importantly, have fun!