



2022 LHPRISM Subcontractor Final Report: All-of-Westchester Internship with Westchester Parks Foundation

Summary: From April to November 2022, Westchester Parks Foundation (WPF) recruited and hired two paid interns to engage in fieldwork and community outreach to fulfill two of LHPRISM's 2022 Action Plan Goals: **Goal 1. Obj D:** Foster strong academic relationships, and **Goal 4 Obj D:** Incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion aspects into our messaging and materials. WPF's Volunteer Program staff participated in outside training workshops and conducted internal development and research to determine (1) what groups were underrepresented among our volunteers and interns, and (2) create inclusive messaging and recruitment strategies. With a focus on recruiting from groups that are underrepresented in the environmental field, two All-of-Westchester Interns were hired in June. By November, each intern completed 130 hours of paid work experience. The interns developed an understanding of invasive species, gained field work experience in 10 area parks, and expanded their leadership, community engagement, and public speaking skills.



Mia Veefkind and Simara Jones, WPF's All-of-Westchester Interns

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All-of-Westchester Internship with Westchester Parks Foundation

Contract Number: 22-007: *All-of-Westchester Internship with Westchester Parks Foundation*
Name of Contractor: Westchester Parks Foundation
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(914) 231-4600

Priority Objectives, from LHPRISM's 2022 Action Plan Goals:

- **Goal 1. Obj D:** Foster strong academic relationships
- **Goal 4 Obj D:** Incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion aspects into our messaging and materials.

Development and Recruitment (April-June 2022)

Several goals were met during recruitment, and while some of the deliverables are not tangible, this quarter was an opportunity for internal growth, education, and assessment of WPF's values.

Activity	Deliverable
WPF Staff training – webinars, research, and education	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2 Webinars attended, 1 networking event attended.• Staff gains confidence and understanding of the complexity and scope of inclusive project management
Develop inclusive messaging and outreach plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Flyer created and shared on social media, in community areas of Yonkers and Peekskill, and with local schools• Interview questions and website copy created with inclusive messaging focusing on values of the program• Created a Spanish version of outreach materials
Volunteer Dept + WPF Leadership planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Began discussion of future long-term roles for interns
Recruit interns from Yonkers and Peekskill	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expanded outreach list of contacts in Yonkers and Peekskill• 21 Applications received from individuals from Yonkers, Peekskill, Mount Vernon, and surrounding areas; 2 applicants hired by July 1

Supporting materials/resources:

The State of Diversity in Environmental Organizations, Dorceta E. Taylor, Ph.D.

https://diversegreen.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/FullReport_Green2.0_FINAL.pdf

Pause on the Play Master Class, From Implicit to Explicit: Leading Through Your Values

<https://pauseontheplay.com/explicit>

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion: Why They Matter for Businesses Big and Small, Berkley College

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yeh9esn-tS0>

DEI Demystified, S. Jai Simpson-Joseph

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F1NcWFklj2c>

US Census Quick Facts

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/yonkerscitynewyork,peekskillcitynewyork,westchestercountynewyork/PST045221>

Sample application questions, which were offered in both English and Spanish:

Westchester Parks Foundation engages the public to make Westchester County Parks accessible to all. The summer portion of this internship will take place in Tibbetts Brook Park in Yonkers, and Blue Mountain Reservation in Peekskill. Do you connect with either of these parks? How would improving the accessibility of these parks be important to you?

The All-of-Westchester Internship seeks to include interns from groups that are underrepresented in the environmental field. How does this goal resonate with you?



ALL-OF-WESTCHESTER PAID INTERNSHIP

Now accepting applications!

Are you from Yonkers, Peekskill, or the surrounding areas?
Do you want to get your community involved in preserving green spaces?
Do you have an interest in learning about jobs in the environmental field?

Apply today for Westchester Parks Foundation All-of-Westchester Internship

Participants of this paid experience will:

- Gain experience in the environmental field through surveys with WPF staff
- Learn to identify invasive plant species and raise awareness of their impact on our parks
- Develop leadership skills and practice public speaking at community volunteer events

Internship Schedule:

July 2022

Tibbetts Brook Park, Yonkers &
Blue Mountain Reservation, Peekskill

Lake Revitalization and removal of
aquatic invasives

4 weeks, 16 hours per week

September – November 2022

Various parks in the Yonkers &
Peekskill areas

Community engagement and park surveying

4-6 hours per week,
weekends and after school

Rate: \$16/hr

Westchester Parks Foundation is committed to hiring interns from groups that are underrepresented in the environmental field. See our link for more information.

To apply, visit TheWPF.org/allofwestchester

This project was contracted by the Lower Hudson Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management using funds from the Environmental Protection Fund as administered by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.



PASANTÍA PAGADA ALL-OF-WESTCHESTER

¡Se aceptan solicitudes!

- ¿Eres de Yonkers, Peekskill, o sus alrededores?
- ¿Quieres involucrar a tu comunidad en la preservación de los espacios verdes?
- ¿Tienes interés en aprender sobre trabajos en el campo del medio ambiente?

Aplica ya mismo para la Pasantía All-of-Westchester de Westchester Parks Foundation

Los participantes de esta experiencia pagada:

- Obtendrán experiencia en el campo ambiental a través de encuestas con el personal de WPF
- Aprenderán a identificar especies de plantas invasoras y concientizarán sobre su impacto en nuestros parques
- Desarrollarán habilidades de liderazgo y practicarán hablar en público en eventos comunitarios

Calendario de las Pasantías:

Julio 2022

Tibbetts Brook Park, Yonkers &
Blue Mountain Reservation, Peekskill

Revitalización del lago y eliminación
de invasores acuáticos

4 semanas, 16 horas por semanas

Septiembre – Noviembre 2022

Various parks in the Yonkers &
Peekskill areas

Involucramiento con la comunidad e
inspección de parques

4-6 horas por semana los fines de semana y
después de la escuela

Pago: \$16/hr

Westchester Parks Foundation se compromete a contratar a pasantes de grupos que están subrepresentados en el campo ambiental.

Para aplicar, visite TheWPF.org/allofwestchester

Este proyecto fue contratado por Lower Hudson Partnership para el Manejo Regional de Especies Invasoras usando fondos del Fondo de Protección Animal administrado por el Departamento de Conservación Ambiental del Estado de Nueva York.

The Internship (July-November 2022)

Mia and Simara participated in invasive species training, hands-on invasive species management, beech leaf disease monitoring, park surveys with partner organizations, and outreach to prospective volunteers and partners both at public events and remotely. They worked between 3 and 16 hours a week, with more full weeks in the summer and lighter weeks once school was back in session.

Activity/Goal	Deliverables
Lake Revitalization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 project days; worked alongside 15 WPF Greenterns • Learned about <i>trapa natans</i> and shared this knowledge with community members who attended the hand-pulls • Contributed to hand removal of 15,910 pounds of water chestnut for WPF's 5th season of Lake Revitalization at Tibbetts Brook Park
Understanding of invasive species	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learned to use species lookup on LHPRISM website • Attended NAISMA Webinar on jumping worms • Practiced plant identification with WPF staff • Created IS presentations for volunteer project at Cranberry Lake Preserve
Empower interns to lead in the environmental field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educated volunteers at 12 volunteer days in 10 area parks • Interns comfortable demonstrating management methods and public speaking
Conduct field surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interns learn to use Epicollect5 and iNaturalist • 23 affected areas added to BLD survey: findings aid the WPF Volunteer program in fall tree planting initiative with Westchester PRC, which resulted in 499 trees planted • Conducted IS survey at Willson's Woods Park with members of the Hutchinson River Restoration Project
Community Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distributed snacks, prizes, and IS info to community members at cleanups • Gained coverage on News12 • Added names to WPF mailing list • Grew WPF's school mailing list from 30 to 74 • Developed list of local businesses for donations of supplies • Interacted with total 115 volunteers and park visitors • Created list of local farmers markets and festivals for future tabling opportunities

Photos



*Mia and Simara presenting on *phragmites australis* and *artemisia vulgaris* to volunteers at Cranberry Lake Preserve, Harrison*



Simara demonstrating beech leaf disease monitoring in Sprain Ridge Park, Yonkers



Invasive species management with volunteers at Lenoir Preserve, Yonkers



Local news coverage of August litter pickup in front of Willson's Woods Pool, Mt. Vernon



Working with Mrs. New York Earth Melissa Luiso at a native tree planting project at Sprain Ridge Park, Yonkers



Training for beech leaf disease monitoring at Graham Hills Park, Pleasantville

Water chestnut hand-pulling day at Tibbetts Brook Park, Yonkers



Final Report (December 2022)

Internship Wrap-up, Take-Aways

At the close of the interns' paid hours, WPF conducted final check-ins with Mia and Simara. Mia continued on as an unpaid intern through December to fulfill a field-work requirement of her major in Environmental Studies. WPF Staff is committed to continuing professional relationships with both interns and will provide support however possible in their future career search.

This internship proved to be multi-faceted for the participants and gave them a sampling of the wide range of jobs under the umbrella of environmental work. Westchester Parks Foundation was pleased to be able to offer this internship, as our mission includes serving all populations within Westchester County. The development and research period we conducted prior to recruitment raised the ever-present question of how our organization can engage all our community members in environmental work.

Challenges

The largest challenge we faced was achieving a regular schedule between two interns and WPF staff. The WPF project calendar changes week-to-week, and our two interns were in different phases of their educational careers. This led to WPF staff holding individual meetings and setting individual goals for the interns. One solution that did help was recruiting our two interns from the same area, as opposed to one from Yonkers and one from Peekskill as laid out in the original application. Lastly, WPF staff moved to a new office which was considerably farther from Yonkers, which put an additional strain on scheduling.

Future Goals

For continued years of the All-of-Westchester Internship, we aim to fund a schedule that is closer to full-time for a set number of weeks to yield more consistency. We would like to expand WPF staff workshops on values, diversity, equity, and inclusion. We aim to secure a temporary workspace at a park in Yonkers so that interns and staff can be in same office when not conducting field work, or set aside funds for intern transportation to the main WPF office. Lastly, a long-term goal is to find funding to make this internship a year-round position.