

# Looking Back and Moving Forward

**MDE Science Student Award Winner Amy Donna reflects on her summer experience interning at Agency**

*Amy Donna, the recipient of this summer's MDE Environmental Science Student Award, wrote this article summarizing her experiences at the agency:*

When I applied for the Environmental Science Student Award, I knew very little about what the Maryland Department of the Environment actually did, beyond just “something environmental.” Receiving the award and internship has led to experiences that have taught me a lot about environmental issues and how MDE is helping to solve them.

During the internship, I had the opportunity to work in both the Water Management Administration and the Office of Communications. While in OC I went into the field with groups from Lead Poisoning Prevention, Air Monitoring, and Wastewater. I even spent a day with the Emergency Response Division, listening to stories and learning how MDE deals with accidents like mercury and oil spills. Because I was able to work with several people in these different programs, I was able to gain an understanding of the many aspects of environmental issues and solutions.

I've always been interested in science and engineering, so I was excited to visit places like Poplar Island and stream remediation

sites, where I learned how scientists and engineers were helping the environment by creating habitat with dredged materials, slowing erosion with living shorelines, and much more. I explored various areas of environmental science, from learning about geology while seeing a well drilled with the Wastewater program to learning about air pollution while calibrating an ozone monitoring station in Beltsville.

But through this internship I've realized that solving environmental problems requires not only scientists and engineers but educators, regulators, and politicians, too. In the Office of Communications I helped with outreach events and learned how promoting topics like electric vehicles, recycling, and climate change can be just as important as actively engineering solutions. I also learned how environmental solutions depend on policies created by the Maryland legislature and enforced by MDE, when I worked with the permitting process in WMA, watched a lead inspection, and attended meetings such as the Board of Public Works meeting in Annapolis.

At MDE, I've discovered that in order to change the environment, it is important to not only develop and construct science-based solutions but also to work with the public



*Amy Donna on an educational tour at Hart-Miller Island*

and political community to ensure that these solutions will be supported. Though I plan on majoring in Environmental Science and Engineering and focusing on the more technical solutions to environmental problems, my internship has given me valuable insights into each aspect of the environmental field, which can only help my future career.