



United States Department of Agriculture

*Natural Resources Conservation Service Earth Team*

# Volunteer Showcase

## Volunteering at USDA-NRCS Leads to Career in Conservation

It has been said that sometimes you have to seek out opportunities to further your experiences in life. Such was the case with Katelyn Mattila, a University of Wyoming at Laramie graduate, with a Bachelor of Science degree in Rangeland Ecology and Watershed Management, and a minor in Restoration and Reclamation Ecology. After graduating and moving back to Minnesota, Katelyn began the search for a career that would allow her to follow her passion for conservation.

In her search to find the right fit for volunteering, Katelyn contacted John Zinn, State Grazing Specialist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). From there, she was referred to the NRCS Buffalo field office in Wright County.

“I had reached out to a few agencies about volunteering but one thing that really stuck out with me about NRCS was the promptness and enthusiasm of each employee when responding to my request to volunteer,” said Katelyn. “After selecting a field office, I contacted the local District Conservationist, Julie Reberg. She was enthusiastic about the opportunity and prompt in setting up a time to meet and discuss my short- and long-term goals. It left a lasting impression on me in regard to the team of employees who work for this agency.”



*Katelyn Mattila gained valuable field experience as an Earth Team volunteer, which led to a career in conservation.*

In August, 2012, Katelyn became an Earth Team Volunteer at the Buffalo field office. At first, she job shadowed the District Conservationist and the Soil Conservation Technician, Katie Evans. Then, as her knowledge and abilities increased, she was given more responsibilities.

The Earth Team is the volunteer component of the Natural Resources Conservation Service. If you are interested in volunteering, contact the National Earth Team Office at 888-526-3227 or visit:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/EarthTeam>

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## Natural Resources Conservation Service Earth Team

“She assisted with construction, wetland and erosion issues,” said Reberg. “She was given the responsibility of outreach and coordinated field days for pasture walks and even some miscellaneous administrative duties. This made a huge difference on NRCS’ ability to do outreach.”

The Minnesota NRCS has a contract with the company Ultima, to provide each field office in Minnesota with one contract employee paid to help with administrative duties or field work. In 2013, Katelyn was hired as an Ultima contract employee to do technical and field work. She

assisted the Buffalo office with field surveys, conservation planning, program outreach, and other administrative tasks. As a contract employee, Katelyn was able to continue working with NRCS and developing her skills for a potential future with the agency.

In 2015, Katelyn was selected as a Soil Conservationist with NRCS in Wasilla, Alaska.

“Without a doubt, the experience I was able to gain through volunteering helped get me where I am today,” said Katelyn.



*Katelyn (far right) provides conservation education to students during conservation field days.*



*Katelyn’s field work included monitoring and surveying during her time as an Earth Team volunteer.*

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