



The Pathways Program

Student Internship Opportunities with the Soil and Plant Science Division

The Pathways Program offers a clear path of opportunity with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in meeting our mission of Helping People Help the Land. Students from high school through post-graduate school can apply to participate in the available programs.

The Internship Program

The Pathways Internship Program offers paid opportunities to work at an NRCS office and explore a Federal career in natural resources while completing your education. You may be eligible if you're a student in high school, college, trade school, or other qualifying educational institutions. Students enrolled in college as a first- or second-year student are ideal candidates for the program, allowing 2–3 years in school to complete the required 640 hours of work.

Interns have the flexibility of working either part- or full-time. Intern jobs will be related to your academic career goals and field of study. Students who successfully complete the program may be eligible for conversion to a permanent job with the NRCS.

When and How to Apply

To get job announcements sent directly to you, set up a profile on **www.USAJobs.gov** and select your preferences for job notifications through the Saved Searches option, typing the keyword "Pathways NRCS" and the location preferred.



Click "save this search" here in USAJobs

Pathways internship positions are announced and open to apply for, typically, only five business days. Having your profile set up and ready, while also receiving job notifications through email, is crucial in finding Pathways announcements when they open and applying for them in a timely manner.



Student Successes

Sarah Smith was a Pathways student in a Soil Scientist position every summer starting in 2012. In November 2016, she was converted to a full-time Soil Scientist.

"As a Pathways student, I learned how skills I was developing in college and through soil judging could be used as a career. There were also a lot of opportunities to see the background work that goes into providing the public with valuable soils data, and whether it was something I could see myself doing full-time after I graduated," Sarah said. "The time spent in the Pathways Program gave me enough experience with the agency that I have been able to further my career faster than I might have without it. I have been able to go on two initial mapping details and have been promoted to a Soil Survey Office Leader position earlier than I would have predicted when I was first converted. This position allows me to develop and manage the projects of the Soil Survey office in Indianapolis, Indiana, to focus on providing the most up-to-date and accurate soils data possible. I also supervise a couple of employees, which has provided a new challenge and opportunity for me to continue to grow in my career."



NRCS's Soil and Plant Science Division hires Pathways Internship positions for careers in the natural resources field. Examples of typical positions NRCS hires for are:

Soil Scientists,

Ecological Site Specialists,

Rangeland Management Specialists,

and Forestry

USAJOBS

TIP: When you are actively looking for a job, set your alerts to receive them **"daily"** versus "weekly" or "monthly" so you don't miss anything!



Scan the QR code above to watch our recruitment video!

Student Benefits

The Pathways Internship Program has many benefits for students, including:

- 1) real-world experience working in multiple NRCS offices and counties,
- 2) experiences working in the field with customers on unique landscapes,
- 3) diverse experience to add to your resume,
- 4) learning from NRCS mentors,
- 5) pay and stipend toward housing provided,
- 6) relationship building and network building,
- 7) natural resources, hands-on skill building,
- 8) a truly unique, fun experience,
- 9) the potential for a full-time job after completion, and MUCH MORE!

Completion and Conversion

Interns may be converted to a permanent NRCS position within 120 days of successfully completing the program. To be eligible for conversion, interns must:

- 1) complete at least 640 hours of work experience acquired through the Internship Program,
- 2) complete their degree or certificate requirements,
- 3) meet qualification standards for the position to which the Intern will be converted,
- 4) meet agency-specific requirements as specified in your unique NRCS Participant's Agreement, and
- 5) perform the job successfully.

More Information

The Pathways Program offers Federal internship and employment opportunities for current students, recent graduates and those with an advanced degree. There are three different paths available: 1) the Internship Program, 2) the Recent Graduates Program, and 3) the Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Program. For more information, visit www.usajobs.gov/studentsandgrads.



Student Successes

Zachary Warning was a Pathways Student in Soil Science in the Belmont, New York Soil Survey Office from July 2019 through July 2020, during his senior year while attending SUNY-College of Environmental Science and Forestry.

"As a Pathways intern, I learned that in order to map soils, I needed a much more involved presence in the landscape; to dig holes, draw lines, get my hands dirty and really challenge myself to read the landscape," said Zachary. "Just five minutes from our field office, I found a parcel of State land free for me to practice on. I did not allow myself to view the published map — I knew the best way to learn was to go in blind. At the end of the summer, to test my knowledge, I drove out with my supervisor to another piece of public land, and told him what units I would assign where, and how I would sketch their boundaries. It was an overwhelming success, with just a few minor differences between my sketched map and the published survey. Despite the initial mapping of our area being all but completed, the simple practice of walking through the forest, feeling the change in relief, noting the movement of water, observing the communities of plants, and taking the time to observe a clear face in a self-dug pit held within its seemingly old-fashioned tradition the key to the essential ways of thinking required to be a skilled soil scientist. The Pathways experience was an exercise in reshaping my mind. To open the third eye on the bottom of my foot — the one that notices the subtlety of soils that makes them such a mystery to so many of us and such an exciting and dynamic career to pursue."

Zachary was converted to a full-time Major Land Resource Area (MLRA) Soil Scientist in Belmont, New York, the same office where he interned.



**Soil and Plant
Science Division**
**Natural
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