



By **Kristi Pupak**, UW Stevens Point & **Mariah Cook**, Northland College



© Kevin J. Lowry

**Above: Kristi Pupak**

Serving as park ranger (visitor services technician) for the USFWS was one of the finest experiences of my life. By obtaining a summer position in the field of natural resources at Whittlesey Creek NWR (Refuge), I now have a better understanding of the Service, System and Refuge. I also have a clear vision of what I desire in my professional career.

The diverse aspects of visitor services and management during the summer at the refuge expanded my knowledge and skills that will be used wisely in upcoming job opportunities. Driven by a strong belief to inspire others about the outdoors, there is evidence of support I impacted environmental viewpoints of others.

From teaching a child how to fish, enlightening a teenagers inquiry about a related natural resource career, or guiding a teacher's request on my composed lesson plans strengthened their outdoor perspective.

Every day was a reward. There were triumphs and struggles that made it all worthwhile. I anticipate the approaching interns will be able to take as much out of this position and feel as passionate about the work as I did during my experience at Whittlesey Creek NWR.



© Kevin J. Lowry

**Above: Mariah Cook**

I served as environmental education and outreach intern at Whittlesey Creek NWR. This internship was unique in a variety of ways.

During my time, I was presented with numerous opportunities to learn new things and gain experience. Working at the Refuge and Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center, a partnership of six agencies, exposes you to a variety of different people and personalities. The staff was remarkable and always willing to lend a helping hand.

Everyone I worked with or alongside were very friendly and inviting; they really made me feel welcome right from the beginning and part of the Center and Refuge family.

I learned a great deal from my supervisor. He guided me through this experience and presented me with numerous and diverse opportunities I could learn and grow from. It was always his mission to make sure I succeeded in whatever it was I was doing.

I hope other interns will take this opportunity to gain experience while being surrounded with outstanding staff members you will never forget.

---

**Summer jobs are currently being advertised. Please visit the Center's facebook for announcements and applications.**

# Youth Conservation Corps

*By Mike Mlynarek*

The Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) Act of the early 1970's allows agencies within the Department of Interior and the Department of Agriculture to provide meaningful employment for America's youth. Although originally envisioned as a pilot program, a high degree of success means that this youth opportunity is still available 40 years later.

The YCC is a summer employment program for young males and females from all segments of society, who work, learn and earn together by doing projects on public land. The purpose of the YCC is to further the development and maintenance of the natural resources of the United States by America's youth, and, in so going, to prepare them for the ultimate responsibility of maintaining and managing these resources for the American people.

The program provides 15 through 18 year old youth with an opportunity to acquire increased self-discipline and teamwork skills, learn work ethics, how to relate to peers and supervisors and how to build lasting cultural bridges

with youth from other backgrounds.

The Whittlesey Creek NWR (Refuge) has hosted a YCC crew each summer since 2006. Under the direction of refuge staff, a crew leader supervises 4 or 5 crew members. The U.S. Forest Service has often hired one or more of the crew members. Over the years, countless biological, maintenance and infrastructure projects have been accomplished on the Refuge and at the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center.



However, I tend to look at the benefits of the program from a different perspective. Youth on the crew grow and develop over the course of the 8 weeks that they're employed. For many it is their first employment experience.

*continued on pg 17*



**The Crew** – Refuge YCC crew and crew leader with Crew members from the FWS Iron River National Fish Hatchery and U.S. Forest Service at the Center.



They work 5 days per week, 8 hours per day, 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. They learn about being safe, watching out for each other and identifying unsafe situations. Each daily activity includes an explanation about why the task is important, the “take home” message.

It’s deeply satisfying to see their enthusiasm and to have the opportunity to be a mentor. Since so many people have helped me throughout the years, I feel obligated to give back, to pass along a bit of that goodwill. After their YCC experience, crew members

have stopped by to tell me how their summer “job” made a lasting impression. It has guided some to pursue degrees in biology and natural resources. It has provided students with skills that put them way ahead of others in natural science classes. It has resulted in a former Crew Leader, Scott Stipetich, becoming a USFWS employee in New York. I am confident that the YCC experience will produce others who will pursue careers in public service, natural resources protection and become leaders in their chosen profession. Having a positive influence on youth and young adults through the YCC program and other federal employment programs is among the most satisfying aspects of my job.



**HIRED HAND** - Clockwise: Stream habitat monitoring in Whittlesey Creek ; newly installed loafing logs at the Center and trip to Copper Falls with Professor Tom Fitz from Northland College.