BRRC Summer 2021 Internship

I’d first like to thank everyone involved in the creation and current upkeep of the Back River Restoration Committee. The work all of you have and continue to put into reviving Back River is so important and has not gone unnoticed. I have now experienced first-hand how difficult and frustrating this work can be. Each day we clean out the boom and each day it is filled with more trash. Storms pile up debris before we have even finished cleaning up from the previous one. However, I have also experienced the joy at looking at the river clean and brimming with life. It is beautiful, inspiring, and rejuvenating.

This past summer, I spent most of my mornings wading through Back River with my arms full of trash. Clearing out the trash boom is not the most coveted of jobs, but it somehow became one of my favorites. You have a task: get the trash out of the water. You get out the large logs and sticks. You pile the trash into a bucket a few times. There is something very simple and meditative about it. And it’s all for a purpose—it is all about the river. When you finish you are met with the reward of a clear, beautiful river. Looking out, instead of seeing trash, you see birds, fish, flowers, and bay grasses.

Sometimes after clearing the boom, we would get on the pontoon boat and travel upriver. These boat rides might have been my favorite part of the summer. Thanks to the years of work by BRRC, the views are absolutely beautiful. It was so relaxing to glide on the water in the cool of morning on the clear river with tall grasses, vibrant flowers, and towering trees lining the banks. Sometimes I would see fish, muskrats, or turtles by the surface as we raced by. My wonder never faded with each trip.

However, when we reached our destination upriver, the sight was less than stunning. Trash and sticks piled three feet high on top of the water, what we call Trash Island. This summer, we succeeded in clearing it out—only for it to return even bigger two weeks later after a storm. The trash never stops. This work can feel thankless, but it really is all about the river. This is something we work to remind each other and others at BRRC. It is home to so many plants and animals and brings us together as people and as a community. It is within a community that change happens. When overwhelmed by global crises, I remind myself of this and it brings me comfort. I truly think the best thing you can do to help your environment is start small and learn from others around you, then build upon the foundation they have made.

I started working at BRRC because I love nature and came out with a greater appreciation for community (and for the river). All of us are very different individuals, but we share a love of the river and that brings us together and makes us stronger and the river cleaner.

Sincerely,

Luka Pearson