Back River Restoration Committees gift to me

I am so proud to be a part of such a great organization with fantastic employees and board members that I call family at the end of the day. I graduated from the S.P.E.C.I.E.S Program at Sparrows Point high school and I am now a freshman majoring in Environmental Studies with a minor in biology at St. Mary’s College of Maryland. Ever since a young boy I have been intrigued in such a way with the Chesapeake Bay and rivers feeding into it with their natural beauty. As far as I can remember whenever driving over I-695 southbound from Essex to Dundalk, the water and tidal flats seemed different, as you look closer you see trash, a lot of trash. It was always very disheartening to me, which is why I decided to really care about our environment and the bay. It was a mission to me that someday, I would be a part of something that would help combat all the trash entering Back River. For years, I could not understand why it was so dirty and why no one was doing anything about it. That is, until one morning during my senior year I was listening to the morning announcements and I heard something about an internship with Back River Restoration Committee. Initially, I was skeptical and not too sure what it was, but it sounded interesting. I decided to apply for one of BRRC’s summer intern positions and was invited to interview and tour the boom site in person. During the visit I realized this was the opportunity I had been looking for and was eager to work with BRRC. I shared my interest in, not only the internship, but the entire organization and could not wait to get started. Just a few weeks later, Tori Ross, Shawna Budney and I started on our journey to restoring the health of Back River. Long summer days seemed to be longer when we were knee deep in trash, which sometimes seemed to go on forever. Even through all that trash that just keeps pouring in, this was more than a side job for me, this was the mission I had been pursuing for years. During my internship with BRRC I was able to enjoy my true passion for preservation and restoration. Over the summer months we were able to remove over 48.64 tons of wood and 26.17 tons of trash from entering Back River and the Chesapeake Bay. I was thrilled be called back to work during my winter break and could not wait to get started again. I was going back to be with my old team again, minus to other interns. Paul Schilpp, Clark Testerman, and Desiree Greaver welcomed me back and made me feel like no time had passed at all. This four-man team, I call that I happily refer to as family, were ready for whatever the river was ready to throw at us! I enjoyed every moment that Paul and I shared on the river, even if we are glorified trashmen in our waders. 28 degrees, in the freezing cold water, removing trash and debris from the river has increased my passion and drive to restore the health of Back River. During my time over winter break allowed us to remove 20.03 tons of wood and 16.73 tons of trash from the river. While the work at the boom is incredibly important, we work to keep all of Back River healthy by cleaning heavily littered shorelines and streams that lead to the river as well as visit sites of concern that citizens that live along the river point out. BRRC is always hosting cleanups that welcome anyone and everyone to participate. While on my winter break, I was able to participate in the Race Road cleanup and the Hyde Park Road cleanup. I am always amazed at the how many people volunteer and show up for the river. It is so nice to see so many people come together and have the same drive in saving Back River. At the end of the day, we (BRRC and volunteers) are tired, but also happy. It gives me tremendous happiness in knowing that there is a wonderful group of people that work hard to keep Back River beautiful. It is truly intriguing to see wildlife return to where it was recently diminished, each day we see fish, clams, and various species of birds making home in this amazing place. Now, all each of us has to do is keep up the hard work and continue to share the mission to save Back River. BRRC has shown me that I truly am meant to be within my area of study, and I hope that after this long college journey that I can apply my knowledge and hard work and turn it into something big for Back River and the Chesapeake Bay. I appreciate all BRRC has done for the Back River watershed and appreciate all the organization has taught me. Now, come on April, I cannot wait to get back to work! It’s all about the river.

 Sincerely,

Chris Kvech