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During the Summer of 2020, I had the great pleasure of working with the Back River Restoration Committee at the boom site and around the Back River water front community. I found out about the internship opportunity from my AP Environmental Science teacher at Eastern Tech High School and was immediately interested in taking the position. There was definitely no sugar coating when it came to informing how gross and dirty the job would be but I was ready to take on the challenge.

Before I knew it, my Summer consisted of very early mornings, wading through piles and piles of floating trash and tree debris, dealing with all kinds of crawling bugs, and ending the day’s work soaked in my own sweat. Yes, it wasn’t the most attractive job but was very much self-rewarding. I would have never thought how much sticks, branches, and tires would become my enemy and how exciting it would be to see one less tree stuck out in the water after tugging and pulling for too long.

Besides the job being self-rewarding, what made it such a great experience was the people that I worked with. There were two other interns that worked with me and the three of us soon became very close. Working with Desiree, Clark, Paul, and Dale was always such a joy as well. They definitely knew how to put in some work while also making it fun. It became a mini competition to see who could spot the most bizarre trash finds or who could collect the most basketballs, footballs, and beach balls from the river. Everyone was always ready to give tips on how to make the job a little easier. By the end of the Summer, I knew the river’s patterns, where not to walk unless I wanted my waders to fill with water, the best routes to take the boat without hitting bottom, and how to make a few different rope knots.

Working with the committee on Back River opened my eyes to something that really can’t be fully understood until you’re out in the water with it. It’s insane to see just how much trash ends up in the bay and to think this is just one river’s trash out of the whole Chesapeake Bay watershed. It is honestly the most sad and frustrating thing to see as it never ends. Each morning it’s the same thing over again. There’s always more waiting for us. That’s why I can’t personally thank Back River Restoration Committee enough for all their time and effort they put into this river and more specifically those who are out at the boom site working year-round in all-weather maintaining the waterway. Back River Restoration Committee gave me an experience like no other and I am forever grateful for what they have shown me.