



Conservation Ambassador Program!

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2022

NRCA CONSERVATION AMBASSADOR PROGRAM



PARTICIPANT HANDBOOK



CONSERVATION AMBASSADOR PROGRAM PARTICIPANT HANDBOOK

Welcome to the NRCA Conservation Ambassador Program (CAP)! This handbook will provide you with information about preparing for and participating in CAP. Please read the information carefully, and contact Dr. Laura Cisneros (NRCA Director) at laura.cisneros@uconn.edu or 860-486-4917 if you have any questions.

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A. The CAP Field Experience Schedule

We're excited to begin working with you! As a participant in the Conservation Ambassador Program (CAP), you will live in a university residence hall with the other CAP students and staff during the field experience.

One of the unique aspects of CAP is that you get to work directly with UConn professors and other environmental professionals. By day, you will spend time in the field and in the classroom experiencing exciting hands-on environmental programming. In the evening, you will participate in fun activities that explore different parts of our environment from campfires and stargazing to black light trapping and bat acoustic monitoring.

There is no such thing as a typical day at CAP. Each day is packed, **and you should expect to spend much of the day outdoors and being active (including walking and hiking)**. So, reading this handbook thoroughly so that you can plan and pack appropriately will be key to your enjoyment during the week.

THE FIELD EXPERIENCE DAYS WILL GENERALLY FOLLOW THIS SCHEDULE

Subject to Change

Sunday 7/17	Monday 7/18	Tuesday 7/19	Wednesday 7/20	Thursday 7/21	Friday 7/22	Saturday 7/23	
Breakfast (7-8 AM)							
Check-In	Traditional Ecological Knowledge	Water Quality	Fisheries	Wildlife	Environmental Careers Exploration	Pack	
						Closing Ceremony	
Lunch							
Team Building Activities	Forestry	Water Quality	Soil	Mapping	Project Work		
Community Agreements	Down Time	BBQ at Bicentennial Pond	Community Environmental Action		Community Environmental Action		
Dinner			Down Time	Dinner			Pizza Party
Campfire	Compass Scavenger Hunt	Down Time		Ice Cream	Movie Night		Ice Cream & More!
	Campfire		Biodiversity in the Night	Down Time			
Quiet Time (10-11 PM)							
Lights Out (11 PM)							

All friends and family are welcome and encouraged to attend the Closing Ceremony on Saturday!





B. Arrival & Departure Information

ARRIVAL DATE AND TIME:

SUNDAY, JULY 17
11 A.M. – 12 P.M.

ARRIVAL LOCATION:

UCONN STORRS CAMPUS
NORTHWEST RESIDENCE HALLS

We will email detailed directions and a map to the residence hall closer to the date of the field experience. Check-in runs from 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. and staff members will be there to greet you and help you get settled. During this time, you can begin unpacking and meet other CAP students. **It is very important that you arrive on time, as orientation and CAP programming will begin promptly at 12:00 p.m.**

CLOSING CEREMONY DATE AND TIME:

SATURDAY, JULY 23
9:00 A.M. – 11:00 A.M.

Refreshments provided prior to the ceremony

CLOSING CEREMONY LOCATION:

UCONN STORRS CAMPUS
BIOPHYSICS BUILDING ROOM 131

Check-out of the residence hall and departure from campus will take place immediately following the closing ceremony. **Parents, friends, and family are strongly encouraged to attend the closing ceremony, where the students will showcase their work from the week.** We will provide detailed directions and information about the Closing Ceremony to parents/guardians during the field experience check-in.

C. Accommodations

- a. **Residence Hall:** You will be housed in the Northwest Residence Hall on the UConn Storrs campus. CAP students stay in gender-specific rooms. Students that identify as non-binary gender can arrange housing on an individual basis with the NRCA Director, Laura Cisneros (laura.cisneros@uconn.edu; 860-486-4917). Students will share common areas for meetings and activities. Rooms do not have air-conditioners, and past CAP participants have suggested bringing a personal fan if you have one to make your stay more comfortable.
- b. **Bathrooms:** Bathrooms are gender-specific and communal with shared sinks, individual bathroom stalls, and individual shower stalls.
- c. **Roommates:** You will be randomly assigned a roommate and will meet them when you both arrive on campus. We do not accept roommate requests, nor do we change roommate assignments during the week. We encourage conversations between roommates to agree on room rules such as sleeping hours, cleanliness, and sharing possessions. Some compromising by each person is usually necessary to ensure a great rooming experience. Most roommates learn to live together easily, and many become very good friends!



- d. **Furnishings:** Your room is equipped with the following furnishings for each person: desk, desk chair, bed, dresser, and closet. You will receive a linens package including: 1 set of sheets, 1 pillow, 1 pillowcase, 1 blanket, and 2 towels. Students may not bring TVs or any other appliances to the residence hall. Students are permitted to bring laptop computers but do so at their own risk. The dorm will have a Wi-Fi connection.
- e. **Cell Phones/Telephone Access:** All students are asked to leave cell phones in their dorm rooms during daily programming. While you are permitted to bring your cell phone to the field experience, cell phone use is restricted to free time in the evenings. This restriction will minimize distractions and allow students to immerse fully in the field experience. **In case of an emergency, parents may contact the NRCA Director 24-hours a day during the field experience** (see emergency contact information on last page).
- f. **Laundry:** Free washers and dryers are available for use in the residence hall. However, laundry detergent is not provided. Please bring a small amount if you plan to do laundry.
- g. **Building Security:** The outer doors to the residence hall will remain locked at all times. You will be issued a building access card (which also serves as your meal card) and a room key. **You must maintain possession of your access card and room key at all times. There is a \$110 charge for lost keys (the NRCA will not be held accountable for lost keys).**
- h. **Residence Hall Staff:** A NRCA graduate student mentor and five undergraduate student Difference Maker Mentors will live in the residence hall with you during the field experience. These program leaders will conduct room checks every night to make sure all students are present at the required curfew time.

D. Dining Facilities

All CAP students will eat their meals in a large, air-conditioned cafeteria. The cafeteria offers a wide variety of food, including vegetarian, vegan, and gluten-free options. Participants with food allergies should note that the cafeteria posts ingredient information for most food options. If you require Kosher-prepared food, please make contact the NRCA Director, Laura Cisneros (laura.cisneros@uconn.edu; 860-486-4917).

E. COVID-19 Policy

The safety of CAP participants and staff is our top priority. The COVID-19 pandemic is an evolving situation that we continue to closely monitor to implement the necessary safety policies for the conditions that exist in the moment, and as such, are subject to change at any time during CAP. The following policies apply to all CAP participants:

- a. **Screening:** Participants will need to confirm that they have neither been sick nor, to the best of their knowledge, been in close contact with someone infected with COVID-19 within 14 days prior the CAP check-in. If a participant has been exposed, they will be asked to follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC guidelines](#). **We strongly encourage that you avoid crowded areas within 14 days of the start of the program.**
- b. **Negative COVID-19 Test Result:** At the field experience check-in, we will provide COVID-19 test kits to all participants. All participants **must have a negative COVID-19 test result to participate in**



the field experience. If a participant tests positive, they will be asked to return home and follow [CDC guidelines](#). Participants can work with the NRCA Director to discuss program registration/participation options.

- c. **COVID-19 Vaccination Policy & Voluntary COVID-19 Vaccination Status:** CAP participants are strongly encouraged to be vaccinated against COVID-19, unless legally entitled to an exemption (e.g., due to a disability or sincerely held belief, practice, or observance). Participants will be able to voluntarily disclose their vaccination status in the CAP Forms packet. Please note that sharing this information is voluntary and will not affect participation in CAP.
- d. **Symptom Monitoring:** Participants will be asked to monitor their own symptoms and to notify the NRCA Director immediately if they become ill at any time during the program.
- e. **Facial Covering:** During the CAP field experience, masks are required in indoor classroom settings. Use of masks in other settings will be dependent on university's campus guidelines. The NRCA Director will inform participants of and follow the university's campus guidelines and UConn COVID-19 Dashboard.
- f. **Physical Distancing:** The NRCA Director will inform participants of and follow the university's campus guidelines and UConn COVID-19 Dashboard.
- g. **Cleaning and Sanitation:** Participants will wash hands and use hand sanitizer frequently and as necessary. Hand sanitizer will be provided to each participant and readily available throughout the program. Sharing of personal belongings is discouraged.
- h. **COVID-19 Positive Testing Results:** Participants who test positive for COVID-19 must notify the NRCA Director immediately. Participants will be isolated and must depart from campus within 12 hours of receiving this result. In adherence with Minor Protection Program requirements, participants will stay in our care and will not be released from CAP until an authorized adult has arrived to check out the participant. The participant will receive communication regarding the isolation on campus and information for protocols to follow at home. Meals and wellness checks will be provided until an authorized adult arrives to pick up the participant.
- i. **Emergency Pick-Up:** All participants will be required to complete the *Emergency Contact Information* and *Persons Authorized to Pick-Up Your Child* sections of the CAP Forms. This information will allow CAP staff to follow protocols should the participant need to be picked up due to a COVID-19 positive test result or other emergencies.
- j. **Tracing:** Participants that were in close contact with a positive case will be contacted and asked to follow quarantine measures (e.g., monitoring symptoms, masking, social distancing) outlined by current [CDC guidelines](#).
- k. **Departure after Program:** Participants will be asked to notify the NRCA Director if they test positive for COVID-19 within the 14 days following their departure from CAP. If necessary, contract tracing will be conducted by state or local public health officials based on the latest guidance from the CDC.



F. Student Health Services

UConn has a health care facility on campus that is accredited by the Accreditation Association of Ambulatory Health Care Facilities. A fully qualified EMT, ambulance, and rescue service serve UConn and are housed at 126 North Eagleville Rd. UConn Health Urgent Care is located less than 1 mile from UConn, and Windham Memorial Hospital is located within 7 miles of UConn. Both facilities are available to handle any medical emergency. To participate in CAP, you must be covered by a medical insurance policy and provide your insurance information on the health form. Completed health forms for participants will be kept on file in the NRCA office during your participation in CAP.

G. Campus Safety & Security

UConn maintains its own 24-hour police department located at 126 North Eagleville Rd. The UConn Police can be contacted at 860-486-4800. There are blue emergency phones with direct lines to the police department located all around campus. In an emergency, please dial 911.

H. Outdoor Safety

Throughout the field experience, we will be exploring, studying, and learning about a variety of local environments. During the field experience, you should:

- Be aware of your surroundings
- Take caution when working in or around rivers/streams or other bodies of water
- Avoid standing under dead trees/branches that might pose a potential hazard
- Avoid approaching any other hazards we may be working near
- Avoid climbing rocks or trees or swimming in streams/rivers or other bodies of water without authorization

Due to the outdoor component of CAP, there are a variety of risks of injury to person and/or property that may include but are not limited to:

- Hazards associated with the weather (e.g., sunburn, rain, lightning etc.)
- Hazards associated with water-related activities such as wading in shallow water
- Insect bites (including ticks)

Note: During the summer season, ticks and Lyme disease are a significant concern. We are very serious about tick safety and implement a tick safety plan that includes a minimum of two tick checks per day. It is recommended that participants bring insect repellent, long pants, shirts, and hats for work in the UConn Forest. If desired, you might also consider treating clothes and shoes with Permethrin (available on Amazon) prior to attending the field experience for greater tick protection. CAP will supply additional bug spray and will educate on tick avoidance practices while in the field.

- Non-venomous snake bites
- Injury on or by rocks, terrain, vegetation (e.g., poison ivy) or rock pieces

CAP staff will educate participants on outdoor safety practices at the start of the program. Proper safety and preventative steps will ensure that we have a safe and rewarding outdoor experience! If you have concerns regarding these risks or require specific accommodations for participation, please contact the NRCA Director, Laura Cisneros (laura.cisneros@uconn.edu; 860-486-4917).



I. Transportation

Participants should make their own travel arrangements to and from the UConn Storrs campus. If you need assistance, we are happy to help arrange car-pooling. Please contact the NRCA office as soon as possible, as we are not able to accommodate last minute requests. Students may not bring a car to campus.

While CAP provides transportation when necessary to field sites and for program field trips during the field experience, walking and hiking is required for many of the CAP activities. This includes walking on rainy days and hot days. Participants should plan attire, shoes, and rain gear accordingly (see Section O for a suggested packing list).

J. Visitors

The NRCA does not allow friends or family to visit CAP participants during the field experience or drop off forgotten items. However, all friends and family are welcome to attend the CAP Closing Ceremony from 9 am-11 am on Saturday, July 23.

K. Money

All living (e.g., housing and meals) and trip (e.g., travel) expenses are covered, and CAP provides morning and afternoon snacks to all participants. Supplemental money is not necessary to bring unless students are interested in buying snacks from the vending machines in the dormitory.

L. Non-Discrimination Clause

We do not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, gender identity and expression, age, national origin, ethnicity, physical or mental disabilities, learning disabilities, sexual orientation, marital status, religion, status as a disabled veteran or veteran of the Vietnam Era, and any other group protected by civil rights laws. Any student seeking an accommodation should contact the NRCA office immediately.

M. Program Rules

Please read the information below very carefully

All CAP participants are required to abide by the following University rules and regulations. Infractions of any of the rules may result in disciplinary action, including but not limited to restriction from activities, contact with parents, and/or immediate dismissal from the program. Participants will be held responsible for willful damage of university property or personal property of other students.

Prohibited Conduct:

1. Use, possession, sale, distribution, or manufacture of controlled substances, drugs, or drug paraphernalia, except as expressly permitted by law.
2. The threat of or actual physical assault or abuse, stalking, verbal/written abuse, harassment, intimidation, or coercion of any person.
3. Disruptive behavior, defined as: participation in or inciting others to participate in the disruption of any aspect of the CAP, including at the residence hall.



4. Sexual misconduct, which includes the threat of or actual sexual assault or unwelcome sexual contact of any person.
5. Conduct that threatens or endangers the health or safety of any person including oneself.
6. Willful participation in or perpetration of any action that results in personal harm, property destruction, or theft. This includes property of other participants, staff, and the University.
7. Possession of a firearm, knife, or any other illegal weapon.
8. Driving or riding in any vehicle other than vehicles provided by CAP staff or faculty members.
9. Use of obscene or inappropriate language.
10. Pulling of fire alarms in non-emergent situations
11. Throwing items out of any residence hall or campus building windows.
12. Possession or use of candles, lighters, incense, or other burning devices.
13. Visiting a floor occupied by members of the opposite sex, or visiting a floor or rooms not reserved for CAP activities.
14. Entering the room of another participant without permission.
15. Violation of curfew rules.
16. Harassment, consisting of abusive behavior directed toward an individual because of race, color, ethnicity, religion, age, gender identity, sex, national origin, ancestry, sexual orientation, or physical or mental disabilities.
17. Inappropriate entry into or behavior in university buildings.
18. Willful disregard of instructions from program staff or faculty, or overt disrespect toward staff and fellow students.

N. Program Culture & Expectations

We believe that our communities thrive when everybody has access to and feels welcome in local greenspaces and that community members of all ages and backgrounds bring innovative ideas, assets, and solutions to address local environmental issues. We strive to cultivate a program environment that embraces and celebrates our identities, cultural heritage, or background, and promotes mutual respect. Participation in CAP requires adherence to the expectations listed here.

1. Stay engaged and listen to understand different perspectives.
2. Recognize the assets that everyone brings to the program.
3. Promote mutual respect for all participants, staff, and others at UConn by:
 - a. Being on time for all program activities, including field trip departures and curfew.
 - b. Respecting university property and the personal property of others.

- c. Treating all program staff with respect, including following directions, completing assignments, paying attention during activities, and not using cell phones during CAP activities (leave cell phones in dorm room).
4. Other expectations include:
 - a. Lock your room when no one is in it.
 - b. Maintain possession of your access card or room key at all times.

O. Packing List

If you do not have the items listed on the packing list below, there is no need to rush out to a sporting goods store. Secondhand stores such as Goodwill or Savers often have excellent options for clothes that you can wear in the field, and at a deeply discounted price. If you need help getting certain items below, please contact the NRCA Director, Laura Cisneros (laura.cisneros@uconn.edu; 860-486-4917).

Clothing

Each CAP day is packed with fun! You will spend much of the day being active and outdoors, walking, and hiking. As such, it is important to consider variable weather conditions. When packing, choose items that **can get dirty**, do not restrict movement (i.e., are not tight), are comfortable, and provide appropriate cover for walking through forests. Below is a suggested packing list, and you might consider packing extra clothes for when you get dirty or hot throughout the day. There are free laundry machines for your convenience (laundry detergent not provided). When selecting clothes to bring, please dress in a manner that is respectful to students and staff members.

- 7 T-shirts appropriate for outdoor activity
- 4-5 pairs of pants appropriate for outdoor activity (e.g., loose fitting jeans, hiking pants, lightweight sweatpants)
- 3-4 pairs of shorts appropriate for outdoor activity
- 7 pairs of long socks (i.e., not athletic or ankle length)
- 2-3 long sleeved shirts appropriate for outdoor activity
- 2 sweatshirts or fleeces
- Baseball hat (or any hat that provides sun protection)
- Raincoat
- Rain pants (*optional*)
- Sneakers and/or hiking shoes. Shoes **must be** close-toed and have ankle support.
- Water shoes (a pair of shoes that you can get wet, could be athletic sandals) (*optional*)
- Flip-flops or sandals
- Swimsuit
- Comfortable clothes to lounge in during evening activities
- 1 nice outfit for the closing ceremony

Personal Items

- Toiletries (toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, shampoo, conditioner, etc.)
- Shower caddy (*optional*)



- Towel (for lake swimming)
- Water bottle (*optional, we provide one for everyone*)
- Sunscreen
- Bug spray
- Sunglasses (*optional*)
- Medications (1 week supply) (*if applicable*)
- Extra set of contacts/glasses (*if applicable*)

Other Items

- Backpack
- Headlamp (*optional, we have extra*)
- Flashlight
- Notebook/paper, pens/pencils
- Alarm clock (phone clock is fine)

Additional Optional Items

- Personal Fan (past CAP students **highly recommend** bringing this item)
- Laundry detergent
- Camera
- Laptop
- Additional bath towels

What Not to Bring

- Car or bike
- MP3 player or video games
- TV, microwave, air conditioning unit, or other appliances
- Candles, lighters, and incense

P. Community Environmental Action Project

After you complete the field experience and return home, your work with the CAP is still just beginning! You will have the chance to design and complete a unique project within your local community. But you won't be alone – an undergraduate student Difference Maker Mentor (including other NRCA leadership) will be there to help get you started and check in with you along the way. We will also help you connect with a community partner, an expert in your local community who will help you develop your ideas and work with you to complete your project. To learn more about the community project, visit <https://nrca.uconn.edu/projects/>. Email laura.cisneros@uconn.edu to start talking about the community environmental action project today!

Q. NRCA Director, Dr. Laura Cisneros, Emergency Contact Information

- **Cell Phone:** 734-678-3859 (*best form of communication during field experience*)
- **Office Phone:** 860-486-4927 (*limited access during field experience*)
- **Email:** laura.cisneros@uconn.edu