



Natural Resources Conservation

Academy

Conservation Ambassador Program!

nrca.uconn.edu

2025 CONSERVATION AMBASSADOR PROGRAM



PARTICIPANT HANDBOOK



CONSERVATION AMBASSADOR PROGRAM PARTICIPANT HANDBOOK

Welcome to the NRCA Conservation Ambassador Program (CAP; <https://nrca.uconn.edu/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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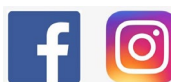
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NRCA Website



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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 participants 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 jam-packed, **and you should expect to spend much of the day outdoors and being active (including walking and hiking)**. Read this handbook thoroughly! Planning appropriately will be key to your enjoyment during the week 😊.

THE FIELD EXPERIENCE DAYS WILL GENERALLY FOLLOW THIS SCHEDULE

Subject to Change

Sunday 7/13	Monday 7/14	Tuesday 7/15	Wednesday 7/16	Thursday 7/17	Friday 7/18	Saturday 7/19
	Breakfast (7-8 AM)					
	Water Quality Testing	Water Justice Wrap Up	Fisheries	Wildlife	Drones	Pack
		Forestry				Closing Ceremony 9-11AM
						Check Out
Check-In 11AM-12PM						
Lunch						
Team Building Activities	Water Analysis & Green Infrastructure	Traditional Ecological Knowledge	Soil	Community Environmental Action Project	Mapping	
			Ice Cream	Down Time or Explore Campus w/ Staff	Work on Closing Ceremony Presentation	
Community Agreements	BBQ & Lake Swimming	Down Time	Down Time			
Dinner		Dinner			Pizza Party	
Campfire	Down Time	Compass Scavenger Hunt	Movie Night	Biodiversity in the Night	Pizza Party & More!	
		Campfire			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 13
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 participants. **It is very important that you arrive on time, as orientation and CAP programming will begin promptly at 12 p.m.**

CLOSING CEREMONY DATE AND TIME:

SATURDAY, JULY 19
9:00 A.M. – 11:00 A.M.

Refreshments provided prior to the ceremony

CLOSING CEREMONY LOCATION:

UConn Storrs Campus
Biophysics Building Room 130

Check-out of the residence hall and departure from campus will take place immediately following the closing ceremony. **Parents and family are strongly encouraged to attend the closing ceremony, where we will showcase the events of 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 live in the Northwest Residence Hall on the UConn Storrs campus. CAP participants stay in gender-specific rooms determined based on preferences indicated in their application. Any questions regarding housing can be directed to the NRCA Director, Laura Cisneros (laura.cisneros@uconn.edu; 860-486-4917). There are 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:** Gender-specific and gender-neutral bathrooms are available. Bathrooms are communal with shared sinks, individual bathroom stalls, and individual shower stalls.
- c. **Roommates:** You will be 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 compromise 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. You may not bring TVs or any other appliances to the residence hall. You 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:** We encourage all CAP participants to keep their cell phones in their backpacks during daily programming activities. This will minimize distractions, allowing for a more fully immersive experience, as well as the risk of damage to phones in the field (e.g., dropping in the water). **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 on the same floor of the residence hall as you during the field experience. These program leaders will conduct room checks every night to make sure all CAP participants are present at the required curfew time.

D. Dining Facilities

All CAP participants 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 (check out the menu and ingredient information for UConn Dining Halls here: <https://dining.uconn.edu/nutrition/>). If you require Kosher-prepared food, please contact the NRCA Director, Laura Cisneros (laura.cisneros@uconn.edu; 860-486-4917).

E. Severe Illness Symptoms Policy

Because some illnesses can be infectious and transmitted to others, participants who experience symptoms of a severe illness must notify CAP program staff immediately. Symptoms include but are not limited to diarrhea, vomiting, deep cough, suspicion of having a communicable disease (such as pink eye or strep throat), skin rash, temperature higher than 100 degrees F. Participants will be isolated and may have to depart from the program within 12 hours if determined by a medical professional. Meals and wellness checks will be provided until an authorized adult arrives to pick up the participant. In compliance with Minor Protection Program requirements, participants will stay in our care and will not be released from the program until an authorized adult has arrived to check-out the Participant.



F. Student Health Services

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 from campus. 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. You 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 clothing, 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 19.

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 you are interested in buying snacks from the vending machines in the dormitory or during a potential visit to the grocery or bookstore (*depending on time in schedule*).

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 CAP participant 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 people.

Prohibited Conduct:

1. Use, possession, sale, distribution, or manufacture of alcohol, nicotine, controlled substances, drugs (including cannabis), or drug paraphernalia (including vapes), 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 program, 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 flammable materials or open flame.
13. Visiting a floor or room occupied by participants in another program.
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 CAP participants.

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.



4. Other expectations include:

- a. Lock your room when no one is in it.
- b. Maintain possession of your access card and 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 is not provided). When selecting clothes to bring, please dress in a manner that is respectful to other participants 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

- ___ Room fan (**highly recommend**; dorm rooms are hot!)
- ___ Laundry detergent
- ___ Camera
- ___ Laptop
- ___ Additional bath towels

What Not to Bring

- ⊗ Car or bike
- ⊗ Video game console
- ⊗ TV, microwave, air conditioning unit, or other appliances
- ⊗ Candles, lighters, or incense

P. Community Environmental Action Project

After you complete the field experience and return home, your involvement with 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 – a NRCA 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