



Natural Resources Conservation

**Academy**

**2026**

# **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](mailto:laura.cisneros@uconn.edu) or 860-486-4917 if you have any questions.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

A. The CAP Field Experience Schedule.....	2
B. Arrival & Departure Information.....	3
C. Accommodations.....	3
D. Dining Facilities.....	4
E. Student Health Services.....	4
F. Campus Safety & Security.....	5
G. Outdoor Safety.....	5
H. Transportation.....	5
I. Visitors.....	6
J. Money.....	6
K. Non-Discrimination Clause.....	6
L. Program Rules.....	6
M. Program Culture & Expectations.....	7
N. Packing List.....	8
O. Community Environmental Action Project.....	9
P. NRCA Director Emergency Contact Information.....	9

### NRCA Website



[www.nrca.uconn.edu](http://www.nrca.uconn.edu)

### Follow Us on Social Media



[@UConnNRCA](https://www.instagram.com/UConnNRCA)





**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 6/21	Monday 6/22	Tuesday 6/23	Wednesday 6/24	Thursday 6/25	Friday 6/26	Saturday 6/27	
	Breakfast (6:30-7:30AM)						
	Morning Meeting (7:30-8AM)						
	Water Quality Testing	Forestry	Fisheries	Wildlife	Drones	Pack Closing Ceremony 9-11AM	
Check-In 11AM-12PM						Check Out	
Lunch (12-1PM)							
Program Welcome	Water Analysis & Green Infrastructure	Traditional Ecological Knowledge	Wetland & Soils	Enviro Action Project	Mapping		
Team Building Activities				Down Time			
				Pollinator Pathway	Work on Closing Ceremony Presentation		
I Am From Poems	Lake Swimming & Pizza Party	Down Time	Ice Cream	Down Time			
					Enviro Action Project		
					Enviro Action Project		
					Enviro Action Project		
Dinner (6:00-7:00PM)						Pizza Party	
Conservation & EJ Introduction	Enviro Action Project	Compass Scavenger Hunt	Movie Night or Down Time	Biodiversity in the Night	Letter Writing, Awards & More!		
Community Agreements	Down Time	Campfire					
UConn Campus Scavenger Hunt							Down Time
Quiet Time (10-11 PM)							
Lights Out (11 PM)							

**Family and friends are welcome and encouraged to attend the Closing Ceremony on Saturday!**





## **B. Arrival & Departure Information**

### **ARRIVAL DATE AND TIME:**

SUNDAY, JUNE 21  
11 A.M. – 12 P.M.

### **ARRIVAL LOCATION:**

UCONN STORRS CAMPUS  
ALUMNI RESIDENCE HALLS  
(632 Gilbert Road, Storrs CT 06269)

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. **We strongly encourage parents to come to check-in to meet program staff and help their child settle into their room. It is very important that you arrive on time, as orientation and 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  
MCHUGE HALL ROOM 101  
(Hillside Rd, Storrs, CT 06269)

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 and discuss support their the environmental action project.** 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 Alumni 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](mailto: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 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 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 1 towel. You may not bring TVs or any other appliances to the residence hall. You are permitted to bring laptop computers. The dorm will have a Wi-Fi connection.
- e. **Cell Phones/Telephone Access:** **We require all CAP participants to keep their cell phones in their backpacks or rooms 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 *Section P* for emergency contact 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 always remain locked. 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 four 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](mailto:laura.cisneros@uconn.edu); 860-486-4917).

#### ***E. Student Health Services***

Emergency medical services are available at UConn (126 North Eagleville Rd). UConn Health Urgent Care is located less than 1 mile from campus, and Windham Hospital is within 7 miles. Both facilities are available to handle any medical emergency. **All CAP participants must have medical insurance and provide insurance information on the required health form.** Completed health forms will be kept on file in the NRCA office during participation in CAP.



### **F. Campus Safety & Security**

UConn maintains its own 24-hour police department (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.

### **G. 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: Ticks and Lyme disease are a concern during the summer. CAP follows a tick safety plan that includes at least two tick checks daily. Participants should bring insect repellent and protective clothing, such as long pants, long sleeves, and hats, for work in the UConn Forest. Clothing and shoes may also be treated with Permethrin before arrival for added protection. CAP will provide additional bug spray and instruction on tick prevention 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](mailto:laura.cisneros@uconn.edu); 860-486-4917).

### **H. 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 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 N* for a suggested packing list).



### ***I. 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 Field Experience Closing Ceremony from 9 a.m.-11 a.m. on Saturday, June 27.

### ***J. Money***

All living (e.g., housing and meals) and trip (e.g., travel) expenses are covered, and CAP provides morning and afternoon snacks for 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 schedule).

### ***K. 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.

### ***L. 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 (this includes but is not limited to ignoring directions regarding curfew and restrictions of cell phone use).

#### ***M. 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 and participants with respect, including following directions, completing assignments, paying attention during activities, and not using cell phones during CAP activities.
4. Other expectations include:
  - a. Cell phones, headphones, earbuds, and other personal electronic devices must be silenced and stored during CAP instructional time, field activities, and group programming unless approved by staff. Devices may only be used during designated breaks or free time.
  - b. Lock your room when no one is in it.
  - c. Maintain possession of your access card and room key at all times.



## **N. 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](mailto: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 (especially ones that are light weight and button-up or zippered are useful to take on and off in the field)
- 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 (for shower)
- 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
- Sunscreen
- Bug spray
- Sunglasses (*optional*)
- Medications (1 week supply) (*if applicable*)
- Extra set of contacts/glasses (*if applicable*)



### Other Items

- Backpack
- Laptop (*optional, please indicate on your CAP forms if you need to borrow one*)
- 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
- 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

### **O. 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/>.

### **P. 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

