

RITA in Action!

Encouraging Tomorrow's Conservation Professionals in Morgan County

By Emma Bodnarick

RITA Mentor Technician 8

Growing up, I spent much of my time outdoors in the empty, overgrown lots around my parents' house or at my grandfather's cabin near the Hoosier National Forest. I felt a deep fascination with the plants and wildlife there. However, I viewed my passion for nature as "just a hobby" and certainly nothing I could make into a successful career.

Now, after changing my major several times, graduating from college with a Geography degree, and working in conservation for a couple of years, I realize that it is possible to be successful in the conservation field. I only wish I had been introduced to the variety of career options in conservation earlier!

As a Resilient Indiana Conservation Technician, I get to work directly with communities through local soil and conservation districts. One of my goals in this position is to share career opportunities in conservation with the youth in my area.

Recently, I have been able to carry out this goal through the Morgan County Soil & Water Conservation District. As a guest speaker in a middle school career class, I spoke to students about careers in conservation.



I emphasized the sheer variety of opportunities and specializations in the field, all requiring different levels of education and experience. They also conducted several soil tests and learned about the vast differences in soil types just within the county. Hopefully, the students left knowing there is more to conservation than just zookeepers and park rangers.

To continue youth outreach, Morgan County plans to host Hoosier Riverwatch programs for youth over the summer. I also intend to continue taking my career presentation to classrooms and other groups. In order to ensure that conservation efforts persist into the future, we need to introduce the next generation to the near-endless possibilities of a career in conservation.