Zach Rohde Internship Exit Summary

My name is Zach Rohde, and I was the summer Land & Water (Lake Wissota) Technician with the Land Conservation and Forest Management department for 2025. I graduated from UWEC with a degree in environmental biology and before my time here I worked as a fisheries technician with the Ohio Division of Wildlife on Lake Erie. During my free time I enjoy reading, going to the gym/running, and being outdoors.

During my internship with Chippewa County's Land Conservation and Forest Management Department, I gained valuable experience in watershed management, water quality monitoring, and community-based conservation. As the Lake Wissota Stewardship Project (LWSP) technician, I supported a variety of projects aimed at protecting and enhancing local water resources while also engaging with the public on sustainable land management practices. Much of my work involved collecting and analyzing lake and stream data—including dissolved oxygen, phosphorus, temperature, and chlorophyll levels—to assess ecosystem health and track seasonal changes. I also learned how to upload and update county datasets associated with these monitoring efforts.

Another major project I contributed to was the Fixed Photo Point Station program, where I helped update and expand photo monitoring sites around Lake Wissota. This work allows us to document shoreline and habitat changes over time and gave me hands-on experience with project planning and implementation. My internship also included extensive community engagement; I assisted with planning and speaking at events such as monthly LWSP meetings, the Lafayette Fall Festival, and Student Conservation Days. Through these experiences, I developed stronger communication skills and gained confidence interacting with the public.

In addition to fieldwork, I strengthened my technical abilities in GIS and data management. I expanded my proficiency with ArcGIS, Canva, Excel, and other digital tools used to support conservation projects. Throughout the internship, I also had opportunities to collaborate with landowners, lake associations, and conservation staff, and I gained experience communicating scientific data and environmental concepts in ways that are accessible to the community.

This internship gave me a deeper understanding of how local conservation efforts, research, and public engagement work together to sustain healthy ecosystems. My passion for natural resources and conservation has only grown, and I am excited to see where I go next in this field. Thank you to everyone in the LCFM Department and the LWSP for making these past six months such a meaningful experience—I wish you all the best!