KLAC Internship Experience

My internship experience at the Key Largo Anglers Club afforded several opportunities to work on projects and design experiments to help improve the state of the park and the health of the lakes. My primary goals were monitoring the water quality by testing the temperature, pH, salinity, and oxygen levels 3-4 times per week, as well as algae control. This was done both with manual removal of surface algae using a bucket and a rake, as well as experimenting with microbes in a controlled environment to monitor their capacity to limit algal growth. I also had responsibilities to feed the fish daily, and bait/monitor the fish trap.

Additionally, I got the opportunity to work with multiple field technicians on staff at the Anglers Club to ensure upkeep of the pumps and filters on site. Brian Judge was one of these partners, and we performed maintenance both at the Anglers Club and at the Ocean Reef Club next door. This was valuable experience as I was able to improve interpersonal and group work skills as well as gain experience with machinery (pumps and other physical systems) and saltwater aquaculture (mangrove growth and monitoring). I was fortunate to receive a tour of the Broad Key satellite campus of the University of Miami, and briefly partner with a professor and grad student there to tackle research questions.

I was joined by a co-intern for my final 3 weeks, which made many of the daily processes much more efficient and allowed us to work on more large-scale projects. Two of these were an “interns map” that detailed many of the useful locations and sites around the property, and a species list with facts and images to be posted on the Club website. This was part of the outreach program to inform members about what is swimming in the lakes and promote involvement and funding for future projects.

The Parks and Lakes chairman and my employer, Ben Cart, was very helpful in providing equipment for our studies, including physical tools, measurement devices, and a microscope to analyze the algae. Mr. Cart has been involved with the lakes program for many years and is passionate about improving the quality of the environment and the outreach for the park. He was my mentor and a great resource for any questions or concerns I ran into throughout my time at the Club.

Dining and living accommodations were excellent, and the staff at the Key Largo Anglers Club were very friendly and helpful as I got acquainted with my job and routine. Working in the Keys during summer was quite hot, but the flexibility of this position allowed for both early morning and later afternoon hours, so the midday heat was avoided. The Keys was also an amazing location for outdoor activities after work including fishing, kayaking, and snorkeling; as well as beautiful sunsets. Overall, this was an incredible experience that I thoroughly enjoyed, and highly recommend to anyone interested in the biology, environmental science, or ecosystem management fields.

