

Jake McDermott

Sustainable Energy Advantage, LLC

Summer 2016 Internship

I began my SEA Internship in May of 2016 and it lasted for 12 weeks until August. I had just graduated from the Commonwealth Honors College of the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, with a degree in Political Science and a minor in Resource Economics. I had first approached SEA about an internship after doing some research into the organization, the people involved, and the type of work they do. For me, I knew I wanted to work in an office with bright and passionate people, but people who also strive for objectivity without letting their feelings and passions get in the way of what the data or hard facts tell them.

I am very pleased and humbled to have been selected for the summer 2016 internship. The majority of my internship was centered on qualitative work, with a few quantitative tasks included to round out my experience (very much mirroring my academic work). I worked primarily on the Eyes & Ears team which is an SEA subscription service where we cover legislative, policy, and regulatory affairs as they pertain to renewable energy markets in New England. I started off assisting the core team by writing smaller, "one-off" articles. These were smaller issues and affairs that probably only needed to be covered once as there was a small change of further action occurring. Additionally, I began helping with the consolidation of articles for the Eyes & Ears Digests- which are released every 8-9 weeks and feature a culmination of the previous cycle's write-ups. Soon after my initial trial phase, I was tasked with doing additional writing and research on heavier and more exciting topics. Through my work on Eyes & Ears, I was able to fine tune my writing capabilities, helping me to key in on important issues for our subscribers. In addition to writing, my research skills were greatly improved, as many of our articles required me to skim and extract important information from legal and regulatory documents.

The Northeast Wind Resource Center (NWRC) is a DOE-funded center which focuses on the dissemination of credible information regarding wind energy and development to stakeholders. I was fortunate enough to be pulled in on a few tasks regarding the NWRC which involved curating a collection of resources to be added into the publicly available resource library.

I was also able to provide research assistance and data management tasks on SEA's Regional Modeling Outlook (REMO). REMO is a very quantitative project that involves many aspects of excel sheet modeling, MS Access management, and the tracking of renewable energy projects and prices. For REMO I did helped track the Historic Renewable Energy Credit (REC) prices, which feed into the model and help SEA establish the supply and demand for renewable power in the region. This task was done primarily through excel and while I did not have the chance to play around with the more quantitative aspects of the spreadsheet, I was able to see how they would function and I was able to witness the plethora of data that SEA culls for these projects. Very impressive. As I also mentioned, I provided additional assistance by researching different small renewable energy projects in New England and helped keep the REMO Access Database up to date.

One final project I worked on was the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center's Solar Market Barriers Study. This study was aimed at identifying different barriers for solar adoption in

Massachusetts, and was indexed by different categories including residential, commercial, and industrial/manufacturing facilities. My job was to research and come up with a large list of stakeholders who could potentially fill out a survey which would be the prime influence of the project itself. I came up with a large list of individuals, whose companies were spread out among solar developers, real estate organizations, and trade associations. I had the pleasure of sitting in on a phone call with another consulting team that we were working with and I was given the chance to speak and answer questions about the research I had performed and where I had found the stakeholders.

My SEA internship came to a close in August of 2016 and it was a rewarding and uniquely challenging endeavor. I walked in as somebody with a very basic understanding of how renewable energy markets- and more broadly- renewable energy itself functioned, and while I cannot profess to be an expert on these markets, I have now found confidence that has allowed me to think and communicate on a deeper level about these issues. I'll give an example: some towns in Massachusetts have previously or currently participate in Solarize Massachusetts. It is a program that encourages local solar adoption by giving homeowners larger incentives when more people in their local municipality sign up. I was on a run in my neighborhood and as I was running, I noticed a man in his driveway staring intently at his roof. I looked up and noticed racks on his roof, clearly for a solar installation. I stopped mid-stride and while catching my breath I asked him (knowing of course what the answer was) if he was getting solar on his roof. The answer was a resounding yes. I congratulated him on such an important investment and we spent about 5 minutes chatting about the process. I learned he did, in fact, sign up through our local Solarize program. He started telling me about the nameplate capacity of his soon-to-be installed system, the power it would output, how his roof was facing south and had a great angle to capture as much of the sun's light as it could, and about the state incentives he received for installing solar. It was a great conversation and as I put my headphones back in and finished my run, I had one of those crystallizing moments. I realized that I would have never been able to have had that conversation in the first place if I hadn't been an intern with SEA. I grinned and kept running. The staff and people of SEA are warm, light-hearted, and extremely competent. I highly recommend interning with them.

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