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Personal Statement

Growing up between Virginia Beach and Canada, I have always felt a strong connection to the natural world. That sense of connection turned into curiosity when I began exploring science more deeply, and it grew into something much larger as I started working in environmental education and outdoor recreation. These experiences showed me that science does not exist only in classrooms or laboratories; it is something people can see, feel, and participate in when given the chance.

Over the past few years, I stepped away from school to serve as a Recreation Specialist with the City of Virginia Beach's Environmental Stewardship and Outdoor & Nature-Based Recreation Teams. In that role, I taught environmental education programs that made nature accessible and engaging, creating opportunities for thousands of community members to build personal connections with their local ecosystem while recognizing their role in the health of our watersheds and natural spaces. From leading nature camps to coordinating volunteers for city-wide cleanups like Clean the Bay Day, I witnessed how science, interpretation, and community action can inspire stewardship and affect real change. I learned that when people are invited into nature through storytelling, hands-on experiences, and a welcoming community, they begin to see themselves as part of something bigger. This lesson has become one of the strongest motivators in my decision to pursue biology: the idea that knowledge can be transformative when it is shared.

Currently, I am pursuing my Biology degree at Old Dominion University, with particular interest in conservation, sustainability, and the intersection of science and policy. My coursework in ecology, climate adaptation, and GIS is giving me a strong foundation in scientific methods and data analysis, while my field and program leadership experience has honed my ability to communicate complex ideas in accessible and engaging ways. I enjoy bridging theory and practice—whether that means helping participants better understand the unseen roles organisms play in ecosystems or tracking how waterways respond to pollution and sea-level rise. I have come to appreciate how science gains its power not only through research and discovery, but also through interpretation and application. That balance between understanding systems deeply and connecting them to human communities is where I feel I can make the greatest contribution.

Looking ahead, I am keeping an open mind about my path—whether that means pursuing graduate school in areas such as environmental law or restoration science, or stepping directly into a nonprofit or government role where I can contribute to conservation and sustainability. What matters most to me is working at the point where science, policy, and public engagement overlap. My long-term goal is to protect ecosystems while also shaping the policies and communities that depend on them. I believe that biology is not only about studying life but also about sustaining it, and I want to be part of the generation that ensures the resilience of our natural systems. Completing my Biology degree is the next step in that path, and I am eager to continue growing as both a scientist and an advocate for the natural world.