James was born and raised in Rochester, NY. After a couple years at Monroe Community College, he transferred to the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry in Syracuse, NY, where he graduated with a Bachelor’s of Science degree in Environmental and Forest Biology. After graduating, he has gone on to pursue long distance backpacking trips, having completed thru hikes of the Long Trail in Vermont, the entire Appalachian Trail from Georgia to Maine, and the Northville-Placid Trail in the Adirondack Park of New York State. Extensive time spent in National Parks and on the National Trails System bred a desire to work with the National Park Service in some capacity, leading him to eventually discover the CVA internship.