Alumni Ryan Humrighouse graduated from Ohio University in 2005 in International Business with an Environmental Studies certificate and received a Masters in Public Administration in 2007. Ryan states this unique combination “provided me with a greater understanding of how public administrators can protect the environment by implementing environmental laws and policies, carrying out programs and projects, delivering critical services, and managing the resources to address complex environmental issues.”

During his time at OHIO, Ryan interned at both the Foundation for Appalachian Ohio in Nelsonville and the Governor’s Office of Appalachia in Columbus, and was immersed in an applied project experience with the Voinovich School. In his internships, Ryan planned, organized, and coordinated mini-grant and scholarship programs and provided financial advice and assistance to regional nonprofits. With the Voinovich School, he gained hands on experience by collaborating with professional staff efficient in geographic information system (GIS) and environmental management technologies to develop solutions to the environmental challenges facing Appalachian Ohio and the state; and collected, measured, and tested water for watershed restoration projects.

These projects provided Ryan the opportunity to work on and develop solutions to local and regional environmental issues. He explains, “I gained valuable experience in a wide variety of environmental issues, like poor water quality due to abandoned mines, sustainable development, and using geospatial data. I really enjoyed the opportunity to work in the field collecting and testing water quality samples, as well as working directly with local nonprofits and state environmental agencies.”

Ryan currently works in the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)’s Office of International and Tribal Affairs, managing grants and assistance agreements. Assistance agreements are a way of building international partnerships to identify global environmental issues and policy options to address them. The EPA currently participates with over 60 countries in numerous kinds of partnerships. Ryan states, “EPA has recognized that domestic action alone is not enough to fully address environmental concerns.”

“The courses I took at the Voinovich School were focused on developing the exact skill set I needed to successfully manage public environmental programs,” Ryan
states. He adds, “Environmental issues impact a multitude of stakeholders, and these courses helped me develop the skills necessary to evaluate the impact of environmental programs and policies.” His time at the Voinovich School “also helped me to develop my communication skills to be a more effective communicator and to be more comfortable speaking to large audiences and addressing diverse groups of stakeholders.”

Ryan believes that the public sector has the responsibility for addressing our most serious environmental issues, but the politics surrounding environmental issues present an additional layer of obstacles. He advises current students, “Don’t let these challenges prevent you from following your passion for protecting the environment. The skills you develop at the Voinovich School and the experience you gain working on these important projects will help you understand and create public value; and you can be sure of the public value you create by protecting human health and the environment for future generations.”

He warns that the environmental challenges on the horizon are daunting. He explains, “These challenges will test America’s system of politics and governance, but as my mentor here at EPA likes to say, ‘they can be conquered if our system is propelled by a cadre of dedicated public managers who understand the new imperatives of their profession.’”