I am very grateful for the opportunity to have served as the Bill Levitt Fellow for Friends of Alta (FOA) during the Summer 2022 season. While I admittedly sought the position to fill an internship requirement for my undergraduate degree, I gained so much more: a unique, hands-on experience promoting environmental conservation and education in one of Utah’s most beautiful and tranquil environments, the space to a positive impact in my community, and a lasting connection with Little Cottonwood Canyon. Moreover, the entire summer I was fortunate enough to work alongside the most enthusiastic people at Alta who shared my devotion to protecting our Earth­­, including FOA’s interim Communications Director, Ellie.

**­­**  A goal of mine as the Bill Levitt Fellow was to incorporate environmental justice into the position, and increase accessibility and inclusivity of Alta primarily through equitable resource distribution and recognition of systemic inequality. In terms of accessibility, I started by creating an infographic on the issue of environmental justice to sit at the Host station. The infographic raises awareness of injustices that occur in our community and offers solutions, regardless of the reader’s positionality. Next, focusing on inclusivity, I worked with Ellie to create all our event information in both English and Spanish. We wanted to encourage a wider demographic to enjoy the mountain and feel comfortable doing so. Finally, Ellie and I connected with the nonprofit organization Latino Outdoors (LO) to plan a hike through Albion Meadows. LO invited participants from Salt Lake City’s Latinx community while Ellie and I solicited donations from local businesses to allocate to our participants in an equitable manner. By means of event planning, community outreach, and environmental education, the *LO Wildflower Hike* was a success. I am very appreciative for LO’s eagerness to work with us, and we are extremely grateful for the opportunity to build a lasting partnership between FOA and LO.

Another aspect of this position that I really enjoyed was education. I discovered my passion for educating on ecology and environmental issues during my undergrad at the University of Utah. Interning with FOA, I learned a great deal about Little Cottonwood Canyon, the Wasatch National Forest, and our watershed, and taught passersby aspects of climate change, the importance of Leaving No Trace, and how we can lead a more sustainable life through everyday actions. Every Sunday I Hosted alongside Ellen from Cottonwood Canyons Foundation; our role was to be sure visitors felt equipped to explore Alta and answer any number of queries. Additionally, during major events at Alta such as the Wildflower Festival, I interacted with visitors to the FOA booth and was eager to share the importance of stewardship at such a high-volume event. During Kids’ Day at Alta, Ellie and I engaged with little scientists and got our hands dirty making wildflower seed bombs which were taken home, planted, and will attract pollinators next season. I found it fascinating to walk among the specific niches that flora and fauna have inhabited at Alta. This intricate network of symbiotic relationships all throughout Alta keeps the greater ecosystems resilient and healthy, and is something to be taught, valued, and protected through education.

The main driver of FOA’s mission is watershed protection. To further FOA’s mission of protecting and conserving Alta’s watershed, I partnered with different organizations to conduct weed surveys, invasive species management, Conservation Easement monitoring, and various restoration efforts all over the mountain. First, while it may not seem like an ideal task, I was excited weed out invasive species from Alta’s precious ecosystems as part of FOA’s invasive species management responsibilities. Any time I would tire, I glanced up at the peaks and instantaneously feel refreshed and rejuvenated to carry on. Next, to ensure adequate management of the land owned by FOA, Ellie and I had the pleasure of hiking around our Conservation Easements which protect the land from development for generations to come. Furthermore, I tagged along with Tracy Aviary conservation ecologists while they conducted research on Alta’s songbird and owl populations, and never failed to be impressed by the vast amount of knowledge they would share with me. Lastly, alongside other volunteers from Tree Utah, I dug up unfortunately-located young Blue Spruce saplings that had sprouted on a groomed run, and we transported them first to Alta’s tree nursery and then to a home in a safer patch and higher-elevation patch on the mountain. Other restoration tasks included assisting the Alta Environmental Center in planting propagated native sage and rice grass to reverse damage from human impact and strengthen ecosystem resiliency. I am very appreciative to have been able to help with these conservation projects as such efforts are the reason why Alta’s ecosystem and character are so unique.

Although chaotic at times, I am truly honored to have spent my days at Alta this summer. There is an unspoked bond between community members at Alta and the landscape itself, and I will forever be grateful to have been a part of it in this capacity.