

**INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE – BEMIDJI AREA  
2019 ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SPECIALIST OF THE YEAR  
GARRETT W. STEINER**

**Introduction**

LTJG Steiner has served in the Bemidji Area IHS (BAIHS) Rhinelander District Office since 2015 when he began his career as a COSTEP. He was hired as a civil service employee and converted to the Commission Corps in 2018. *LTJG Steiner quickly established himself as a valuable employee by working with key programs within the BAIHS; assuming leadership roles in several area initiatives, and providing assistance in covering services to three tribes during staff vacancies.* In addition, LTJG Steiner mentored two COSTEPS, the last occurring in the summer of 2019.

**Professionalism**

LTJG Steiner has obtained the following credentials: REHS (NEHA), Certified Pool Operator, Certified Professional – Food Safety, and a 30-Hour OSHA card. He has also started a Master's Degree in Public Health from the University of Arizona, he currently has a Bachelor's of Science in Environmental Health from Illinois State. LTJG Steiner also serves on the EHOPAC COSTEP Committee and is serving on RIST Region 5 Response Team.

**Special Accomplishments**

LTJG Steiner's dedication, motivation and professionalism have substantially elevated the development, growth and quality of the Bemidji Area Environmental Health Services program. In addition to his usual workload of providing field environmental health services to six tribal communities in Michigan, LTJG Steiner has risen to assume a lead role in key initiatives. *These initiatives included the expansion of the vector-borne surveillance program to include all Bemidji Area Tribes, establishing a more efficient delivery of annual head start health and safety training, and establishing ServSafe instructors in five large facilities.* He has made a significant contribution to our DEHS programs efforts to work with tribal, state, and federal programs.

One such initiative was the expansion of the vector borne surveillance and disease prevention program across the BAIHS Division of Environmental Health Services region. In November of 2018 the vector program was limited to four tribes within the Rhinelander District. *In 2019 LTJG Steiner took the lead and worked with BAIHS staff to create a plan to offer this program to all BAIHS Tribes.* LTJG Steiner led BAIHS staff in developing an implementation plan that included identifying the needs of the tribes, identifying tribal contacts, obtaining tribal concurrence for the delivery of the program, identifying the equipment necessary for the expansion of the program, and establishing the procedures and protocols for collection and testing. *The expansion of this program from 2018 to 2019 resulted in the collection of 410 ticks and over 2000 mosquitos from 18 tribes.*

In order to ensure the program's success LTJG Steiner developed a partnership with multiple state and federal Agencies. One such partnership was the Midwest Center for Excellence in Vector-borne Disease Research (MCE-VBD) operating under grants from the University of Wisconsin and the state of Wisconsin. *This partnership became key to the Rhinelander District team responding to an outbreak of Jamestown Canyon Virus, a mosquito borne illness.* The partnership resulted in a seasonal effort by staff from both agencies in collecting, identifying, and testing the mosquitoes associated with this disease. A total of 15,271 adult mosquitoes and 4,999 pupae/larva stage mosquitoes were collected. *Of these 5 adult pools (50) and 1 pupae/larvae pool (50) were identified with JCV.* The areas where these pools of mosquitoes were trapped have been identified and disease prevention options presented to the tribe. The MCE-VBD also offered and provided training to several BAIHS staff. The project and results are currently being prepared for publication.

*Another partnership that resulted from LTJG Steiner's efforts was with the CDC Vector Borne Disease Laboratory who agreed to accept and test the tick samples collected from all BAIHS Tribes monitoring for Lyme Disease and other tick related diseases.* Prior to this partnership ticks had to be submitted through the

states who would then forward them to the CDC for testing. This streamlined process reduced shipping and the time required to get test results back from the CDC lab. ***The results are now provided directly to the Bemidji Area and the tribes.***

LTJG Steiner began working with his five tribes to identify a more efficient way to deliver Servsafe manager training to his large casino facilities, totaling 72 food service operations. The demand for these trainings had increased with the rapid expansion of gaming facilities and community developments in Lower Michigan. This was requiring additional trips by LTJG Steiner to provide these trainings. He initiated discussions with casino management and tribal leadership on the ability of the large facilities to identify individuals he could mentor and train to become certified Servsafe instructors. ***LTJG Steiner mentored these individuals and currently all 72 food service operations have full time staff that are trained as Servsafe instructors and several of these have trained additional employees to ensure coverage.*** These programs have also begun to open up the regular training to community members who need the managers training to safely operate their programs; these include, elder meals, school lunch programs, and other tribal enterprises. ***This has reduced LTJG Steiner's travel time and area travel expenses while increasing tribal capacity and food safety.***

In addition to the aforementioned training, LTJG Steiner worked with the head starts operated by the Inter Tribal Council of Michigan (ITCM) to improve the delivery of annual health and safety training. He previously recognized this training came with a heavy travel schedule and was difficult for head start staff to coordinate. ***Therefore, LTJG Steiner proposed the use of a video teleconference training and that it be delivered to multiple sites over just one day.*** LTJG Steiner was instrumental in organizing, scheduling, setting up the video and teleconference and providing the training to 32 staff in virtual attendance. Comments about the training were positive and this was presented at a head start director's meeting as the way future trainings should be held. This program is being adopted throughout the BAIHS DEHS area. In addition, and at the request of the head start programs, these trainings are recorded so they can be used to orientate new staff. LTJG Steiner's innovative thinking has made our program and the Head Start programs more efficient, while still ensuring they meet all requirements of the Head Start Performance Standards.

LTJG Steiner coordinated and marketed a 30 and 8 Hour OSHA training to multiple tribes located in Michigan. ***These trainings were attended by 34 staff including casino and tribal risk managers, tribal utility directors, and human resource managers.*** This training would not have normally been offered to this group, but with LTJG Steiner's effort in working with several of the risk managers he developed the idea to offer this course to them and obtained their commitment. By coordinating this training LTJG Steiner ensured tribal program directors and risk managers were receiving safety training they would not have normally considered.

### **Summary**

LTJG Garrett W Steiner is nominated for the BAIHS Environmental Health Specialist of the year for demonstrating outstanding leadership in partnering with tribes and multiple programs to develop and expand the BAIHS vector surveillance program, his innovative delivery of critical trainings, his ability to resolve complex environmental health and safety issues, and in achieving the mission of the Indian Health Service DEHS program.