

ENS Emily Zamzow
Jr. COSTEP Summer 2013
Boise State University
Fort Apache Indian Reservation
Whiteriver, AZ



Hiking in Sedona, AZ

My name is Emily Zamzow, and I am a senior at Boise State University pursuing a degree in Environmental and Occupational Health and Safety. An internship is required for graduation in my program, and Jr. COSTEP seemed like an interesting way to fulfill these credits versus the typical internship, such as working in industry or for the county health department. I was recruited by LT John Hansen stationed in Elko, Nevada, a fellow Boise State alumni. He presented this internship as an incredible opportunity where I would have the chance to not only to enhance my professional career, but also mature as a young adult through many personal experiences.

This summer I was stationed in Whiteriver, Arizona where I had an experience unlike any other. My preceptor was LT Beth Wittry who helped me become assimilated into this entirely new world. I was 1,000 miles away from my home in Boise, Idaho, and I had never spent any substantial amount of time on an Indian reservation. I was stationed for two and a half months on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation (FAIR) working with the White Mountain Apache Tribe (WMAT). During my internship, I was given the opportunity to visit other reservations such as the San Carlos Apache Reservation and the Hopi Reservation, and was astonished by the archaic traditions and eccentric cultures of these tribes.

I came into this internship not really knowing what I was going to do. I didn't know if I was going to be an active player in this work, or work as a sidekick to assist my fellow Environmental Health Officers (EHOs). I discovered quickly I was no sidekick. Within the first week I was actively involved in all types of environmental health work. The entire summer I was busy, and entertained by the many roles undertaken by EHOs. I was thrown into an array of different assignments, everything from taking temperatures of potentially hazardous food at the food stands, to administering rabies shots to dogs and cats, to analyzing the chemical content of the pools at the casino. Additionally, I wrote reports, mastered the copy machine, and created community education flyers to inform the public about environmental health issues.



Collaring dogs during RMSF prevention week

The experiences which stood out most to me were the Rocky Mountain spotted fever (RMSF) Prevention Campaigns. These were the most exhausting, yet most gratifying weeks of my entire life. RMSF is endemic on the reservation due to a large roaming dog population accompanied by a large number of ticks. Many tribal members have been negatively impacted from this disease, and many of the fatalities were children. I observed many tick-infested dogs throughout the campaigns. The RMSF Prevention Campaigns intend to reduce the tick population and ultimately prevent the public's exposure to RMSF. RMSF prevention activities include treating homes with pesticide, collaring dogs with tick collars, and educating the public to ensure they are aware how to prevent RMSF. During the June RMSF Prevention week we treated 2,068 homes with pesticide, collared

1,820 dogs, and educated 2,482 homes. During the July RMSF Prevention week we treated 2,369 homes with pesticide, collared 928 dogs, and educated 2,247 homes. Although it was tough work, it was such a great feeling to know we were making a difference and potentially saving lives.

The week immediately following the June RMSF Prevention Campaign was the rabies vaccination clinic. Three hundred eighty five rabies shots were administered to cats and dogs by Evelyn Williams, a USDA veterinarian. During the clinic, we were able to observe our achievements from the RMSF Prevention Campaign the week prior. A large percentage of the dogs which came to the clinic were wearing tick collars provided during the RMSF Prevention Campaign and many dogs were tick-free. I was very happy to see that all of my hard work was making a real difference and helping to improve the overall health of the population on the FAIR.

Throughout this internship I was an active component in the prevention of environmental health risks and improved the public health of the WMAT. This experience and the genuine appreciation from the public made my job worth all of the hard work. The JRCOSTEP was a fulfilling experience and made me very proud to be employed by the Commissioned Corps, an entity that sincerely cares about the wellbeing of the public. I am so grateful to have been given this opportunity, and I would like to thank the Commissioned Corps, and the Whiteriver Service Unit. I would also like to thank the many amazing people I worked with including LT Beth Wittry, LT Kelsey Hustedt, CDR Stephen Piontkowski and many more, who all welcomed me, and taught me so much throughout this summer. I will never forget my summer spent in Whiteriver, Arizona.



Spending time with LT Kelsey Hustedt
& my preceptor LT Beth Wittry