

ENS Cheyanne Morgan
JRCOSTEP Summer 2017
Western Carolina University
Reno District Office
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My name is Cheyanne Morgan and I will be a senior this fall at Western Carolina University where I am majoring in environmental health. Originally I was a chemistry pre-med major with the hope of going into pediatrics. However, I quickly discovered that chemistry was not what I wanted to do. I was taking an environmental health class and fell in love with the major, switching within my first few weeks at Western Carolina. I had heard many stories about the USPHS JRCOSTEP from students and professors so I was looking forward to applying before my senior year. When I received the call that I was selected for a JRCOSTEP, I was beyond excited to travel across the country and start a new journey.



Kayaking on Lake Tahoe



Lead sampling project

During my JRCOSTEP with the Phoenix Area, Office of Environmental Health and Engineering (OEHE), Reno District Office, my preceptor, LCDR Landon Wiggins, provided me the opportunity for many rewarding work and personal experiences. This included my first time on an airplane, as well as visiting the west coast. Due to the large geographic area served by the Reno District Office, I was able to visit many reservations in Nevada and Utah and assist with providing environmental health services to several types of facilities. I travelled to the Uintah and Ouray Service Unit, Ft. Duchesne, Utah, where I helped provide food safety training and conducted food service sanitation surveys of temporary food vendors during the Ute 4th of July Powwow. I was able to work alongside multiple Environmental Health Officers and Environmental Engineers. This provided an opportunity to observe a variety of methods used in addressing environmental health and safety concerns and getting a broader understanding of the OEHE.

I provided food handler training, conducted environmental health surveys of food operations, pools, and senior centers, and assisted with rabies virus vaccination clinics and mosquito surveillance for West Nile virus and other diseases. I was the lead on a pilot project collecting water samples for lead and copper testing from schools, Head Starts, and child care centers. The project was a collaboration between tribes, the IHS, and the U.S. EPA to help ensure safe drinking water for children. In addition to the testing, the project's long term goals included defining sampling frequency and working the IHS engineering and tribal water utilities to include these facilities in future sampling plans.

Even though I had completed food safety surveys as part of my class in college, it was very different to experience this in a new setting. While at school, I was employed at the dining facilities on campus. When we were conducting the surveys it was very easy to communicate

issues to people that I already knew. However, in the field this is not always the case. I learned that environmental health staff are sometimes interacting with individuals who have varying degrees of food safety knowledge and food safety practices. Learning to bridge this gap and communicate information was a challenge but also very rewarding when we were able to see operators take action to address identified issues. I also enjoyed doing the inspections as consultative versus regulatory and see the appreciation of operators when we took the time to explain the public health reasoning associated with a recommendation.

While stationed in the Reno District I was able to travel to many places including Las Vegas and San Francisco. I had never been this far west so getting to see this side of the country was an excellent experience. As I reflect on my time at the Reno District Office, I feel I have learned many valuable life lessons and things about myself, in addition to more about environmental health that I can apply once I graduate and pursue a career in public health.



Mosquito surveillance