

**ENS Ariel Whitwell
JRCOSTEP Summer 2019
Western Carolina University
Fort Yuma Service Unit
Winterhaven, California**

My name is Ariel Whitwell and I am a rising senior at Western Carolina University in Cullowhee, NC. I am earning a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Health. I was first introduced to the JRCOSTEP my freshman year of college. I heard the experiences of the past year's JRCOSTEPs through my majors advising day. I have been working to get this externship since then because it seemed so diverse and I would get to know what I did and did not like in the field.



Setting a mosquito trap

I was stationed at the Fort Yuma Health Clinic in Winterhaven, CA. My preceptor was LT Kate Pink and I served the Quechan and Cocopah Native communities. The Cocopah Tribe has around 1,300 members and the Quechan Tribe has approximately 3,500 members. During my externship I was able to experience many different aspects of an Environmental Health Officer's duties. LT Pink and I completed mosquito surveillance as well as food, pool, and hotel surveys. I entered the survey information into our Web-based Environmental Health Reporting System where all the surveys are recorded. I helped to finalize the surveys and write reports.

The biggest highlight of my externship was that I was able to cross-train with other offices. I inspected a drain field and followed-up on a sewage tank installation with an engineer. In Parker, AZ with other EHOs I learned to trap, speciate, and test mosquitoes. I even worked with the local pest abatement district to set, collect, and sort mosquitoes and bleed sentinel chickens as part of ongoing West Nile virus surveillance in the region. These opportunities helped to reinforce everything that I did during my externship.

My major project was based on car seat usage rates among one of the communities we served. For eleven weeks I performed car seat use surveillance at an education complex to see if children were being properly restrained. I compiled this data into a document that will be used to apply for a grant from the Bureau of Indian Affairs. For this project, I also created a PowerPoint presentation of tribal restraint laws. I summarized the current laws for tribes in Arizona and pulled out the commonalities, differences, gaps, and unique laws. The final product of my project is a one-page flyer about the entire project. It included statistics from the Centers for Disease Control, the car seat surveillance data, and where the community could go to receive the seat and installation instruction. I enjoyed doing this project, I felt like my contribution could help the community and make a change.

Throughout my time as a JRCOSTEP, there was never a dull moment. Even while I was writing reports and finalizing surveys I found myself interested. I was always learning and gaining new experiences. LT Pink worked constantly to ensure that I was exposed to every aspect of the responsibilities of an Environmental Health Officer. I found some information about the JRCOSTEP experience online, but I mostly relied on my preceptor and what I heard from peers.

My recommendation for others considering the JRCOSTEP would be to make sure you have an open mind. There is no telling what you may encounter each day and if you have a willingness to learn, the JRCOSTEP assignment will be great. The last thing I want to say is to keep working for it. The application process can take a long time, but it is well worth it. My time as a JRCOSTEP is something that I will never forget. I was surrounded by so many wonderful people that wanted to help me succeed and I appreciate them more than they know. I want to say thank you to my preceptor LT Kate Pink. Thank you for answering all of my questions, even when I asked the same one multiple times and for sharing your knowledge with me. Thank you to everyone who helped me along the way and provide support throughout my assignment.



ENS Whitwell and LT Kate Pink



Measuring a swimming pool's water chemistry