

**ENS Greta Gunning  
JRCOSTEP Summer 2022  
University of Washington  
Taos-Picuris Service Unit  
Taos, New Mexico**

My name is Greta Gunning, and I am an undergraduate student at the University of Washington. I will be graduating in spring 2023 with my Bachelor of Science in Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences. My Junior Commissioned Officer Student Training and Extern Program (JRCOSTEP) location has been in the Indian Health Service, Albuquerque Area, Office of Environmental Health and Engineering, Division of Environmental Health Sciences (DEHS), Taos-Picuris Service Unit, under the mentorship of my preceptor LT Braden Hickey. However, I have also had the opportunity to work with Pueblos in the Albuquerque, Santa Fe, Zuni, and Durango Service Units as well.



ENS Gunning at  
Zuni Service Unit

First, I'll start with some of the activities I had the chance to participate in this summer. I conducted surveys of food establishments, detention centers, playgrounds, senior centers, casinos, hotels and gymnasiums. I also attended food handler courses and bloodborne pathogen trainings, collaborated with the entire Albuquerque Area DEHS team to put on a virtual Head Start Summit, dealt with water and power outages, helped run a fire drill for the Taos-Picuris Health Clinic, learned how to conduct respirator fit testing, and assisted with a spay and neuter clinic. Furthermore, I attended a training on lead prevention, assisted with an environmental investigation for lead sources at a tribal member's home and participated in rabies vaccination clinics. Lastly, and what I spent a significant amount of time working on while in Taos, was my animal control and welfare project.

The goal of the project was to support the Taos Pueblo animal control and welfare committee and collect data to encourage the creation of an animal control program. The first step we took was to create a survey questionnaire to gather data on the Pueblo's dog population and community attitudes. Some topics within the questionnaire included asking how many dogs/cats an individual owns, how many free-roaming dogs/cats a homeowner can see within 25 feet of their property, vaccination/spay/neuter status, and accessibility and safety. The questionnaire was then distributed using two different methods: 1) physically given to Pueblo members; and/or 2) electronically dispersed. This survey was done in collaboration with several different tribal departments including: the community health and resources center, central management systems, the IHS clinic, Pueblo checkpoint and the police department. Additionally, we distributed surveys going door-to-door on the Pueblo with the police department and during a spay and neuter clinic.

The next aspects of the project included updating the Albuquerque Area animal control program development guide in order for tribes to have a baseline template as a reference. Lastly, I presented the results of the project to tribal leadership to support the creation of the animal control program.

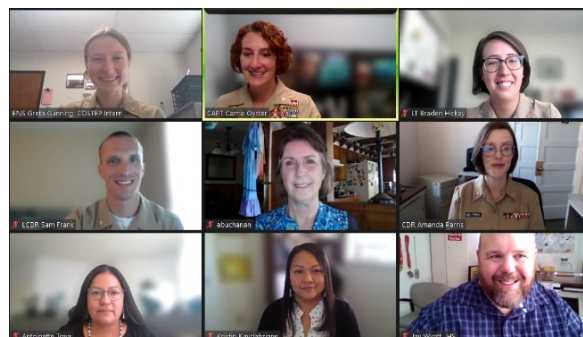
In addition to experiencing the day to day life of a U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) Environmental Health Officer, I also got to explore New Mexico. While in Taos, I did quite a bit of hiking and trail running, including hiking to Wheeler Peak, which is the highest peak in New Mexico at 13,161 feet above sea level. I explored the historic districts of Taos, Albuquerque, and Santa Fe and rode an aerial tram up to the Sandia mountains in Albuquerque. I went to the Petroglyph National Monument and saw ancient Pueblo ruins at Bandelier National Monument. I went whitewater river rafting in the Rio Grande and I tried new foods such as green and red chilies and sopapillas. Overall, it was an incredible adventure.



Wheeler Peak

In conclusion, my most memorable activities included participating in lead home investigations and training/assisting with rabies vaccination clinics, learning about Native American culture, traveling to multiple Service Units, visiting the Kirtland Air Force Base and exploring all the beautiful hiking Taos has to offer. I also had the opportunity to wear the USPHS uniform during my JRCOSTEP externship and thoroughly enjoyed representing the Commissioned Corp as it truly made me feel more a part of the team.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge each of the individuals who I have worked alongside with and who supported me through the duration of my JRCOSTEP. CAPT Carrie Oyster, CDR Amanda Parris, LCDR Sam Frank, Ann Buchanan, Antoinette Toya, Kristin Kaydahzinne, Jay Wyatt and especially LT Braden Hickey, my preceptor who made this externship unlike any other. My JRCOSTEP experience was one I will never forget and the lessons I learned will no doubt have a profound impact on my future career in environmental health.



Albuquerque Area DEHS Team