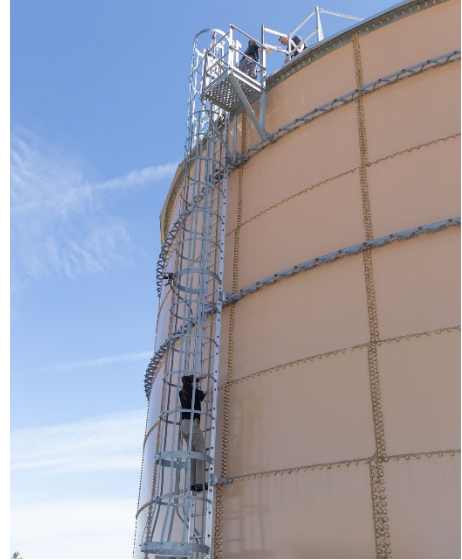


ENS Lindsay Uzarski
JRCOSTEP Summer 2025
Portland Area Office
Portland, Oregon

My name is Lindsay Uzarski, and I am a senior at Central Michigan University studying environmental health and safety and biology (ecology, evolution, and conservation concentration). This summer, I had the privilege to participate in the Junior Commissioned Officer Student Training and Extern Program (JRCOSTEP) with the Indian Health Service in Portland, OR. I worked in the Portland Area Office under the guidance of my preceptor, CDR Christopher Fish. While the Portland Area Office serves many tribes within Oregon, Washington, and Idaho, I served The Confederated Tribes of the Yakama Nation, the Umatilla Reservation, the Warm Springs Reservation, and the Kalispel Tribe.



ENS Uzarski inspecting a water storage tank on the Umatilla Reservation

During the course of my externship, I gained a wide range of experience in many different aspects of the environmental health field. I spent much of my summer conducting food service sanitation surveys of various establishments, including restaurants, school cafeterias, food warehouses, and more. I gained knowledge and confidence in food inspections throughout the summer, and by the end I was able to complete them independently. I conducted additional safety inspections of health clinics and construction environments. In addition, I completed trainings and received certificates in various subjects including food safety and food service inspections, pool inspections, OSHA construction safety, and more.



Conducting a food service sanitation survey

In addition to environmental health inspections, I was given the opportunity to create a project based on my own interest and expertise in environmental health. I used this opportunity to research vectorborne diseases in the pacific northwest, and what risk they pose to the tribes served by the Portland Area Office. Using this information, I created a report describing the risk vectorborne diseases may pose to these communities and what actions could be taken to prevent illness in the future.

Overall, my time as a JRCOSTEP provided me with invaluable professional and cultural experiences. This program allowed me to learn many different environmental health skills, while simultaneously exposing me to new cultural experiences that educated and improved me as a person. Whether it be climbing a water storage tank to inspect it, or trying new regional food, each new experience left a positive impact that I will carry with me in my future career.