Hannah Jacobsen

Honors Post-Enrichment Award Report: Education Abroad in Todos Santos, Mexico

The Enrichment Award put forth by the Honors College at Colorado State University (CSU) helped me to participate in an education program during the winter break of the 2017-2018 academic year. The program I chose to attend was the Fish, Wildlife and Conservation Biology program in Todos Santos, Mexico. As a student majoring in Human Dimensions of Natural Resources, this opportunity allowed me to expand both my academic and personal interests. Additionally, I had the opportunity to learn about wildlife species not found in Fort Collins and gain an appreciation for Mexican culture.

My experiences during the Todos Santos winter break program strongly reinforced my desire to work with international environmental issues and exposed me to professionals who work in the field that I'm interested in. I was able to learn about the unique challenges facing Mexico, including land ownership problems, lack of enforcement with environmental protection laws, freshwater use, overfishing, coastal development, and the impacts of tourism on delicate ecosystems. I was also able to look more closely at the complicated inter workings between the Mexican government and nonprofit organizations who work to protect and conserve lands and endangered species, and how the two branches can work together to make a difference.

By visiting places like the Cabo Pulmo Marine Park, Espiritu Santo island, and El Refugio ranch I was able to spend time with locals who live and work in these protected areas. I was able to learn about the deep cultural and historical ties communities have with their
environments and their dependency upon them, and their drive to protect them as a result. Learning of the appreciation and great value these individuals placed on their surrounding environments was greatly inspiring to me, as it illustrated the salubrious worth that some individuals place upon nature. I think I am now better equipped with an understanding of global sustainability issues as a result of this experience, and thus more prepared for a career working with these challenges on a widespread and diverse scale.

Upon reflection of this trip experience, it has strongly reinforced my interest in international environmental policy and sustainability. It has been a great reminder of why I hope to make a future career working to protect the environment, and re-instilled in me a desire to work harder to protect and conserve lands and wildlife. Often, working in this field can be somewhat negative and saddening in nature, but seeing all the hard work of those that we met was awe-inspiring and a great reminder of what can be achieved despite difficult circumstances. My perspectives on wildlife, conservation and my future have changed from this experience in that it has garnered my interest for these topics like never before. I feel more interested in expanding my knowledge of these topics as a result of this experience, particularly conservation. I had never seriously considered working with marine environments before this trip, but now I am fascinated with some of the conservation issues surrounding marine endangered species in particular. I feel that in the future I will look for more opportunities like this in order to expand my understanding of the problems associated with areas similar to Baja California Sur.

In conclusion, this experience was an unforgettable one that allowed me to widen my appreciation of Mexican culture and allowed me to advance both academically and personally. It
was with the help of the CSU Honors college that I was able to partake on my journey abroad and I am grateful for the support.