

Water is the lifeblood of my community. From its integral part in the growing of endless fields of green that make up the heart of our economy, to the topography of the channeled scablands my hometown of Othello overlooks, the environment in which I grew up has been undeniably shaped by the importance of water. Recognizing and valuing the relationship water has to communities like mine, I knew what I chose to pursue as a field of study and career would revolve around protecting that lifesource.

The first two real jobs I had were deeply involved in agriculture. The summer before my Senior year, I spent three blistering months tending to fields of developmental bean, pea, triticale, and wheat strands. I walked between rows and pulled up gnarled weeds, to cut small plots down for testing, and to organize data in a dusty warehouse. It was hard, hot, and honest but my experience was invaluable; I learned how seed genetics play a role in agricultural commerce and how changing climates impact plant growth and harvest. Most importantly, I gained a small taste for what many of my peers and community members do on a daily basis as field hands. Though my work was nowhere near as intensive and my privilege gave me a state of authority many farm workers lack, I came to understand how much work goes into food production to support a whole community. As I had spent the summer tending to the growth of these plants, so too did I reflect on my growing passion for serving rural communities like my own.

For the past two summers and this upcoming season, I have worked as a water quality technician for the East Columbia Basin Irrigation District, further learning about the crucial role water plays in Eastern Washington via hands-on work. I immediately fell in love with my work, whether my day was spent inside our little lab as I ran tests on water samples for NPDES compliance or while out driving miles across multiple counties to collect data and samples using new and old methods (I became very, *very* familiar with flow gauging and waders my first summer). During these summers however, I was also given the opportunity to attend and volunteer for NWRA's summer sessions. Here is where the lightbulb went off; I was introduced to the legislative actions that were being taken to further protect vital water resources and the communities that tend to and live off of them. I began to visualize here, at the cross section of my passions, education, and work experience, a future career in water and health law.

While at the University of Washington, I approached my education with the knowledge of my youthful career goals but a thirst for new experiences. My first interpretation of how I wanted to serve my community was to become a doctor despite my underlying desire to pursue the realm of law. But with each environmental science class I found myself in, with each public health course I took, I was reminded that water was the lifeblood of the community. As I learned about the specifics of transmission vectors and social determinants of health, the key to the well-being of populations was almost always found in clean water and access to nutritious food. With every chapter I read, I was transported back to my summers spent in the fields or the seminars I was so lucky to sit in on; I had been directly introduced to these principles, had seen first hand the work

that is done both in the country and the boardrooms to ensure people from every corner of the west could live healthily and happily. *That* is what I wanted- to be in the room where it happened rather than observing from the sidelines. Afterall, I have always been more of a doer than a watcher.

As I move into the final years of my undergrad college experience, I continue to craft my educational journey around preparing for law school. With my recent admission into UW's School of Public Health, I have been focusing on environmental factors and legislation so as to strengthen my understanding of how the protection of water resources can best be utilized for the agricultural communities of western America. Before graduation, I intend to accept an offered internship with Water Strategies LLC, allowing myself to develop connections in the domain of water law, put to use my organizational and analytical skills, and gain necessary experience before law school. With the completion of my law degree, I expect to seek employment in Eastern Washington or Oregon to follow through with the driving goal behind the last 5 years of my life- to uplift, protect, and advocate for the agricultural communities that rely on our sacred water.