I had the fortunate opportunity to intern at Sierra County Department of Public Health this summer in Loyalton, CA. This internship was through the National Environmental Public Health Internship Program (NEPHIP), hosted by the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA), the Association of Environmental Health Academic Programs (AEHAP) and CDC Environmental Health Service Branch.

Extending to parts of the Sierra Nevada and Sierra Valley, Sierra County is a really unique place. Less than 3,500 residents are service by Sierra County Department of Public Health; making it the second least populous county in California. This little known tidbit about Sierra County adds onto its uniqueness and my internship experience; as I was fortunate for the opportunity to work in a small and supportive environment to further my knowledge of public health programs. Such programs within environmental health, that I had the chance to learn about at Sierra County included: food safety, hazardous materials management, sewage disposal, solid waste, vector control and water quality.

I participated in inspections of food establishments, organized camps, and the manifest hazardous materials & waste at various facilities to ensure respective compliances with California Retail Food Code (Cal Code), California Organized Camp Statute/Regulations, and California Environmental Protection Agencies (Cal EPA). I also monitored bacterial analysis of water system, and collected gas reading at the landfill. Most of my time was dedicated to projects. I assisted with part of the Loyalton Landfill permit revision process, the Certified Unified Program Agencies (CUPA) evaluation of hazardous waste and materials, and inspection reports for CalRecycle Solid Waste Information System (SWIS). While working on the projects, I also researched environmental health and safety codes to ensure legal regulatory actions and compliances.

This internship was a great experience, and I would highly recommend this to students looking to experience a variety of environmental health fields. I gained firsthand experiences in the daily responsibilities and challenges environmental health professional engaged in, and learned a lot about public health programs at the local rural government level. In the short amount of time that I had at Sierra County, I can tell that public health professionals are extremely passionate about their programs and the community they serve.