I had the pleasure of completing an internship within the USDA-ARS-WMU under Dr. Shanna Henk, an occupational health specialist. This was the first year that this facility had an intern; I brought the idea of an unpaid internship to Dr. Shanna Henk while I was working for the Water Management Unit. During the course of my internship I was able to learn how to complete field safety inspections, complete pesticide safety inspections, complete laboratory safety inspections, develop and present trainings for employees on safety procedures for the building and field sites, develop quizzes for employees to ensure their safety knowledge, work one on one with employees when they have safety concerns about their work environment, act as a safety officer for laboratories within the Water Management Unit, and ensure that employees working with radioactive measurement devices do so in a safe manner.

My internship was planned to be a project that would allow me to thoroughly investigate pesticide use in the unit and develop all the safety trainings; I was able to learn and do a lot more than that by asking for more opportunities and being more involved on my worksite. Dr. Shanna Henk is the occupational safety specialist for all of USDA-ARS units in the Fort Collins and Northern Colorado Area. I was able to do safety inspections at field sites as far away as Wyoming and even in some on campus labs like the National Seed Bank laboratories. My project involved both independent work and research but I also had a lot of hands on time with safety procedures and working directly with employees and scientists.

The units that I primarily worked for deal with agricultural water efficiency and quality; they track the plants progress through its growth stages with varying amounts of water to determine if there is a more efficient way to irrigate crops so that farmers can save water without reducing their crop yield. Working with this unit directly gave me experience working with soil moisture relationships and monitoring the movement of pesticides through soil profile layers.

The most important thing I took from this internship experience is that there are opportunities to work in environmental health everywhere. You can pick almost any field that you are interested in and find opportunities for environmental health positions. Personally, I love agricultural research and so I talked to people and created an internship where I could work hands on with scientists completing agricultural research. Opportunities are everywhere if you are not afraid to approach new people and ask. There are almost no limitations for what you can do in the field of environmental health.