

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

GRO Summer Internship Final Report
Evaluating the Feasibility of Renewable Energy
at the FMC Plant Superfund site, Pocatello, Idaho
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My GRO internship was held in the Region 10 Office of Environmental Cleanup in Seattle, WA, and was done under the supervision of Tim Brincefield, the Senior Policy Advisor and Land Revitalization Coordinator for Region 10. The title of my project was, ultimately, "Evaluating the Feasibility of Renewable Energy at the FMC Plant Superfund Site, Pocatello, Idaho." The purpose of my research this summer was to research and communicate, in a report, how to promote and support the implementation of renewable energy at Region 10 Superfund sites. As part of the Obama Administration's goals, efforts are being made to make cleanups greener, more focused, more efficient, and more successful. Region 10's Superfund program is currently overseeing the investigation of site conditions and evaluation of feasible options for the remediation of a site owned by FMC Corporation, and in conjunction with these efforts is assessing ways to support potential reuse of a portion or portions of the site. In producing my report, the goal was to evaluate and suggest further action on the renewable energy options available for FMC properties as well as to provide a resource for project managers and others that will assist in the evaluation of even the most complicated sites for purposes of generating renewable energy. From my assessment, solar power is the most feasible option at this time because of the Very Good solar utility rating given by NREL, its close proximity to a substation, and the heavy industrial zoning of the property which provides a perfect backdrop for the generation of power. For these reasons and more, solar generation will continue to be pursued for specific parcels of land on the FMC property.

The summer did present a few challenges both in the office and outside of it. Not having a specific project the first few weeks of my internship was challenging because I felt lost and unsure of my purpose. During this time, I tried to get as much information as possible on a few of the project options my project advisor and I had discussed earlier on. This included Internet research, reading any material I could get my hands on, and going to meetings that might help further my knowledge on related topics. We eventually settled on a project and I was able to complete my energy feasibility assessment with minimal problems. My report did require that I contact other Regions and people outside of the EPA, including community coordinators, the Shoshone-Bannock Tribal governments, and a green energy company that showed interest in developing on the site. Reaching some of these people was difficult at times because of varying schedules and time zones; however, I learned how to effectively communicate through email and phone as well as to have patience while waiting for responses.

I was able to apply computer, writing, and communication skills to my project as it involved updating Excel spreadsheets; doing Internet research; communicating with tribes, other Regions, and people outside the EPA who were somehow related to my research; and the actual writing of the report. My skills in these areas were applied and strengthened.

Everyone working in my office said they were attracted to the EPA because of its mission and this continues to be the reason why they work for the EPA today. It was encouraging to hear that the people I worked with this summer were dedicated to Region 10's mission: "To protect and restore the environment of the Pacific Northwest and Alaska for present and future generations." This is purely sustainability, something I am passionate about. Despite the seemingly endless amount of contaminated sites and limited number of people to work on them, the employees remain enthusiastic about their job and the small accomplishments that come

along with it. Overall, I got the impression that most people wanted to work towards becoming a united EPA: united on all fronts, within programs and across Regions.

From my experience in Seattle this summer, I learned a great deal about my ability to be a “self-starter,” to be independent in the workplace, and to work without supervision. I also learned how to be independent and find my own way in an unfamiliar city. Going to school in a small city surrounded by corn fields, city life is not something I am familiar or comfortable with. In addition to these things, I learned that my Sustainable Management specialization for my major is very much related to almost every office within the EPA and can be applied across multiple programs, as it was in my research on the siting of renewable energy on contaminated lands. Lastly, I learned that I have interest in renewable energy and contaminated lands as well as interest in the creation of sustainable communities (as I found out while participating in meetings on the newly formed HUD-DOT-EPA Partnership for Sustainable Communities).

This internship helped expose me to new disciplines, other career opportunities, and possible career interests that I might be open to pursuing in the future. Prior to the internship, I had no idea that I had an interest in environmental cleanup. Nor did I know that it was tightly connected to renewable energy, which is something that I have studied in school and wanted to pursue. The Office of Research and Development is another area that I was exposed to and may want to look into because of my background and interest in the science rather than the policy. Another career interest that I may consider, after having spoken to a few EPA employees about their background, is consulting in the private sector. This is something that I have heard about as a career option but I had never had the chance to speak to people who have worked for a consulting firm.

I had a wonderful internship experience! The internship itself was challenging and rewarding, however my placement in Seattle was what made the most difference. Having never been to Seattle or the West Coast in general, I had the chance to explore the mountains, the water, the city, and the smaller neighborhoods surrounding the city. These are things that I do not have easy access to in my hometown or college town. Going out to Seattle, I didn't know anyone, so I was forced to meet people and ask for help if needed. Because of this, I ended up meeting a few people with whom I know I will remain friends for a long time to come.

To get the most from your GRO internship, don't be afraid to have your own goals and desires. This is for you! Make these interests known and go for it! I would also tell you to try to get as much experience as you can during your internship by going to meetings, participating in seminars, going to events, etc. Not only will these things give you experience, but they will also allow you to do some networking. That's another thing I would recommend: network, network, network. Introduce yourself to the people working around you and build relationships with them. This will enhance your experience and make yourself known, thus building a network of people for the future. While the internship project is important, getting out and experiencing the city where you are interning will definitely enhance your time there. This made all the difference for me.