

This summer (2006) I was an intern with the Integration and Application Network, IAN, group at the University of Maryland's Center for Environmental Studies Horn Point Laboratory. My main tasks were centered on assisting graduate student, Ben Fertig, with a MD coastal bays study. During the summer we went on two field trips to the coastal bays, with the first trip scheduled on the weekend that I started working with the IAN group. The learning curve was steep and the days were long but getting to be on a boat in the Chincoteague Bay seemed like a really good start to summer. It is unfortunate that it was so chilly out, a flaw which was remedied completely by the second trip in July.

This brings me to one of the most important things that I learned during my summer work; the value of fore thinking and planning in scientific research. By the second trip in July we had identified all of the areas that could be improved in sampling to make the days shorter and the work more efficient. As soon as we got back from the first field trip I started organizing our sampling supplies for the next one. It made every part of the field work so much better to have really put in the effort before the trip to be prepared and organized.

Once we came back from the field trips there was always plenty of laboratory work to be done. I learned how to grind macroalgae and prepare it for stable nitrogen isotope analysis, test for chlorophyll concentration using a flourometer, and how to use a multi parameter water quality probe to generate water quality data.

The final aspect of this preparation for field work and analyzing of samples was to report the findings. Early in the summer I had attended a short workshop run by the IAN group where I learned some basic science communication skills. I got to put these to use when I reported to the group on the results of the data analysis. I feel that the communication skills that I learned, like using the Adobe suite, and following good presentation etiquette, will translate to more successful science (and general) communication in my senior year of college and beyond.

Overall it was a successful summer. I feel like have I learned a lot about science communication and the coastal bays of MD and also that I have much more still to learn.