Jennifer Garlesky

Joining AmeriCorps allowed me to gain a variety of skills and opportunities that have help propel me into my career path of working in the environmental field. I completed two AmeriCorps terms before coming to Evergreen. My first service year I worked with the Redwood Community Action Agency (RCAA) in Eureka, California where I was a mentor to 5th-8th grade students at Fortuna Middle School. During my 10 months of service with the RCAA I received many opportunities that ranged from leading team-building activities to starting a local garden on campus for the after-school program. This experience gave me a toolbox of skills that I have built upon over the years while working with youth and leading outdoor trips.

My second AmeriCorps term was with the Appalachian Coal Country Watershed Team, where I worked as a watershed development coordinator with the Morris Creek Watershed Association (MCWA) in Montgomery, West Virginia. As a VISTA, I helped develop an education and outreach program that included development of alternative spring break projects for university students. I also assisted with writing grants and reports to state agencies on water quality issues and completed water monitoring fieldwork. This position allowed me to network with a variety of state and federal agencies as well as present at state and regional conferences on a restoration project on which I was the project lead.

After working for the MCWA I developed the skills to gain employment with the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection. It was while working for the state that I realized I wanted to pursue my master’s degree in watershed management. I remember from my first term of service that Evergreen was a school that was very AmeriCorps-friendly and the Master of Environmental Studies degree was able to complement my experiences that I gained from AmeriCorps due its interdisciplinary curriculum. Because of the degree’s flexibility, I am able to focus my studies on watershed management and policy, while also gaining the broader leadership and communication skills that are necessary for the environmental profession.