

Web Blog: Gemma Cristóbal Pérez. -

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Today I joined Linda's team for the soil patching. As any of the other activities where I have participated, this was absolutely new for me.

Her enthusiasm was so contagious that in a few minutes I was following her directions and collecting rocks and soil samples. Her team (Heather and Andrew) were awesome too. They explained us how to do everything and also about the results they expected. Once more, I have been learning about science and scientific methods from early in the morning till late in the night.

It was also very interesting to share this experience with my team leader, Matt. As the "advantaged student" he is, Matt explained us things like the GPS setting, and was always willing to help whenever any of us was a little bit lost.

In other words, these days have been really special for me. I have met a lot of great people, I have learned a lot about science, and all this is definitely going to have an influence in the way I am going to teach my students, my current ones and my future ones. I really wish this relation I have started with NASA could continue in the future so all the members of this "community" (scientists, teachers and students) can take the best advantage of it.

The microbiology team took several teachers, including myself, to multiple sites in the Mojave to take soil samples to be used for further analysis. I was extremely excited to partake in this activity in that it gave me the opportunity to see how NASA scientists do sterile sampling. The sample sites contained different precipitation levels, which would eventually allow the team to analyze them in terms of microbial content variations. At each sample site we made a 10 m X 10 m transect to use in our collections. The samples were labelled with a location, date, and site number. I also had the opportunity to use a GPS device.

Overall, this experience gave me many ideas to implement in the classroom. Soil transects can be easily done with students for numerous lab activities. They are also fun and economical cost-wise. Transect labs also allow students to get experience in field work, and I feel confident that I can explain soil sampling methods to them after doing this activity. I feel extremely enthusiastic about this activity and its effectiveness in the classroom as a formative assessment of laboratory skills and practices. I

definitely plan to use soil transects in my instruction and have the students utilize various soil kits to supplement this activity.