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Jr. COSTEP Summer 2010
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My name is Brandon Davis, and I am a senior at East Carolina University in Greenville, NC. For my COSTEP experience I had the opportunity to work in rural Alaska with some of the best environmental specialists in the state. Our department was responsible for providing assistance to 34 villages in an area as large as the state of Ohio. In Alaska, things such as commuting to a clinic or finding a time when you can meet with the local community health aide are not as simple and easy as they are in the lower 48. In order to get to all but one of the 34 villages that we service in Bristol Bay, we have to fly. Because subsistence fishing is a way of life in southwest Alaska, it also became difficult to find times when local health aides would be present at the clinics to assist us in our surveys.



For my internship, my primary assignment was to complete Consumer Confidence Reports (CCR's) for 20 of the 34 villages that we assist. These CCR's are basically a compilation of data of all the tests that were run and what was found in the community water systems over the past year. They are meant to inform and educate the local people to give them a better understanding of what is going on with their drinking water.

My summer also consisted of assisting in village trips to Egegik, Koliganek, and Chignik Bay. The purpose of going to these villages was to conduct surveys of the landfills, liquid waste facilities and the health clinics. Each trip typically would take a couple of days, so each night we would stay at the local clinic. The surveys had different dimensions, and each exposed me to a different aspect of environmental health. For example, the liquid waste survey consisted of checking the sewage lagoon, inspecting the pump house and looking at the sewage lift station. The landfill survey was aimed at checking the efficiency of the burn boxes or incinerators and making sure that none of the items found in the landfill were hazardous. The life safety code was used as a

reference when we completed the health clinic surveys for determining if electrical outlets within 6 feet of a water source were ground fault circuit interrupted (GFCI) protected and ensuring that the water temperatures at hand washing faucets didn't exceed 105°F. On our trips, we also always brought rabies vaccines with us to vaccinate dogs and cats for people living in the remote communities.

My summer experience has been one to remember. Working in an area as remote as Dillingham has allowed me to experience new things and to work outside of my comfort zone. Not only has the work experience that I've gained been irreplaceable, but the adventures that I've experienced in the Alaska wilderness have been unbelievable. From fishing for king salmon on the world renowned Nushagak River to walking up on a growling brown bear protecting its cache, I can say that I've experienced quite a lot in Alaska. I would strongly recommend a COSTEP to anyone who is self motivated and wants to gain an experience that you can't get through any other internship. I've been lucky enough to have



already completed a COSTEP last summer, when I was stationed in Rosebud, South Dakota, so coming in I thought I had a pretty good grasp of what I would be doing. But once I started, I realized I was working with a different side of environmental health. Each COSTEP that I've completed has focused on a different area of environmental health, but both have helped develop me into a well rounded environmental health specialist.