



Winter 2024

Legal and Policy Intern

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COLLEGE OF THE ENVIRONMENT



Internship Title: Legal and Policy Intern

Organization Worked For: LRSS and NARN

Student Name: Carolyn Fenno

Internship Dates: 1/17/24-2/21/24 (LRSS) 1/17/24-3/11/24 (NARN)

Faculty Advisor Name Michael Medler

Department ENVS

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STUDENT SIGNATURE _____

Handwritten signature of Carolyn Fenno in blue ink.

3/26/24

DATE: _____

Carry Fenno

ENVS 498B

Professor Medler

March 26, 2024

Final Report: NARN and LRSS

During the 2024 winter quarter at Western Washington University I had the privilege of interning with two impactful organizations: LRSS (Legal Rights for the Salish Sea) and NARN (Northwest Animal Rights Network). These internships not only fulfilled certain graduation requirements but also provided me with invaluable real world experience in environmental and wildlife law. Most notably, as a woman with a degree in STEM, the experience was even more so enriching as both organizations' were led by empowering women with similar educational interests as myself.

NARN's (W2) mission focused on general WA state wildlife and understanding legal frameworks in environmental law. During my time with NARN I engaged in tasks such as attending online commissioner calls and speaking at WDFW meetings where I shared perspectives as both someone with hunting knowledge, farming experience, and a passion for wildlife advocacy. Speaking at these meetings required careful preparation, articulation of legal jargon, and the ability to engage with diverse attendees. By effectively conveying my viewpoints and experiences, I contributed to meaningful discussions and raised awareness about wildlife advocacy issues within the WDFW community. This experience not only honed my public speaking and advocacy skills but also reinforced my commitment to making a difference in the

realm of animal rights and environmental protection. My boss at the time also held both a JD and masters in criminal justice, allowing me to ask important questions regarding law school and its potential pathways.

On the other hand, LRSS (W1) is a grassroots community organization focused on educational engagement regarding the rights of WA state marine animals with a particular emphasis on recognizing the inherent rights of the Southern Resident Orcas. My biggest achievement at LRSS, besides the occasional public zoom discussion, was creating an internship recruitment flyer. This task was significant to myself as it not only showcased my ability to take on graphic design work (a skill I had not previously explored) but also demonstrated my adaptability and willingness to learn new skills to support LRSS's outreach efforts. The flyer was well-received by my supervisors, and I was granted approval to both print and distribute around the WWU campus. This accomplishment not only contributed to LRSS's recruitment but also boosted my confidence in tackling diverse tasks outside my comfort zone. Moreover, I was able to work under a woman with extensive research and academic background, including both an MSW and PhD, inspiring me to learn more about wildlife intricacies and the involvement of social work in environmental advocacy .

The linkages between my internship experience with LRSS and NARN and my education at WWU were highly significant. My classes at WWU, such as ENVS 201 (Understanding Environmental Information), ENVS 303 (Introduction to Environmental Studies I: Human Ecology and Ethics), and PLSC 261 (Introduction to Political Theory), provided me with foundational knowledge and critical thinking skills that were directly applicable to my internships. ENVS 201 taught me to approach environmental issues with a critical eye,

emphasizing the importance of evaluating sources and understanding the complexity of environmental journalism. ENVS 303 deepened my understanding of the socio-political aspects of environmental issues, highlighting the raw impact it has on both society, wildlife, and the environment. PLSC 261 gave me insight into the functioning of legal systems, the flaws, and the gray areas that often exist within law. These courses not only prepared me for the legal and environmental aspects of my internships but also helped me develop analytical, research, and communication skills that were invaluable to my work.

Overall, my coursework in environmental studies has thus far provided me with an abundance of knowledge and critical thinking skills regarding environmental law and policy. In contrast, my internships with LRSS and NARN allowed me to apply this knowledge practically. Performing a skew of intern tasks has shown me how theoretical concepts apply in real world scenarios within the environmental field. This hands-on experience not only reinforced classroom learning but also deepened my understanding of both knowledge and application in environmental advocacy work.

To someone considering taking on the same internships next year, I would highly recommend it as a valuable learning opportunity. These internships not only fulfill academic requirements but also offer real world experience in environmental / wildlife law. Working with LRSS and NARN under the guidance of passionate and knowledgeable female leaders provided a supportive environment to learn, grow, and make a meaningful impact. I would advise future interns to embrace the challenges, be proactive in unfamiliar territory, and take advantage of networking activities offered by both organizations. Additionally, I would encourage them to approach the experience with an open mind, be willing to learn from different perspectives, and

leverage their academic knowledge to contribute effectively to organization missions. Overall, these internships offered a unique blend of academic learning and practical experience that I believe may significantly enrich one's educational and professional journey.

Both these internships not only supported my professional goals but also provided valuable insight into my personal aspirations. Initially, I aimed to attend law school, however, through my experiences at both LRSS and NARN, I realized the emotional toll and complexities of legal work, leading me to reconsider my career path. This realization was a significant turning point, saving me from potential misalignment with my true passions and preventing a considerable financial burden that would have been invested in pursuing a JD. Moreover, the skills I gained in communication, community engagement, and legal understanding are transferable to various career paths, such as the EPA, DNR, or WDFW, aligning with my long term objectives in environmental advocacy.