Katie Morrison  
Internship Experience

Working with Guadalupe Blanco River Authority and Trust was overall a great experience. Just within the first week I learned about how important water management is in Texas. The Texas water law is different then most states that I’m familiar with. Groundwater belongs to the landowner and is governed by the rule of capture. This means that the landowner is allowed to pump as much water as they like on their property. However, surface water is different, it is state owned and can be captured only with a permit saying what you are specifically using it for. Managing this water in Texas is extremely important because Texas goes through some of the worst droughts in the United States. In order to make sure there is water left during these desperate moments they have put regulations on the capture of water based on the flow rate. GBRA works as a steward to the ten-county district, and is responsible for managing and protecting the water on the Guadalupe River.

Over the ten weeks I was an intern with GBRA I got to work and attend a variety of projects and meeting. Working with Doctor Todd Votteler gave me the opportunity to attend legislative meetings about new laws are being improved or implemented in Texas. Like most policies, it takes many years and work to figure out the best system to distribute and manage water. Many topics that are talked about in water policy is the amount of ground and surface water that can be taken based on flow rates, droughts and flooding seasons. As time continues on water will always be of great value, and with the increasing population in Texas managing this water is equally important.

Part of what GBRA does is take water samples along the river and connecting creeks to collect qualitative data that indicates the water quality. I’ve gotten the opportunity to go out in the field and collect some samples. At each creek we measure for temperature, salinity, PH, dissolved oxygen, nitrates, and then that goes back to the lab for more testing. While collecting water samples I observed in Texas it’s a lot harder to control runoff because of the flooding. When it floods here it picks up all the chemicals and waste, then all of that waste ends up in the water. At that point it becomes hard to decide what is point and non-point source runoff.

The other part of my internship has been doing research conducted at the office about the flooding that occurred last year in May. GBRA wants to put out an article about the light the flooding has brought to the company and the planning that has gone into controlling the Guadeloupe River during such awful disasters.

In my future I can see myself wanting to go into water management. I found myself mostly engaged in the policy side of water. It is interesting how people can learn from the past and from there make/modify laws to improve future systems. For example, just by doing research on droughts and floodings that have occurred in the past few decades people figured out new systems that have saved many lives, homes, and our surrounding environment.
For future interns I suggest you figure out your living situation on your own or make sure you know early on that they have a permit place for you during the summer. I was moved around to five different living place in two months there. Besides my living situation everything worked out smoothly.