

SPOTLIGHT SERIES: ALUMNI, WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

AN INTERVIEW WITH CECILIA WEIBERT

BY ALEXANDRA PURITZ

September 2016 kicks off our brand new “Spotlight Series,” an MPS blog about YOU - past and present MPS students. Whether it’s assessing program efficacy or whale-watching in the Pacific, MPS students are involved in a variety of careers within the field of marine and atmospheric science. The “Spotlight Series” will feature stories, profiles, and more relating to the MPS experience. By sharing personal stories from our alumni, or highlighting the activities of current students, the “Spotlight Series” will provide a glimpse into our impressive MPS family. The creators and contributors of this blog hope readers will learn about the new student body, gain insight on professional life after graduation, and feel more connected to all MPS members. Plus, it’s a great way to network!



CECILIA WEIBERT
TRACK: COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT
GRADUATED: DECEMBER 2015

What is your current job and main responsibilities?

I am an Invasive Species Program Specialist at the Great Lakes Commission in Ann Arbor, MI where I work on a variety of invasive species projects. Some of my current projects include: a gap analysis of invasive species grant funding for the past five years, conducting risk assessments of invasive plants for NOAA's Great Lakes Aquatic Nonindigenous Species Information System (GLANSIS) program, and working with a software development team on a web crawler that searches the internet for sale pages offering invasive species for sale. In addition, I provide staff support to regional and national forums and collaborations. These include the Great Lakes Panel on Aquatic Nuisance Species, where I coordinate an ad-hoc panel on risk assessment and the Invasive Mussel Collaborative, where I organize webinars and am currently in the process of revamping their website.

Tell us about your MPS internship, and in what ways did it help you develop professional skills and connections?

My MPS internship was with the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, where I conducted risk assessments for regulated plant species. Two of my assessments (*Stratiotes aloides* and *Trapa natans*) were even published on the U.S. Department of Agriculture's website for weed risk assessments! This internship introduced me to the management and regulation of invasive species at the state government level, and allowed me to attend workshops in Michigan and North Carolina. I participated in the state's Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Core Team meetings, where I got to meet and interact with other high-ranking government employees who are actively working in their respective departments on the management of invasive species. It was definitely a great way to

learn about the different aspects of risk management, and I still interact with many of them today in my position at the Great Lakes Commission!

What are your favorite RSMAS memories?

Arriving to campus early so that I could sit on the beach before classes started to center myself. My last year in Miami was crazy and hectic, so it was great to be able to have time to myself to appreciate the view. And of course, who wouldn't love evenings spent at the Wetlab?

What were your favorite classes at RSMAS and why?

I really enjoyed that the flexibility of the Coastal Zone Management track allowed me to take some courses that were a little outside of my dedicated career field. My two favorite classes were a special topics course on the History of Seafaring, which was an underwater archaeology course, and Fisheries Ecology and Oceanography, which was labeled as a Marine Biology and Fisheries course and was much more science and math heavy than any of my other courses. Being able to learn about other realms of marine science beyond my chosen track was a great opportunity that I wouldn't have had at any other school.

What piece of advice would you give to current or incoming MPS students?

It's never too early to start thinking about your internship. Explore classes that interest you, and if you have a good idea of what you want to do, start reaching out to organizations! I'm not saying you should let internship-hunting consume your time here, but if you have a good idea for an internship or know of an organization you want to intern with, get in touch with them!

Thanks for your advice Cecilia, and for sharing these responses with us!