



Water Guardians

Marina Lindsay '19 and her Bren School teammates call themselves the Walker Rangers after the Eastern Sierra river that changed their lives. Their mission began with UC Santa Barbara Foundation Trustee Jim Taylor, a real estate executive collaborating with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) to develop conservation easements in rural Nevada. When asked for a recommendation of an expert in sustainable water markets, Jim immediately thought of the UC Santa Barbara Bren School of Environmental Science & Management.

At the Bren School, Marina responded to Jim's request and began investigating. With TNC as her client, Marina proposed a Bren School Master's Group Project to evaluate nature-based conservation solutions for the Carson and Walker River watersheds in Douglas County, Nevada. After working with TNC to review management concerns including land use trends, the water supply, and the impending effects of climate change, Marina saw an opportunity to apply market-based solutions that would aid conservation efforts.

Through the school's Master of Environmental Science & Management, students lead a year-long group project serving a client struggling with an environmental challenge. Groups of students analyze problems and provide action plans to businesses, government agencies, and NGOs. Jim did more than suggest the Douglas County watersheds research: he and his wife, Denise, made it possible by supporting the UC Santa Barbara Bren School. With the help of Jim and Denise Taylor and UC Santa Barbara, TNC offered office space and bunk housing for Marina and her four teammates to perform fieldwork, meet with stakeholders, and research the Douglas County watersheds.

"The quality of the Bren students and their enthusiasm and professionalism is just extraordinary," said Jim.

The impact of having donor funding has been astronomical in our research. The opportunity to bond with my teammates and Douglas County locals was invaluable.



Marina Lindsay '19

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Watching the sunset from the porch after a long day of reviewing data, Marina found herself falling in love with the Eastern Sierras. She recalls a lecture from Bren School professor emeritus Thomas Dunne, who advised his students to walk the watershed when possible. "[He said] you don't truly understand it until you've experienced it yourself," said Marina. "Getting intimate knowledge of our area thanks to donor support helped shape our project."

Thanks to Bren School supporters like Jim and Denise, the Walker Rangers forged personal connections with Douglas County officials, ranchers, hikers, local tribe members, and NGOs. Residents of their adopted town of Genoa stake their livelihoods on the watershed. This oldest Nevada settlement featured the students' work in the town newsletter.

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With the help of generous donor support, the Bren School gives students like Marina a chance to create water management solutions at the local level and mitigate the global water crisis.

"My name means 'of the water,' which has become more and more literal," said Marina. "Many individuals don't know where their water comes from beyond their tap. I hope to help people understand the value of water in order to help conserve it for the future."

About the Bren School of Environmental Management Master's Group Projects

- 160 students are working towards a Master of Environmental Science and Management through the Bren School
- In their second year, students work together in groups of 4 or 5 with a faculty advisor to solve an environmental problem
- The class of 2019 is collaborating on 17 master's group projects
- Research topics include sustainability in the gulf of California, a strategic energy plan for CBS California, and innovative materials that reduce waste in the clothing industry

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(https://www.bren.ucsb.edu/research/masters_projects_landing.htm)

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