



## News Item

E-MRGE Fellow Jessica Lopez Pearce writes:

In June, 2008, the GK-12 fellows at Laguna Middle School (Jessica Lopez Pearce and Jason Thomas) collaborated with Project Venture and embarked on a 9-day field trip around the Grand Circle of the southwestern US. The goals of this trip were to give twelve Laguna Middle School students an overview of the amazing geologic, ecologic, and recreational aspects of several popular places in the southwestern US. The field trip was structured like a large family road trip, with two ten-passenger vans piled high with food and gear. The adults on the trip included Jason and myself, along with Heather Yazzie and Michael Gavlak.

On the first day of the trip, we drove from Laguna, NM we drive to Page, AZ. Along the way, we visited Walnut Canyon National Monument. During our stay in Page, we tested the water quality at Lake Powell's Wahweap Marina (yucky!) and went on a short raft trip from the base of Glen Canyon Dam to Lees Ferry. The students really enjoyed travelling by raft and splashing in the cold Colorado River. We also hiked in Lower Antelope Canyon (see photo). Page is home to the beautiful Page Sandstone and Navajo Sandstone. We spent some time learning about eolian systems and erosion. We then drove to Bryce Canyon National Park via the Cottonwood Road. Along the way, we stopped at the BLM Visitor Center in Big Water and learned about the dinosaurs that once inhabited the area. We also stopped at the Cockscomb to practice our scientific sketches and watercolor paintings, and Grosvenor Arch, where students saw a cool example of weathering and erosion. Upon our arrival in Bryce, we set up camp in one of the campgrounds and immediately began exploring the area. The students learned about Bristlecone Pine and the Claron Lakes that deposited this amazing orange lacustrine limestone. We hiked on several of the park's trails and even got caught in a snowstorm. The students got a hands-on experience with the variable nature of high-elevation summer weather!

Onward to canyon country! We were happy to drive down from the Aquarius Plateau and into the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument to warm up. We camped at Calf Creek for one night and hiked to the lower Calf Creek Falls. While we were there, we tested the health of the stream and the water quality with our travelling chemistry kit. We also explored the riparian ecology along the pools and stream. We next drove to Capitol Reef, where summer was in full swing. It was nice and warm for our hike, where we studied the fragile desert ecosystem and sandstone. To cool off, we drove south and hiked to Hog Spring for a fun swim. We used this hike as an opportunity to reflect on our surroundings, making it a silent hike helped focus the students' attention to the beautiful nature surrounding us. On the hike to Hog Spring, the girls led the group on the poorly maintained trail. On the way back, the boys led. It was neat to see they different dynamics of each group. We camped that night at Hite, UT. The next morning, we tested the waters at Lake Powell once again, to compare our results to our earlier tests at Wahweap Marina. This part of the lake was slightly cleaner.





## ECOHYDROGEOLOGY IN THE MIDDLE RIO GRANDE ENVIRONMENT

Next, we drove down the Moqui Dugway and on to Mesa Verde National Park. We spent several days in Mesa Verde, exploring the cliff dwellings. The students really enjoyed visiting the home of their ancient ancestors. We attended several ranger-led hikes into the dwellings and even saw a daytime fireball when we were in Step House! Throughout the trip, we had an evening ritual of a small, healthy dessert and storytime, where we expanded on a lesson or a feature that we had visited. By the last night of the trip, we were all very tired but also sad to know it was our last storytime. The drive home was long, but we were grateful that we arrived home safe and sound with so many amazing memories to share.



Group shot.



Scientific sketches in Utah.



Noses to the outcrop!

