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From a young age, I was always fascinated by water. I spent countless hours wading through creeks and ditches, turning over rocks to find interesting bugs, and watching tiny pond creatures dart around the water. I was intrigued by the way the ecosystem interacted, how the water was moving, and how it sparkled. Those childhood experiences sparked my curiosity, guided my passions, and ultimately brought me to a career in ecology and conservation through my training at Western Colorado University (WCU).

At WCU, I am deepening my interest in science. I wanted to know how natural organisms interact with their environments. This curiosity led me to pursue a degree in biology with an emphasis in ecology because in my future career, I hope to protect aquatic ecosystems and manage them for future generations to enjoy as I did in childhood. Through courses like conservation biology, ecology, invertebrate zoology, fisheries management, and biology of fishes I have built my knowledge and love for conservation and aquatic ecosystems. I have learned how to identify different insects, plants, fish, and macroinvertebrates within these ecosystems that interest me. Recently, I have entered the 3+2 program to also complete a master's degree in ecology. My thesis focuses on aquatic macroinvertebrate communities in the side canyons of Lake Powell. While these organisms are often overlooked, they provide vital information about water quality, nutrient cycling, and food web structure. Through looking at the macroinvertebrate communities, I hope to have a better understanding of habitat complexity and how climate change is affecting biodiversity in reservoir ecosystems through water level decline. Gathering information on how macroinvertebrates are recovering in areas that were previously lakebed will inform the management of recreational areas and conservation of the Colorado Plateau. Through this work I am furthering my training to achieve my career goals. My thesis is providing me with the research skills necessary for my future goals.

My long-term career goal is to contribute to fresh and marine water ecosystem conservation through performing research that informs management decisions. I envision myself working for a county, state, or federal government agency that collects data to inform management for the public use of water resources. Aquatic ecosystems are among the most threatened ecosystems globally, facing major pressures from climate change altering flow regimes, and the introduction of invasive species. Conservation requires deep ecological knowledge from careful observation and data collection. I hope to work with both science and management to ensure that research on freshwater communities continues. What began as a childhood fascination turned into my professional goal. I enjoy studying aquatic ecosystems not only because they intrigue me but because I care deeply about their future. Through deeper understanding of aquatic communities, I hope to protect the intriguing systems that first inspired me to pursue science.