The first thing I saw upon walking into the impressive William Jefferson Clinton Building, the headquarters of the United States Environmental Protection Agency, was a tasteful portrait of head administrator, Gina McCarthy. The security guard checking me in chuckled, pointed to the portrait, and asked if there were any relation between us. There isn’t, but this warm greeting and good omen made me feel optimistic about the first day, as well as the weeks to come. That first wonderful morning was the beginning of a truly phenomenal experience at the EPA.

The EPA is an agency of the federal government, and a rather unique one at that. As an agency, it is not part of the president’s cabinet, however traditionally the administrator is given a cabinet rank. Created by President Nixon in 1970, the EPA has been crucial to the protection of the natural resources and natural environment of the United States for the past 44 years. Interning at the headquarters in the nation’s capital was especially enthralling, and allowed me to learn first hand about the plethora of tasks and endeavours the agency works so diligently on. Between large scale environmental assessments, creating and enforcing effective environmental laws, extensive research, community education and engagement, and working closely with every level of government, the EPA stays extremely busy.

Within the agency, there are several sections each pertaining to specific environmental issues and regulations. This summer I interned for Mr. Davis Jones, the Director for International Enforcement in OECA. OECA, the Office of Enforcement and Compliance
Assurance, is an especially intriguing branch of the EPA. Mr. Jones develops courses on environmental compliance and travels to foreign nations, teaching them how to further develop their own specific environmental agencies, as well as create, maintain, and enforce their own environmental laws. The courses he prepares and teaches typically correlate with environmental laws and undertakings similar to those in the United States that have proven significantly effective.

During my internship I was most fortunate to partake in a breadth of activities and tasks. I sat in on multiple staff meetings, environmental lectures, and conference calls with environmental ministers from various nations around the world, as well as with department heads from INECE and INTERPOL, all of which further stimulated my deep interest in environmental law and allowed me invaluable networking opportunities. Learning from so many highly established people in the environmental sector, and most especially from Mr. Jones, hugely impacted my time at the EPA in the most positive way. The lectures were fascinating and spanned a variety of topics, my favorites being the "Storytelling with Saris: Resilience in the Face of Climate Change" and "Environmental Justice."

One of the very best parts of this internship was the degree to which Mr. Davis involved me in the happenings at the EPA. Atypical to many internships, Mr. Davis welcomed me to partake in a spectrum of meetings and truly went out of his way to teach me about the intricate world of the Environmental Protection Agency. Two days in particular really illustrate this. The first was when a large group of high ranking petroleum business people and officials visited from Iraq. I was given the task of hosting them, accompanying them around the Clinton building, and
sitting in on their captivating meeting where a translator facilitated a conversation between them and EPA officials. Meeting the extraordinarily kind Iraqi officials and learning more about oil laws and regulations was an amazing learning experience. Another particularly noteworthy day occurred when Mr. Davis brought me with him to a luncheon and presentation at the World Bank. He, along with another EPA official, gave a fantastic presentation on environmental impact assessments and enforcement for international perspectives. Not only was the presentation riveting, but I was able to sit with and meet the ministers of environment from several countries.

Additionally, I worked on two main projects. The first was for INECE. Mr. Jones is the EPA liaison to INECE - the International Network for Environmental Compliance and Enforcement. This network was founded in 1989 by the USEPA and Dutch environmental agency. In the last 25 years the United Nations Environment Programme, World Bank, European Commission, Environment Canada, and Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development have allied together to grow and improve INECE, making it an imperative environmental network with over 4,000 members spanning a variety of international organizations, various governmental agencies, and NGOs. My specific work with INECE was largely editing the main website, researching and collecting environmental news articles, and broadly working to improve the layout and content throughout the site. Through this I learned a great deal about INECE, global environmental problems, and the many ways these dynamic groups work collaboratively to achieve success.
The second project was a rather large and deeply fascinating project. Mr. Jones was teaching a course in Chile a little over a month after the culmination of my internship. In preparation for the course he obtained a plethora of information from INTERPOL, which I read intensely and took extensive notes on. These notes I transferred into a PowerPoint of approximately 115 slides. After reading through and studying a myriad of prior manuals and sections, I felt confident in creating the beginning stages of the future manual for which Mr. Jones then edited and turned into a course to teach the MMA, the Ministry of Environment of Chile. Studying two volumes of the broad information regarding environmental forensics was challenging and deeply rewarding. This project was particularly demanding as I taught myself how to use Adobe InDesign, a multifaceted graphic design program. Using InDesign I was able to put vital graphics throughout the PowerPoint to truly illustrate the various environmental forensics scenarios and solutions. Finishing the PowerPoint for this future course was a wonderful accomplishment, and I was able to leave D.C. feeling overwhelmingly grateful for this truly amazing opportunity afforded to me by Mr. Jones, the EPA, and the TONYA Public Affairs fund.

I feel extraordinarily fortunate to have been given such responsibility, fascinating projects, networking opportunities, and time for engrossing educational lectures. My time at the Environmental Protection Agency, and especially with Mr. Jones, was greater than I could have ever imagined. It was eye-opening to see the many facets of environmental work, especially as part of the federal government. Prior to this internship I knew I wanted to go into environmental law, but this experience showed me how many different paths exist within environmental law,
broadening my horizons and interests. I also felt that everything I had learned in my courses at Sewanee as an environmental studies and history double major really pertained to this real-world experience. Likewise, I am certain that the enormous amount I have learned this summer will engage me even further in all that I will continue to learn, developing interests within and outside the classroom.

In conclusion, I had a life-changing experience at the EPA. Being in D.C. and in the dynamic setting of the EPA opened my eyes to a variety of career options within the environmental sector, but even more importantly it expanded what I learn in classes at Sewanee to real-life implications, ultimately further fostering my love of protecting the great outdoors.