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Serita Frey Professor of Natural Resources and the Environment (COLSA) travels to Argentina

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Serita Frey - 2016

Professor of Natural Resources and the Environment

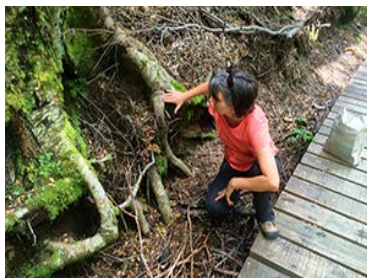
The Center for International Education provided partial financial support for my sabbatical in Argentina during fall 2015. The specific goals of my trip to Argentina were to (1) visit and interact with a research group at the University of Buenos Aires, (2) explore potential research sites in the Patagonian steppe in southern Argentina, and (3) write several manuscripts and proposals.

During the first part of my sabbatical, I was hosted by Dr. Amy Austin at the University of Buenos Aires (<http://www.agro.uba.ar/users/austin/>) where I gave a research seminar and met with graduate students and postdocs to learn more about their ongoing research and to discuss potential future collaborations. The remainder of my sabbatical was spent in Patagonia in the southwest part of Argentina. My research examines how global environmental change (i.e., climate warming, nitrogen deposition, biodiversity loss, land-use change) is altering nutrient cycling processes in forest soils. My current research is primarily focused on temperate forests in the Northeastern U.S. However, in the past several years, I have begun to expand my research program to other ecosystems including the Arctic. I am interested in developing a transect of sites from the Arctic to the Patagonian steppe in southern Argentina to understand the soil response to global change across a latitudinal gradient. During my time in Patagonia, I visited areas that cover a range of natural and human modified ecosystems. In addition to potential research sites, I scouted locations for a field course on the ecology and conservation of Patagonia's diverse ecosystems. I also spent substantial time writing and was actively involved in the preparation and submission of seven manuscripts and four research proposals.

Patagonia is a vast landscape of grasslands, shrub-steppe ecosystems, glaciers, and ancient forests. To see these ecosystems first hand, I took a 20-hour bus trip from Buenos Aires west to Bariloche, located in the foothills of the Andes. From there, I visited several national parks, where I explored the vegetation and soils of the region. From a research and teaching perspective, I am particularly interested in the ecosystems in this part of the world, because they are at the same latitude (except in the southern hemisphere) as my primary research sites here in the Northeastern U.S. and so represent an interesting contrast in terms of climate, soils and vegetation. Trip highlights included a visit to Parque Nacional Nahuel Huapi; the Valdivian rainforest in Parque Nacional Los Alerces, home of the ancient alerce trees; and a trip across the Andes, following an ancient Native American trade route.



Parque Nacional Nahuel Huapi in Argentina



Prof. Frey studying the ancient alerce tree



Studying the soil profile in Chile

This trip allowed me to develop research and education collaborations, look for potential sites for future research and a field course, and the time to pursue my scholarship in a beautiful environment. I would like to thank CIE for their support in making this opportunity possible.



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