

2020 Canyonlands Research Center Fellows



Ian Clifton, University of Toledo

Ian Clifton is a PhD Candidate at the University of Toledo. His dissertation work is focused on understanding the physiological and behavioral effects of climate change on ectotherms. This summer will be his fifth year researching the thermal ecology of lizards in the area. He received his BS in biology from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock in 2013 and his MS in biology from the University of Central Arkansas in 2016.



Sierra Jech, University of Colorado

Sierra Jech is a first-year Ph.D. student in the Ecology and Evolutionary Biology Department at the University of Colorado, Boulder. This summer at the CRC, Sierra will be continuing her work with biological soil crusts. Sierra is using microbial ecology and genetic techniques to assess the health and viability of biocrust that was mass produced for restoration. Sierra's goal is to understand microbial interactions in biocrust to improve restoration outcomes in drylands. Before graduate school, Sierra earned a master's degree in

Environmental Chemistry degrees in Earth Systems Science and Chemistry.



Danielle Duni, New Mexico State University

Danielle Duni is using GPS and GIS technology to study landscape use patterns of heritage (Raramuri Criollo) and commercial (Red Angus) beef cattle at the Dugout Ranch in Utah. Danielle is planning to determine whether breeds use desert (winter) and forest (summer) pastures differently and to analyze environment- and animal-associated factors that drive spatial distribution of grazing at this site. Danielle is a Colorado native with a family background in sheep and cattle ranching. Her goal is to work with producers in the West finding solutions to keep them profitable on the land.



Megan Rabinowich, New Mexico State University

Megan Rabinowich is in her second semester of graduate school at New Mexico State University in Las Cruces, New Mexico. Her interests include dryland ecology, plant-soil interactions, arid land restoration, and seed/seedling ecology. Her previous experience has involved working for various federal agencies including most recently the U.S. Geological Survey in Henderson, NV where she was able to lead many exciting plant ecology research projects. Her current graduate research addresses the interactions of various dominant biological soil crust components on both soil and plants throughout early life stages and at maturity. In her free time she enjoys hiking, biking, cooking, cuddling with her cats, and crafting.