

I'm Dexon Lake and I grew up in the very rural Moreland, Idaho township, an appendage of Blackfoot, the Potato Capitol of the World. While I grew up amongst the spud fields, we owned a beef cattle ranch where the community stink came from our feedlots. I spent my life in the secluded agriculture areas of Idaho where doors don't get locked at night, cows outnumber the people, and your neighbor was a quarter mile down the road. Needless to say, my wife and I had to prepare to go from my small town in the Gem State to this great nation's capitol! Fast forward from February to May. Instead of being D.C., I started working the internship in sweatpants and a dress shirt via my small apartment in my college town.

Despite the very different situation than anticipated, I've learned an exponential amount from my experience at MTA. One of the very first things I learned was letting the chips fall where they may, something I think we have all learned these last few months. I definitely did not get the internship experience I was expecting and was looking forward to. I had suits cleaned and pressed ready to take notes on congressional hearings, sit in on USDA briefings, and work with staff on client development and policy issues. Instead, I kept the suits hung up and watched hearings via YouTube and helped on odds and ends projects as well as the weekly intern tasks of newsletter writing and publishing. From those video hearings and miscellaneous projects, I believe I was able to have one of the most unique and educational experiences regarding policy and client work than any previous intern has been able to have. That is something I am very grateful for!

One of the biggest things I learned is the value of having a close working team. Over the course of the seven months, it was evident the MTA team had to pull together tighter than ever to efficiently work as well as monitor one another's wellbeing. I remember my very first meeting being instantly welcomed in and reminded by my internship advisor that there is always room for my voice at the table. The value of each member of the team was perpetuated time and time again and for that I am very appreciative.

I learned on another level what an inclusive and critical thinking leader is. Michael Torrey never said much during meetings, but he has a remarkable ability to help the team collaboratively think while putting members on the right track without dictating to them. I hope I can adapt into being the type of leader that I saw Michael Torrey be on a regular basis.

The MTA team is something to boast about. I'm extremely grateful for the entire group taking me under their wing as we've all adapted to the current world situation. Thank you to Mike, Tara, Barbara, Cassandra, Perry, and Jessica for a tremendous experience! Additionally, a big thank you to Marissa Dake who was my initial point of contact with MTA that developed into an early and much needed ally and friend as I learned the ropes of the position. This has truly been an incredible internship that will not soon be forgotten.

As for me, I will finish my two bachelor's degrees this Fall in Agribusiness and Plant Science with an emphasis in Horticulture and Cropping Systems at Utah State University. From there, I will stay at USU to complete a graduate program in Agribusiness. In between my leadership responsibilities at the university as well as my work as a licensed auctioneer, I enjoy spending time with my sweet wife doing remote traveling, outdoor activities, and fulfilling ecclesiastical responsibilities.