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15 July 2012
The Mountain Institute – Huaraz, Ancash, Peru

Report #2

During the past 6 weeks at The Mountain Institute, I have made significant progress on my primary project – evaluating the feasibility of creating a bioremediation system in the Campesino Community of Canrey Chico.

In early June, working in conjunction with The Mountain Institute, a class of students from the University of Amsterdam, who are currently pursuing MA degrees in Environmental Engineering, visited Peru to do 3 weeks of field work in the Community of Canrey Chico. Their work involved analyzing water and soil samples from all areas of the community, spanning from low elevations where the community lives to high altitude zones in the puna, where animals graze. Their analysis sought to evaluate contamination levels in all water sources the community uses and evaluate soil quality.

During the visit, I served as a translator for the class during their interactions with the community, but most importantly accompanied the class during their field work. I was able to learn a great deal about the geology of the area, but more critically was able to discuss at length with the Professor of the class (Prof. Eric Cammeraat) his thoughts about bioremediation in the area, in terms of suitable sites for such a project and the effectiveness such a system could have given the current levels of contamination in the water.

Beginning this week, a team of engineers from the US-based NGO Engineers Without Borders have arrived and begun their work in Huasta - one of the Campesino Communities with which TMI works. I have been in charge of coordinating EWB's visit - helping out with their plans to schedule workshops with the community and meetings with members of local government of Huasta. While Huasta is a larger town than Canrey Chico with a different set of environmental problems, the base issues of organizing the community to take charge of the plant and commit time and resources towards maintaining it aligns closely with the type of organization that would be required in Canrey Chico if the community were to successfully establish a bioremediation system.

Learning about how the municipal government and the leadership of the Campesino Community interact and how their responsibilities and authority overlap is a very complicated issue but one which I will need to understand for my report, as the same relationship exists in Canrey Chico. I hope and am confident that being closely involved with the EWB project in Huasta will increase my understanding and ability to propose a plan for bioremediation in Canrey Chico.

In the coming weeks I will continue to help with EWB's work in Huasta, and also conduct various interviews with important stakeholders in Canrey Chico and Huaraz (identified in Interim Report 1) about the potential bioremediation project. These meetings, especially those with local leadership in Canrey Chico will allow me to begin gauging the interest and capacity of the community, along with the political logistics of creating such a project.

Overall, my time in Peru with The Mountain Institute continues to be an incredible experience during which I am constantly learning new things. I would again like to thank the JJCF for their support.