

Why Not Both?

Elijah Manzer, Colorado Plateau and Cycle the Rockies 2024



After a presentation was made to his Wildlife Biology class by a WRFI representative, Elijah realized this may be the opportunity he had been looking for. As a first year student at the University of Montana, fresh off of a gap year in which he realized his connection with nature was the most important thing to him, he knew he wanted to spend his second semester doing something nontraditional. A WRFI course could be just the ticket. Even better, Cycle the Rockies had a credit that directly tied into his climate change studies minor.

During the application process, Elijah mentioned how he was pretty set on Cycle the Rockies, but also how it would be neat to take the Colorado Plateau course, since he has family ties in that area of the country. “Why not both?” our Student Experience Manager asked him. Elijah decided to do just that on the spot.

Now that he’s completed both courses, he reflects on what WRFI means to him:

“I realized that WRFI is an opportunity for me to grow academically, in my backcountry experience, and in my physical and mental abilities. I saw challenges as opportunities to grow. Talking with [instructors and alumni], I knew WRFI was very much a safe place to fail but then to move beyond that failure and get better. I definitely failed multiple times during both of those courses. After the initial setbacks, I realized that’s what I was here for. I’m not here for an easy, guided experience, I’m here for the challenges.”

And his advice for future WRFI students? “Go in with the mindset that ‘this is hard but I’m going to come out a better, stronger person afterwards’, and you will.”



Elijah is currently a student at the University of Montana, set to graduate with the class of 2027. After taking two WRFI courses during the summer of 2024, he decided to focus his studies on environmental law, planning to attend law school upon graduation. He credits much of this decision to a lesson he learned through WRFI: no positive change can happen in our society unless we all go out and do our part.