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## A New Perspective

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Wednesday, January 4, 2012

# A New Perspective

Flower Ortega

Everything is dry. Even the air is dry, suffocating you as you step outside into the sun that burns all year round in this country. Whether the weather is scorching hot or freezin cold, the atmosphere is always arid. Where I come from water is extremely scare. In Chihuahua you can be arrested for watering your plants during certain times of the year and if you're ever caught wasting water, let's say in a water gun fight, you can count on being sanctioned.

I grew up in this city without water. I always saw the fact that I couldn't expect water to come out of the faucet when I turned it on as something normal. I never really took the time to consider the implications of the water issues Chihuahua faces. I never paid attention to Chihuahua's rivers and I was barely even aware of their existence. I guess I've always known that Chihuauha has issues with water, only because I have lived this reality, but I never took the time to think about what this meant, what the causes might be, and what the social, economic, aesthetic, and environmental consequences might be. Being a River Steward has made me look at my birthplace in a different way. During that time I spent in Chihuahua this past winter break, I couldn't drive past my city's rivers without a million thoughts starting in my head.

Becoming a River Steward has changed the way that I look at a lot of things. Before I was a Stew I would have never considered what it means that the Rio Chuviscar has been canalized. This river runs in a straight line through the heart of downtown Chihuahua and no longer has any of its natural banks wherever it runs through urban areas. Surrounded by pavement, its lined with sidewalks instead of trees or greenery. In fact, there isn't much of a river left at all. It's been reduced to a pathetic trickle of water that entirely disappears in some places. The river's lack of a floodplain, among other things, has also caused some serious flooding in the past that has even resulted in the loss of lives. I wonder what the river's health would be like had its natural state been respected and maintained. Another river in Chihuahua is the Rio Sacramento. This river eventually connects with the Rio Chuviscar. Although it's in a much better state, I still wouldn't denote it as healthy.

My experiences at the Rivers Institute have definitely shaped the way that I think and the way that I see my hometown. I am aware of the fact that Chihuahua faces a lot of problems, but its water issues are certainly at the forefront and I am thankful for the new perspective I have gained on these. I am more motivated now to look more into the city's history with its rivers. I want to learn about the city's waste water treatment process and I want to learn where our drinking water comes from. Being a River Steward has shown me that there are a million doors for me to open and it has planted a seed of motivation and thirst for knowledge within me.

Not only has being involved with the Rivers Institute granted me a reformed perspective on Chihuahua and given me new considerations to pursue, I have also learned a great deal about the city of Dayton and its rivers. I've acquired a sense of ownership for the city of Dayton,

appreciating all that it has to offer. I'm proud and glad to be living in the city of Dayton. Never before had I appreciated how important and vital rivers can be to a community. Seeing the way Dayton has chosen to embrace its rivers is revitalizing and inspiring.

Being a part of the Rivers Institute has been an incredible opportunity for more reasons than one. I have met a lot of cool people, I've become more environmentally conscious, I have developed new ways of seeing communities, and my appreciation for water has only increased. I remember starting out the semester feeling overwhelmed by all of the river and water terminology that was being thrown at me. I never knew there was so much that went into a water system. A semester of the RLC and being a River Steward have truly expanded my pool of knowledge. But I am excited to grow and learn more as I continue in my journey downstream with the Rivers Institute.



This is the Rio Chuviscar, which runs through the heart of the city and has been canalized where it flows through urban areas.



This is the Rio Sacramento, which runs down the west edge of the city.