



LRIGS Master's student Alison Bijman.

Alison Bijman started in the NSERC CREATE LRIGS program in September 2013. She recalls the path that led her to LRIGS, "I think I first become interested in reclamation and ecological restoration through my undergrad honours research at Saint Mary's University which involved restoring salt marshes along the Bay of Fundy in Nova Scotia. I really like the idea of being able to manipulate an ecosystem that was damaged or disturbed and bring back natural processes, plants and wildlife and watch it begin to return to what it once was. I came across the LRIGS website and noticed that here is a program where you can be part of a team that collectively returns some of the largest areas of disturbed lands in Canada back to forests and wetlands. This is so exciting!"

Since starting in LRIGS, Alison's research has involved assessing the response of understory plant community development to various treatments including planting aspen and using biochar and fertilizer on the soil. She is comparing plant establishment and survival in these treatments and distinguishing the benefits of shelter in understory plant community development from the benefits of other treatments.

Alison has greatly enjoyed her time at the University of Alberta. Her immediate team, including fellow students Caren Jones and Lizzie Hoffman and supervisors Simon Landhausser and Ellen Macdonald have been very supportive and have helped to make her experience fulfilling and enjoyable. This is not to say that her time has been without challenges. Alison recounts an unanticipated surprise with her research, "I've never had to count out so many seeds in my entire life! For one of my projects I had to hand count 57,600 seeds, sort them and put them into small bags to plant them in the field. The biggest seed was the size of a grain of rice. Needless to say, this took a while."

When she isn't counting seeds or in the field, Alison is involved in the University of Alberta cheerleading team. Her club competes at the highest level





against other collegiate teams in North America. "It's been so great to get to do the sport that I love while completing my MSc." Alison will be travelling with her team to Anaheim, California in March this year to compete in the USA Collegiate Championships competition.

Alison will complete her MSc and time in LRIGS this summer. She'll be in Alberta for the next few years, at least until her fiancée, Devin, completes his electrician's apprenticeship. After graduating (and her wedding in August), Alison plans to pursue work as a consultant in land reclamation.