

Kia ora koutou,

I would like to first thank the Canterbury Branch of the NZ Federated Graduate Women Trust for helping fund my travels to America. This grant allowed me to travel to Sacramento for the 2016 Society for Freshwater Science Meeting, which was my first international conference. I presented part of my PhD research which is focused on disentangling the causes of *Phormidium* blooms in Canterbury rivers. *Phormidium* is a type of algae, which forms leathery mats on the river bed. These mats can be very toxic and consequently have resulted in the death of over 100 dogs in NZ. *Phormidium* is also becoming problematic in other countries, including France and America.

The conference was an excellent opportunity to connect and interact with some of the world's leading freshwater ecologists. It was a great opportunity for networking, particularly for future post-doc options. California is beginning to experience problems with the same algae, so I had some great discussions with people working for American governmental organisations, who were very interested in my research. As part of this trip, I also visited a PhD student from UC Berkeley who is also studying *Phormidium*. We travelled to a beautiful remote reserve in Mendocino County and conducted some field work (see picture). This was an excellent opportunity for me to learn about algae in California and form relationships with researchers at UC Berkeley.

