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Project Reflection

I'm currently a junior majoring in Environmental Science and Ecology and Evolutionary Biology (EEB). The project I worked on involved the installation of vegetated buffers along streams and coastal riparian corridors using native plants to provide flood control, filter or trap pollutants and provide food and shelter for critical pollinator species. We worked with ECCD in their goal to create and map of one connected pollinator pathway on town, residential, business, and open space properties along the Tri-town multi-use recreational trail (City and Town of Groton, Ledyard, and Preston) and a second pathway from the City of Groton to the Town of Stonington. We focused our efforts in the town of Ledyard near the Tri-Town Trail. Our goal was to locate a site which was a good fit for the addition of a riparian buffer. We were also tasked with creating a plan which can be implemented at the site using information from the TN planning guide and our own independent research. Two sites were compared, but in the end, we decided on the Pfizer Field site off of Stoddards Wharf Road.

We ran into a few challenges during the course of this project. The major obstacle we had to overcome was spending most of our time focusing on a handful of sites in one area of Ledyard only to find out we would be unable to actually use these sites. This was a little discouraging at first since we had already spent so much time and effort finding these sites and doing a site visit. We didn't let that discourage us though and kept looking. We eventually found a site and were able to do a site visit and actually check it out.

My favorite part of this project was probably being able to actually go to the sites and see things at the ground level. Most of the project involved looking at aerial images and using various websites to get an idea of where we should focus out work. This was new for me, so I enjoyed being able to learn a new skill and it was very satisfying going to the sites and seeing that I was able to successfully identify sites using the online mapping software. However, it was more interesting actually being at the sites and seeing the plants that were present and the areas that needed improvement. Going to the sites and seeing that we were actually able to find places that did need improvement was encouraging after our previous struggles. Another part that I enjoyed was being able to create a plan that may actually be implemented somewhere. I look forward to possibly being able to visit the site in the future, if it is selected, and seeing something I designed and planned being implemented.

Overall, I enjoyed the experience I gained throughout this project. I can now successfully use online GIS and mapping software. This project helped me get an idea of one path I can take post-graduation and ways I can actually use my degree. I was able to get some real-world experience and expand my knowledge in riparian buffers and creating successful planting plans. I enjoyed being able to create something that can actually make a positive difference for the environment and hope to one day be able to see the impact I was able to have. This project has also helped me become more aware of areas in my own town and local areas that could be improved. I have gained a lot of knowledge that I can now use and take elsewhere.