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ENVS 3999: UConn Climate Corps

Reflection

As I have reached the end of my climate corps practicum semester, I first want to look back on my project goals and acknowledge what I was and was not able to accomplish. My goals were to reach out to relevant people in Mystic, CT, including business owners, employees, town figures, etc and compile the data for a climate vulnerability assessment. Then, my second goal was to host a resilience brainstorming session with local businesses to begin coming up with solutions to issues they face related to climate change. The hope was that businesses who participated would join the Alliance for the Mystic River Watershed's resilient business coalition and participate in future meetings or events. I was able to successfully complete my first goal but was not able to completely fulfill my second goal.

The biggest challenge I faced while completing this project was having to postpone the resilient business coalition brainstorming meeting. This was going to be a large part of my project and was the aspect that was actually supposed to produce results. However, due to the busy nature of the spring and the absence of resilience experts from the Mystic Seaport, we had to postpone. Nearly everything for the evening was prepared. We had a space booked at the Mystic Seaport Museum, we had catering picked out and Bruce Flax and the Mystic Chamber of Commerce agreed to cover the costs. I had designed a poster and sent it out to my contacts and posted it on social media. While I was bummed that the event had to be canceled, I am also

partially relieved because I know the Alliance can take the work I put into planning the event and use it at a later date when more people are guaranteed to come.

Another challenge I faced was believing I could have contacted more businesses in the area. The whole process was fairly new to me, and many of the people I contacted either never responded or said they would respond and never did. I think if I had more time to go down to Mystic and talk to people in person It would have made my project even better. Also, I would have liked to talk to more business owners as opposed to regular employees. However, I recognize how busy these individuals are. They most likely do not have a lot of time to devote to answering questions.

My favorite part of this project was spending the day in Mystic interviewing business people. While it was nerve-wracking at first, once I got a hang of it it was quite enjoyable listening to the stories people had. Since I have lived locally my whole life and have worked there since I was 16, it was so nice being able to meet people I have never met and bond over similar experiences.

Looking back at my experiences with the climate corps, I realized I chose a project that put me way out of my comfort zone. The whole premise of my project was communicating and reaching out to citizens of Mystic. I have always been a shy person who avoids conversations at all cost, especially interactions with people I do not know. I think I would have been better suited for a project that did not rely so heavily on interviews and public speaking. That being said, I am extremely proud of myself for choosing this project and accomplishing what I did. I was able to talk to over a dozen individuals face to face about climate issues. I was also fully prepared to help run a 90 minute meeting full of people older and more experienced than me. I have gained many useful skills through this program, including leadership, communication, and initiative.

Through both semesters of this course combined, I have learned a lot about adaptation and mitigation, especially when it comes to municipalities. It was through this course that I found out about the Connecticut Council of Governments. This led me to apply for the Sustainable CT fellowship and I am now spending the summer interning with them and doing similar work to what I did with Climate Corps. I am hoping the more experience I obtain in this realm, the easier it will be for me.