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Climate Corps Project Reflection

At the start of the course when selecting my project I was a little nervous about choosing a Geographic Information Systems(GIS) project. I had only taken a course or two on the ArcPro software at the time, but my goal was to build my knowledge of the program. A majority of the semester I spent learning tools and asking questions that could potentially advance my project. Oftentimes progress on the map-making aspect of my project felt extremely slow and I was constantly worried about not completing the Commission Zone maps before the deadline. After several trial and error attempts, YouTube videos, and advice from GIS experts I felt that I had gathered enough knowledge to complete the map-making process.

The first map of the project was the most difficult to make by a long shot. Once I figured out a step forward in ArcPro, such as how to properly color the land types using the symbology pane, recreating the process for other maps was very quick. This feeling was a little bittersweet for me. I was happy that I had figured out a new feature, but I got upset with myself that I had not figured it out sooner. Fortunately, during this semester, I took an introductory GIS class that I hoped would reinforce my familiarity with ArcPro even if I had not worked on the project that particular week. The class did exactly that. It more so taught me the definitions and types of data I might work with in the future. From this class, I learned a lot about how to work with raster data which is used in the CT Eco data set.

Once the map-making was complete I felt that the actual spreadsheet and data analysis part of it came very easily to me. I was already familiar with how to manipulate data in Excel from my previous lab classes early in my college career. I only spent roughly 10% of my time on the project generating graphs based on the acre data because I already possessed Excel knowledge, unlike ArcPro. I will admit, creating graphs that displayed logical land use changes was the most satisfying part of the entire process. I was glad to see trends in my data that reflected a decrease in forest land and an increase in developed land which aligns with the population growth that Connecticut has experienced. I also found satisfaction in teaching myself ArcPro functions that were not taught to me in the classroom. It is a completely different feeling learning something new for your own enjoyment rather than learning it because you want a good grade.

After I finished the deliverables that I pledged to complete at the beginning of the semester, I realized that the project could be much larger than I made it with the time that I had. I could have also compared the Commission Zone land change to the rest of Connecticut towns that it was a part of. Knowing that I could have added more to the project made me a little unsatisfied with the work I had completed. However, I have accepted that this semester is my last at UConn and I had several other classes and future plans that also occupied time that could have been dedicated to this project. I hope going forward members of the CT River Gateway Commission can understand the maps and graphs I created and use them for a meaningful purpose. From the project, I felt as though I indirectly learned about some of the legislation that acts behind the scenes for Connecticut sustainability. I genuinely enjoyed meeting so many individuals in my state who are passionate about the environment like me.