

Monica Doherty

Professor Bertotti and Professor Placido

ENVS 3999

May 9th, 2025

My Project as Part of Climate Corps: the Watershed Family Album

Over the course of the semester, I worked with the Alliance for the Mystic River Watershed through the UConn Climate Corps program. My task was the creation of the Mystic Watershed Family Album, with the goal of exemplifying relationships across the Mystic River Watershed among humans, plants, animals, and all other components of the ecosystem. I wanted anyone who views the album to be able to understand how different components of the watershed interact to form a cohesive system, and how people fit into the watershed - not as outsiders, but as another piece of the complete watershed picture. Ultimately, the album was built from writeups of different 'family members' across the watershed. It includes summaries of different organisms, ecosystems, and people that I interviewed. There are also photographs, both that I took of the watershed area and that I sourced from online. Videos of some of the interviews I conducted are also able to be viewed on the website.

One of the main challenges I faced while working on this project was finding people to interview, reaching out to them, scheduling times to meet, and conducting each interview. To find people to interview, I asked the director of the Alliance to recommend people to interview and also did a bit of networking in-person, when possible. I found it difficult to email people I had never met before, especially when I was reaching out to ask them to do something for me. As I sent out more emails, however, I found that most people were open to talk with me and

eager to help out with the project. It was also not easy to schedule interviews, as myself and the people I interviewed are busy. To combat this, I put my own availability in each email to facilitate an easier scheduling process. I was initially nervous when it came time to actually host interviews. I found that with a good set of questions prepared and being open to conversations taking new directions, each person I interviewed was able to provide me with the information I was looking for.

I definitely think that the best part of my Climate Corps project was the opportunity to meet and work with environmentally-minded individuals. It was really inspiring to see people that are taking action to combat climate change and environmental hazards at a local scale. I also enjoyed talking to older adults about climate change: I got a chance to learn about their lived experiences and their thoughts on environmental issues, which I normally would not hear while at a college campus surrounded by people around my age.

One of my personal goals for this project was to become more comfortable interacting with people I have never met. I definitely achieved this goal by working closely with Alliance members and interviewing people across the community. I believe that in the future if I have to reach out to strangers, I will be less nervous and have a better idea of how to formulate what I want to say. Another goal I had was to gain experience working with an environmentally-minded organization. The Alliance is a relatively new organization, so I got a glimpse of the volume of work that goes on behind the scenes to lead a small community organization to success. I always had the goal of producing quality work. As I worked with the Alliance and saw just how much dedication its members have, I developed an even greater desire to make a valuable contribution to their website. I think that the time and effort I put into the Watershed Family Album show in

my final product, and I hope that the Alliance can take my work and build off of it as their organization continues to grow.