

Final Reflection: City of Torrington, Natural Resources Inventory StoryMap

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Taking part in the Climate Corps program at UConn and working on a semester-long project has been a great learning experience. This spring, I worked to finalize an existing Natural Resources Inventory (NRI) StoryMap for the City of Torrington. I collaborated on this project with Nate Nardi-Cyrus, a City Planner in the Department of Land Use/Planning. ArcGIS StoryMaps is a tool that combines interactive maps and other media to help share information in an engaging way. To complete this NRI, I improved existing ArcGIS maps highlighting Torrington's natural resources and developed concise and clear narrative sections. Additionally, I created a section of the StoryMap highlighting climate vulnerabilities and adaptation strategies for the City of Torrington. This NRI StoryMap is intended to be an informative resource for local land use decision makers and the public.

While working on the project, I learned ways to best communicate scientific information and create clear visuals through maps. I looked at other towns' Natural Resource Inventories as examples of how to write the narrative sections. Additionally, I focused on ensuring that my writing provided useful information to city planners and was easy to understand for the public. To complement the narrative sections, I added Canva graphics and pictures. Furthermore, I connected with David Scherf, Manager of GIS/Technical Services in Torrington, to help me with map editing. When editing, I employed several StoryMap features to enhance the original maps. For example, I utilized a feature called the "sidecar" to separate different map layers and add text to help explain the visual data.

After completing the StoryMap, I presented my project to the Commission's Committee in Torrington, CT. At this meeting, I showcased the different maps and their uses. For example, one of the sections of the NRI titled "Soils and Geology" showcased soil information for

Torrington, including bedrock geology, information on mining, and surficial geology.

Additionally, I showcased sections containing information on water resources, climate resiliency, and forestry in Torrington. After I gave an overview of the information in the StoryMap, my community partner presented the final map containing all of the map layers and information from the NRI. The final map will hopefully help city planners to assess natural resource data for specific parcels of land in Torrington.

If I had additional time to spend on this project, I would have loved the opportunity to engage with more environmental experts and stakeholders in Torrington, CT. It would have been impactful to film a video for the StoryMap showcasing the town's natural resources and interviewing experts at different nature sites. Additionally, I would have enjoyed creating a virtual map walking tour through the city, highlighting natural resources information for various areas. Luckily, if the City of Torrington wants to continue making improvements, StoryMaps provides users the ability to continuously edit and update the existing product.

This experience has helped me build additional skills in ArcGIS and gain practice working on a collaborative professional project. Throughout the project, I developed interpersonal skills in organization and communication. Specifically, I created a detailed plan for my project and scheduled weekly meetings through Webex to update my community partner on project progress. Additionally, the opportunity to present in front of the Commission's Committee helped me practice my public speaking skills. I hope to continue using the ArcGIS skills I have gained through this project to help communicate environmental data in creative ways. In particular, I plan to attend graduate school for Environmental Politics and hope to continue utilizing StoryMaps as a mode of scientific communication for my research. It's extremely powerful to continue improving methods of climate change and environmental

communication to raise awareness, improve education, and share solutions that address environmental problems.