

By Heather Wirth, UConn class of 2023

Currently I am a sophomore at the University of Connecticut and I am majoring in Environmental Studies. I am a transfer student from Eastern Connecticut State University. I have had the unique experience of online distance learning for my first academic year here at UConn during the COVID 19 pandemic. During my first semester I enrolled in the course EVST 3100 – “Climate Resilience and Adaptation: Municipal Policy and Planning. This course appealed to my interests and previous studies regarding climate change, but I was intrigued to learn more about climate change from a perspective dealing in municipal policy and planning. Throughout the semester I learned a lot about various subjects, built upon information from previous classes, and got the chance to explore a new facet of climate studies and planning for the future. The material was presented in a compelling, engaging manner, I truly developed a passion and understanding for the subject matter. Also during this course, students were assigned a variation of assignments that allowed us to apply this information in creative ways. Due to an interest in the field of study and encouragement from the professors, I decided to enroll in the independent study portion of this course for the spring 2021 semester. This independent study course was the first of it's kind that I had taken and I thoroughly enjoyed participating in it this past semester.

The focus of my independent study project was preservation of the Stonington Lighthouse Museum located in Stonington, Connecticut. My scope of work included evaluating the impacts of climate change for the area surrounding the Stonington Lighthouse museum, and determining potential risk for the future effects of climate change. During this process I also looked at future projections, impacts on the property,

accessibility, and historical preservation. This research encompasses evaluation of many aspects that contribute to climate change, weather, flooding, damages to the museum property, nearby roads and parking lots, as well as the surrounding community.

I enjoyed getting to learn more about the historical importance of the Stonington Lighthouse museum and the surrounding community. During my research I learned about the historical significance of the museum to the state of Connecticut and how it enriches the local community. This is a location that is experiencing first hand the effects of climate change. While it is unfortunate to think about the potential damages and losses that could occur to this property and others like it, I enjoyed being able to apply the information I learned from my experiences in this course to research, evaluate, and suggest real, achievable solutions for the preservation of the museum. Being able to apply what I had learned helped me become more hopeful for the future. One of the aspects of this project that stood out to me the most was when I created maps for the various future projections of the region. These maps showed the potential change as a result of sea level rise, storm surges, and risk the region faces. Projections like this can give us a peek into the future and to assess what can be done to adapt, plan, and mitigate for the well being of the area. I really enjoyed this experience and feel that it enriched my understanding and appreciation for the field of study.