



## Winter 2017/2018 Intern Spotlight: James Wilkerson

**Q: When did you graduate?**

**A:** B.S Geography (Salisbury University – June 2012 )  
M.S GIS Management (Salisbury University – July 2013 )

**Q: Where is your hometown?**

**A:** Salisbury, Maryland

**Q: When did you first use GIS?**

**A:** Over the summer of 2011 I conducted research as part of a STEM sponsored program for undergraduates at SU. I was signed up for my first GIS coursework the following fall, but was so intrigued by the application of GIS that I taught myself the basics and then worked with Dr. Chen and Dr. Harris to perform the spatial analysis and mapping needed for my project, assessing stormwater management in downtown Salisbury.

**Q: What interested you in working with the ESRGC?**

**A:** The ESRGC represented a rare and rewarding opportunity for me to not only pursue my master's degree under scholarship but to gain professional experience while doing so. The ESRGC also offered a nurturing environment, as much of the team is comprised of alumni who understood well what I was going through as an intern and as a graduate student. The opportunity to better myself while being a part of a highly regarded team is one that I am extremely fortunate to have had.

**Q: What project(s) did you worked on as an intern? How long were you an intern?**

**A:** During my internship, from August 2012 to May 2013, I was involved with a variety of projects. My first involved georeferencing historic insurance maps of Maryland municipalities. These maps were created by the Sanborn Map Company and ranged in date from the late-1800s to the mid-1900s. I also assisted with a variety of tasks for testing and reporting on broadband and mobile access in Maryland.

**Q: Where are you working now? What are you working on?**

**A:** During my undergraduate I studied both GIS and planning and earned my bachelor's with a concentration in both. I have always viewed GIS as a means to enhance my skill as a planner. I am a Planning Supervisor in the Division of Research for the Howard County Dept. of Planning and Zoning. Currently, my primary focus is as a co-author for a report on the significant development and revitalization efforts that are underway in downtown Columbia. While much of my work is research and writing based, I am utilizing GIS to develop maps that will serve as exhibits and references throughout the report that detail a variety of characteristics from the neighborhood boundaries to new infrastructure networks.

**Q: How has working with ESRGC prepared you for your current position?**

**A:** The ESRGC provided me with an excellent start to my professional career. The ESRGC is highly regarded in the GIS community and throughout the state and this is because of the high standards held for the work performed and the integrity of those performing the work. While with the ESRGC I was challenged from the get go to perform work of high quality and of advanced skill. I learned much by working alongside dedicated and highly capable individuals. I try to approach each project and each day with that same mindset of doing the best work I can to the highest quality that I am capable of.

**Q: Have you gone to any GIS conferences? How did they go?**

**A:** I have attended several local conferences, the federal ESRI conference, and the Towson University GIS conference (TUGIS). Personally, I find the smaller scale local conferences to be far more beneficial, as the projects will often have a local impact, and the opportunities for networking are far greater. I think it's fascinating to learn about the GIS work being performed in my backyard and to get to know the fellow GIS professionals in my community.



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*“While with the ESRGC I was challenged from the get-go to perform work of high quality and of advanced skill.” -James*

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**Q: Dream job? (Doesn't have to be GIS/ESRGC related)**

**A:** Ideally, I'd be able to profit from my ideals and would serve as an animal rights advocate or operate a sanctuary for farm animals (and cats!). I am in the line of work that I am (planning) because it is work that I believe in and to be involved with purposeful and beneficial work is incredibly rewarding. To work somehow with a goal towards protecting animals and enhancing their welfare would be incredibly satisfying as well but way cuddlier than planning!

**Q: What do you like to do in your spare time?**

**A:** My interests and hobbies are diverse. I enjoy the outdoors and activities like road cycling and hiking but also revel in opportunities to read a good book, play video games, and stream shows and movies. I'm a geographer at heart, so I'm fascinated by history and travel but as of yet have had limited opportunity to indulge in much of it.

**Q: Do you have a LinkedIn?**

**A:** I do - <https://www.linkedin.com/in/thejameswilkerson>