

## Spatial Analysts

It is amazing how easily clean water can be accessed in America: just turn on the faucet. Once water is cleaned, though, it does not transport itself to our faucets. Spatial analysts are some of the many people who help get water cleaned, then into our homes. I interviewed a spatial analyst: my cousin, Jeremy, to get an idea of what he does and how he plays a part in getting water from springs to faucets.

Jeremy's journey to becoming a spatial analyst began at Georgia College and State University where he went to school for four years to get his bachelor's degree. He majored in geology, minored in Geographical Information Systems (GIS), and learned a little programming. To graduate, he was required to gain some experience, which he got by interning a summer at the Clayton County Water Authority. Looking back, Jeremy acknowledges that "experience helps a lot".

Jeremy helped me understand what spatial analysts do by giving me a real world example. Later, I made my own: "Imagine one day a drizzle of colored water comes out of your faucet. You call in to make a complaint. Spatial analysts monitor such complaints, and help others prioritize to make sure the problem gets fixed. Later, when a crew arrives, you show them a huge mud puddle in your backyard. You're pretty sure there's a broken pipe somewhere under there, but you don't know *exactly* where. Spatial analysts make digital maps by putting the location of pipes, drains, etc. into a database for times like this. The map keeps the crew from having to dig around to find the pipe or hitting it while digging, and saves them the inconvenience of having to hunt for a paper map. They fix the pipe and leave, problem solved." In addition to all this, spatial analysts create software/programs for other workers. Essentially,

spatial analysts get others the tools they need, as far as technology goes, to make sure water gets from point A to point B and stays clean along the way.

When asked what would happen without spatial analysts, Jeremy replied, “They [other workers] would do a lot more legwork.” His work makes other people’s jobs easier. He helps water get to our homes, schools, and workplaces by monitoring water quality and making sure that others have the tools they need to fix problems and monitor systems. His work keeps both water and the water treatment process flowing.

Those who enjoy problem-solving would probably love the job of a spatial analyst. Problem-solving skills are needed to place all the required features into the programs/software spatial analysts make. There is no way to get bored with this job, because new problems always arise. As a spatial analyst, you would work mostly behind the scenes, but you could have the assurance that your job is critical and necessary to help us access the clean water we need to live and thrive.