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Seminar Paper

The Pacific Northwest is known for many things, the scenic vistas of the mountains of Idaho, the existence of many climactic zones in such a small space, the diversity of the population, and the traffic that plagues the Seattle Metropolitan Area. All of these items share common attributes and all of these topics, and so much more, are studied in the field of geography. As you can see geography is found in almost every discipline. In this paper I will talk about the many different geographic areas of study that can be found in the Pacific Northwest. I will talk about the meteorology and climate, the transportation routes, culture, economy, demographics, resource availability, and political elements of the Pacific Northwest. Additionally there will be a discussion on different data visualization techniques.

The first topics that I will discuss today are meteorology and climate. These are two disciplines are related quite closely. The study of meteorology is using current atmospheric conditions to predict conditions in for the near future, normally less than two weeks. Additionally meteorologists study local weather phenomena, such as orographic lift, or inversions. The study of the climate however is concerned with longer scale weather systems. This could involve studying how the average temperature has changed over time in one location, or globally. Climatologists also study global weather patterns such as the El Nino/La Nina oscillations which have a direct effect on the weather of the Pacific Northwest.

The next topic I would like to talk about is transportation routes. In the Pacific Northwest there are two main east-west interstate freeways, I-90 and I-84. In addition there is a north-south freeway that runs through the western side of the Pacific Northwest region, I-5, and a north-south connector interstate, I-82, in between I-90 and I-84. As for in Idaho there is only one north-south highway, this road is a two lane highway for over 90% of the distance it runs in Idaho. Highway 95 is considered to be quite dangerous, and there are many areas where along this road that if there was a rock slide there would not be any north-south road in Idaho. Essentially the state of Idaho would be split in two. This is a large economic problem because the state could be cut in half for a week or more in some cases if there is a rock slide along this road.

For my next topic I will discuss culture, economy, and demographics of the Pacific Northwest. There are many different cultures represented in the Pacific Northwest. The first group to have settled the area was tribes of Native Americans. Throughout the years the Americans moved west powered by manifest destiny. This displaced the Native American populations. Since then there have been many different cultures that been found in this area some examples would be, the hippie movement, and grunge. Some cultures have transplanted into the area such as Asian and Mexican cultures because of large population movement. The economy of the area is driven by many different factors from agriculture to aerospace to information technology firms. Boeing has several facilities in the Pacific Northwest. Seattle is also the home of Microsoft, Amazon. Idaho is home to Micron Technologies, which is the maker of Crucial Memory. Oregon is home to a large Intel manufacturing plant which makes the Pacific Northwest one of leading fronts of the electronic frontier. The final thing which

adds to the uniqueness of the Pacific Northwest is the demographics of the region. The Pacific Northwest is home to roughly 12 million people. It is also home to the Vancouver-Seattle-Portland megacity which has a population of over 7 million people. The largest population group in the Pacific Northwest is Anglo-Americans however there are also sizeable populations of Latinos, Chinese and Native Americans.

The fourth topic of discussion is resources availability. On the Snake River Plain water has always been a scarce resource. This has led to many lawsuits and management headaches for the state of Idaho. However the water rights have been pretty much sorted out. Another resource available in this area is timber. The forestry companies have spent many years getting timber from this area. There are many makers of wood products who call this area home, Clearwater and Simpson just to name a couple. There are also vast untamed wildernesses for people to explore and is home to the only temperate rainforest in the continental United States. These benefits are just a few of the resources that bring companies and people to the Pacific Northwest.

The political elements of the Pacific Northwest are as varied as the landscape. Both Oregon and Washington voted liberal in the last election however Idaho voted conservative. This region is known for having diverse political views. Living within just a few miles of each other are environmentalists, hippies, and staunch conservatives. This has caused a schism to form that has prevented legislation and cooperation between these states.

As you can see the Pacific Northwest is home to many different geographic factors. There are mountain ranges, which impact the weather, there are sections of the

Pacific Northwest that are highly connected via transportation routes and there are places which can be cut off with the failure of a single road. The Pacific Northwest is home to two of the largest computer firms in the world, Microsoft and Intel. There have been battles over the resources which the Mother Nature has given us, and battles between how the government should run. There are many things to study here in this diverse region, known as the Pacific Northwest.