

One page statement of interest

I would like to apply to attend the WAS*IS workshop as I have a specific interest in the integration of social science and science in relation to climate change. As a social scientist, trained in environmental history, I have maintained a long-standing interest in how communities mobilise to engage with the 'science' of environment, and further, how they can either within groups, or as individuals can contribute to environmental management, or environmental debate. Specifically, my interest is drawn from a deeply held belief that in order to have effective decision making, that science and social science must come together and have equal weight and influence. I am also interested in the ways in which traditional Indigenous knowledge can be integrated within climate research, especially in light of the effects currently sustained by Indigenous communities world wide as a result of climate change.

Recently, I have been active in addressing this interest in relation to climate change. Firstly, in delivering courses in marine and social sustainability, (and within that, climate), to a student body, that with the sole exception of my course, are doing a science degree, I have found that finding ways to engage student understanding of the social dimensions of management has been a great challenge. How do I teach the integration of climate change science with the social and political dimensions accompanying decisionmaking about it?

Secondly, I am now six months into a social science research project designed to look at the mechanisms available to local governments in relation to addressing climate change. At the heart of this project, and its outcomes is the need to combine climate change science with the social and cultural dimensions actually driving the decision-making. This project has attracted much interest, and has identified that there is a deep need for social tools that communicate climate change, but also the development of social as well as scientific monitoring mechanisms, to assess values, risk, vulnerability and perception about the climate. This research has also revealed there is a clear 'disconnect' between the social and the scientific in relation to climate change. I have thus been considering the usefulness of establishing a social science research network specifically into climate change, with a view to encouraging mutual science and social science engagement and responses on this issue. I have also been asked to be involved in some local government projects addressing climate change. Specifically one council has invited me to consider the social aspects, within an existing scientific project they have funding for, and to do so by developing a coherent social impact methodology.

My interest in attending the WAS*IS Workshop is that it will enable me to meet like minded people, from whom I can learn in relation to how to integrate science and social science together, but how to do so specifically within the area of climate research generally. Attendance would also assist me to develop ideas and methodologies that will complement and strengthen my existing work, especially important in projects described above where the scientific paradigm while dominant, has not precluded the adoption or at least trialling of social research tools and outputs. Attendance at the workshop would also expose me to new ideas, help build long term networks, and hopefully enable myself also to contribute some ideas to others.