*WAS*IS 2007 Summer Workshop Interest Statement*
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I am very excited to attend the WAS*IS 2007 summer workshop. The objectives of the movement are perfectly in line with my research interests on vulnerability to food insecurity. I am interested in integrating weather and socioeconomic spatial datasets to improve famine and food security early warning systems. To this end I am working with the Climate Hazards Group (CHG) at UCSB[1].The CHG supports the weather forecasting and modeling needs of the FEWS NET[2] program.

I am currently a graduate student in Geography at UCSB. Prior to graduate school I was working in Panama on the NASA/USAID sponsored Central American Regional Monitoring and Visualization System (SERVIR)[3]. My job was to ensure that remote sensing data produced by NASA, NOAA, USGS and other agencies could be used effectively by environmental and disaster response managers working in Central America. I spent extensive time working the World Food Program defining the decision requirements for disaster responders concerned with food aid and how we could tailor a product around those requirements. It was through this work that I discovered the FEWSNET program and the tremendous importance of better tools, methods, and data in improving our understanding of interactions between weather and society. Weather patterns determine crop productivity and the potential impact of natural hazards on socioeconomic systems. To me, food security research is the epitome of how applied investigation into weather and society can provide tangible benefits to humanity.

My commitment to interdisciplinary research on weather and society stems from my interest in food security early warning. Food security research depends on remote sensing data to monitor environmental systems, socioeconomic data to monitor human activities, and integration of these data types to provide useful products to decision makers. Appropriate scientific methods that seamlessly integrate distinct data types across spatial and temporal scales are crucial to food security where miscalculations can lead to starvation, social unrest, and death. I believe that researching these methods contributes to the WAS*IS objective of ***identifying the most appropriate and straightforward methodologies to use for improving understanding, communication, and use of weather information.***

I understand the difficulties of interdisciplinary research. In my previous job I worked with farmers, hydrologists, and managers to build integrated data models and tools to support water quality management on the US Mexico border. I facilitated 10 workshops with hundreds of scientists in the United Arab Emirates to support a state of the environment assessment. I learned it is one thing to put people from different disciplines together in a room. It is another to truly craft interdisciplinary research agendas. The culture, jargon, and methods are often as compatible as the data formats. However I remain committed to integrating research on weather and society. The needs are tremendous and the rewards obvious. Our ability to eat and protect our homes are intricately linked to a better understanding of weather and how it impacts society.

I was excited to learn about WAS*IS and intrigued by your objectives. My professional experience and current research interests make me a strong match with the WAS*IS movement. I am as eager to gain new knowledge and connections as I am in contributing my own skills in advancing the WAS*IS objectives. I thank you for considering my application to the summer 2007 workshop and, regardless of whether I am selected, look forward to working closely with WAS*IS for many years to come.

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[1] University of California Santa Barbara
[2] Famine/Food Security Early Warning Network http://www.fews.net/
[3] http://servir.nsstc.nasa.gov/