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Interest Statement: Weather and Society * Integrated Studies (WAS*IS), July 2007

Dear Ms. Gruntfest, Ms. Demuth, and Mr. Lazo,

I take our National Weather Service (NWS) mission of “protecting life and property” to heart. Like many folks in the NWS and in the hazards enterprise, I am passionate and dedicated to that cause. After spending my formative career years in the field, doing my best to fulfill that goal with our local customers and partners, I now find myself at NWS headquarters (NWSH). While the scope of my projects has changed, my dedication to our mission has not. I do believe that things happen for a reason. I am now in a position to manage national programs, influence future direction, and lead organizational service improvements. With my roots, I prioritize supporting our folks in the field as best as possible. I have to admit that there are many unique challenges here in the Beltway. Things can be frustrating at times. Ever the optimist, I see the challenges as even more reason to work harder.

When talking challenges within NWS, and especially at NWSH, we could make a case that this parallels the challenges we face with the integration of social science and meteorology (or as I keep pushing...all environmental hazards;) Let's identify some obstacles to both. There is the ‘inertia’ relative to change that our federal government is so well known for. There is the knee-jerk reaction to a crisis, a disaster with immense socioeconomic impacts, that we unwisely allocates resources in an attempt to place a band-aid where a measured and consistent approach was needed all along (e.g. post 9/11, DHS formation muddling FEMA and our country's efforts with natural disasters). When folks are challenged with something new, they often reach back to the security of what they know. There is also a lack of curriculum at most universities to support the integration of social science and meteorology. Formal emergency management programs are a relatively new field as well. In my humble opinion, the NWS is in trouble if we do not strive to reach all-populations with our warning messages and other services. If we do not enable the entire weather enterprise to more readily share in that goal. If we do not form formal ties with the social science experts...what a novel idea to hire a few to better our services...we are or will become obsolete. At best we will only limitedly fulfill our mission without fulfilling these organizational needs. There is no shortage of challenges here and I would love the opportunity to help us better overcome those challenges.

You have had many great individuals come through WAS*IS, some that are my friends and colleagues. They recommended I pursue WAS*IS, and after educating myself on it a bit, I humbly submit this application in the hopes that I too can be more empowered to make a more substantive difference in fulfilling our joint mission in the weather (hazards) enterprise.

Thank you for the consideration.

Sincerely,

Χηρις Μαιερ