

J. Greg Dobson
CPO #2345, 1 University Heights
UNC-Asheville
Asheville, NC, 28804
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Dear WAS*IS Workshop Committee,

I am writing to state my interest in attending and participating in the Weather and Society*Integrated Studies 2009 Summer Workshop. I became aware of this community while attending the 3rd NCAR Community Workshop on GIS in Weather, Climate, and Impacts last fall in Boulder. Since this time, I have become very familiar with this exciting group of Scientists whom I share a desire with to build capacity and gain further knowledge and understanding of the processes of integrating weather and society research. Though the few published articles, newsletters, and online discussion groups provide some useful dialogue, the opportunity to congregate together with other individuals for a week long series of in-depth discussions, presentations, and potential collaborations greatly interests me.

Though I am new to this community of research, I feel that my background in Geography, having completed both undergraduate and graduate degrees in this highly integrated discipline, as well as three years of experience in this field as a Research Scientist, would lend itself well and qualify me to participate in the WAS*IS workshop. It seems that WAS*IS is certainly geographical by nature and I appreciate both the social and physical sides of WAS*IS. Geography too has both social and physical components and they share the ability to address complex spatial issues; the integration of weather and society studies certainly has a spatial component that must be addressed. As a Geographer, my focus has been GIS application, theory, and technology and I highly believe that GIS could be an excellent vehicle to better integrate weather and society research. During this last year, I have also had the opportunity to develop and teach a new "GIS in Meteorology" class, a course that I have found to be well suited for the integration of WAS*IS. It seems the key to the WAS*IS success will be educating a new era of scientists and practitioners that understand how these two disciplines can complement one another.

Over the last two years, I have had the opportunity to work closely with the North Carolina Emergency Management community, a local National Weather Service Forecast Office, and other local and regional decision making groups to gain a better understanding of their needs for integrating weather and societal data. Through this process, I have learned that these groups also need increased access to and training on tools that can assist in integrating and analyzing weather and societal data. In addition, collaborative projects with the National Climatic Data Center has provided even further insight into the many challenges that we face when trying to merge these two historically separate disciplines. All of this has led to my current area of research, WAS*IS related, which has been more focused on the development of tools that can be utilized by various decision makers to assist in accessing and analyzing weather and climate hazard data and related societal impacts. These "geospatial decision support tools" have primarily included GIS and Geospatial MashUp technologies. By converting trusted sources of data and information into decisions through the use of these tools and other geospatial visualization techniques, decision makers can often better relate to the integration of these varied datasets and disciplines.

Future research ideas that I have include accessing the true utility and applicability of geospatial decision support tools that my team and I have created. In addition, other ideas for WAS*IS research that I have include 1.) working more with the National Weather Service to develop tools that would allow them to better integrate meteorology, specifically forecast models, and other ancillary societal data through GIS directly into forecast situations, 2.) using geospatial visualization as a tool to display integrated weather, climate, and societal data, 3.) creating education and outreach tools for decision makers and the general public to better understand potential societal impacts from weather and climate hazards.

I hope the WAS*IS Workshop application Review Committee will strongly consider my application to attend the WAS*IS 2009 Summer Workshop. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely, Greg Dobson