

Statement of Interest for Cedar League
March 25, 2009

Dear Julie and the WAS*IS selection committee,

I am pleased to submit my application for the summer Weather and Society * Integrated Studies workshop. I am applying to attend the workshop because I believe the integration of social science into meteorology and hydrology is crucial for making a difference in and improving the weather enterprise, and I wish to be a part of this exciting movement.

I recently completed my graduate work for a Masters degree in Applied Geography at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs. My interests broadly lie in natural hazards and disasters and the societal impact of these events. My Masters thesis, completed under the direction of Dr. Eve Grunfest, Dr. Isabelle Ruin and Dr. John Harner, entitled "What were they thinking? Using YouTube to observe driver behavior while crossing flooded roads," investigated driver behavior using YouTube videos for data collection, with the goal to reduce driver vulnerability in floods. Results of this study revealed valuable information about drivers, including where they were going, what influenced them to cross and what it would take to deter them from crossing flooded roads in the future. This thesis also highlighted a new and useful research methodology using YouTube.

Currently, I am a Professional Research Assistant for the center for Collaborative Adaptive Sensing of the Atmosphere (CASA), a multi-institutional NSF-funded research center that is creating a new network of low-cost weather radars operating at short-range called DCAS or Distributed Collaborative Adaptive Sensing. I am working with the End User Integration Research Thrust to study the technical, social, and behavioral impacts of CASA radar data on decision making by emergency managers. Primarily, I will disseminate surveys to Emergency Managers during the spring hazardous weather season. The survey will gather Emergency Manager weather information preferences and measure how different information sources impact their decision-making abilities and confidence levels, as well as to see how and when Emergency Managers warn the public during severe weather events, and what resources are available to them. I recently traveled to Oklahoma to interview Emergency Managers who handled the tornado events of February 10, 2009.

Lastly, my work as a Research Assistant for a Natural Hazards Center Quick Response Program grant through the University of Colorado Boulder provided me with an excellent opportunity to conduct interdisciplinary research. In the aftermath of Hurricane Dolly, I was part of a team led by Dr. Ruin and Dr. Mary Hayden of the National Center for Atmospheric Research that researched hurricane preparedness among residents of the Lower Rio Grande Valley in Texas and in Matamoros, Mexico. Surveys were disseminated to the public asking about hurricane preparedness and protective actions taken before and during the hurricane. An emphasis of this study was placed on the cultural differences between protective actions taken by those in the U.S. and in Mexico. Jeral Estupiñán and Barry Goldsmith of the National Weather Service's Brownsville Weather Forecasting Office were partners on this quick response study.

I wish to continue this important work throughout my professional career with the overall goal of reducing losses and vulnerability to natural hazards. WAS*IS will provide a unique opportunity to explore new methods and ideas in integrated studies, and will improve my understanding of the weather and society interface. I hope to share with other WAS*ISers the knowledge I've gained through the lens of a social scientist, while at the same time learn about new directions being taken in the weather enterprise and how professionals from a variety of backgrounds and interests can collaborate and learn from each other.

Thank you for your consideration.

Kindly,
Cedar League