

WAS * IS - Interest

Andy Foster

As a meteorologist in the National Weather Service (NWS), I have enjoyed the many opportunities and challenges to provide weather forecasts and warnings. My forecasting experiences in the Southeast, northern Rockies, Pacific Northwest and Midwest have exposed me to a wide variety of weather forecast challenges and hazards. I also enjoy exploring more effective methods to communicate weather information to the public and decision makers.

As the public service and GIS program leader at the NWS Springfield, I believe there is a need to integrate meteorology with social sciences to enhance weather information and decision support services. To do so will require innovative weather services, and partnerships with a variety of user groups and agencies. No longer can weather be viewed one dimensionally in which we simply just issue a forecast or warning with no thought about where it is going. Instead, risk analysis, event impact, and response need to be essential elements to the weather forecast and warning process. This will require an understanding of the needs of decision makers and the public, as well as nurturing new partnerships. I believe WAS*IS provides a great avenue in which to share experiences and support one another to accomplish these goals.

Of particular interest in integrating social aspects with the meteorology has been the development of our “NOAA in the Neighborhood” campaign. This initiative reaches out to user communities including agricultural, parks and recreational, and transportation. Findings and experiences from WAS*IS participants could greatly benefit this initiative.

I see great potential in integrating meteorology, social science and GIS to analyze and communicate weather impacts. NWS Springfield will be working with St. Louis University to incorporate weather event analog data into GIS to generate risk assessments and impact. Expertise shared at WAS*IS would be very beneficial in this development.

Also, the fusion of hydrometeorology and societal impact is crucial to our Flash Flood Risk Analysis Project (FFRAP) which was developed to better understand flooding and its impact in the Ozarks. The purpose of FFRAP is to enhance flash flood warning decisions in the NWS, support the emergency management community with more detailed flood information, and provide the general public with more accurate and effective flash flood warnings. This project has led to partnerships with several agencies including emergency management, department of transportation, etc. Partnerships have also been made with Dr. Isabelle Ruin at NCAR, WAS*IS, and Missouri State University to research the societal impacts of the more than 1500 low water crossings in order to develop effective mitigation strategies.

Ultimately, I believe WAS*IS would be a very enriching experience that would not only benefit me but my organization as well.