

## **Weather and Society\*Integrated Studies Interest Statement**

I have been interested in using social science to help people since my undergraduate days, and my professional experience has involved exploring ways that social science data and tools can improve public health, coastal and marine resource management, and coastal community resilience to hazards. It is my work in this final area that attracted me to the Weather and Society\*Integrated Studies (WAS\*IS) program.

I believe that integrating social science and meteorology has the potential to improve the resilience of both individuals and communities to episodic events such as hurricanes as well as chronic hazards. With the increasingly dire predictions about climate change impacts, I am more interested than ever in finding ways that social science can improve how we communicate risk, how we foster more resilient behaviors, and how we take care of vulnerable populations.

As my resume indicates, my first job after graduate school was with a State emergency management agency. My time working within the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program was unfortunately a dramatic demonstration of how failing to consider the human dimensions of mitigation (e.g. the social costs of projects as well as market costs) limited the effectiveness of public sector efforts.

Following my brief stint in emergency management, I spent three years working for a State coastal management program, and have been with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) since 2001. For much of this time my interest in social science and the human dimensions of issues was channeled towards finding ways to improve natural resource management, and I have been lucky to work within a part of NOAA – The Coastal Services Center – that sees the need for and is very supportive of human dimensions work.

In the past several years, my interest and my projects have focused on coastal community resilience, consistent with a greater focus on this issue by my agency and by our partners and customers. In the wake of hurricanes Katrina and Rita my supervisors supported my desire to contribute to recovery, and I spent three months on mission assignment to the Emergency Support Function #14 effort in Louisiana. My involvement with long-term community recovery planning in Louisiana has been a major driver for my interest in community resilience, and it is also a main reason I am interested in the WAS\*IS program. My experiences in Louisiana, and what I have witnessed in the Gulf of Mexico region following more recent storms, have made me particularly curious about how we can improve risk communication toward the goal of fostering more resilient behaviors by both individuals and communities. Meteorological information is a key component of this risk communication.

I have spoken with a number of graduates of the WAS\*IS program, and believe it would be an excellent professional development experience. Because more and more of NOAA's partners and customers are concerned with climate change, I am hoping that this year's workshop might include some focus on understanding and adapting to climate change. I am particularly interested in the opportunity to join a growing network of individuals committed to more effective applications of weather information.

Sincerely,  
Heidi Recksiek