

Guest Blogger: Robert Davies

06/18/2015

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Extension Sustainability helps everyday people live more healthy, happy and sustainable lives. This is the eleventh of a series of posts that features real people making real changes in their lives and the lives of others to be more sustainable.

This month we are featuring Robert Davies read on to learn about his work the Utah Climate Center and more.....

1. Please tell us a little about your position(s) with USU, what do your duties include?

My work at the Utah Climate Center is primarily climate change science communication. I give regular public lectures — to audiences of all kinds. I also produce educational materials, and collaborate on climate and climate change research.

A side aspect of my job is daily weather forecasts on Utah Public Radio.

2. What is the Utah Climate Center? What resources does it provide to the public?

The Utah Climate Center is the state climate center whose director, Dr. Rob Gillies, is the State Climatologist. It is housed within the College of Agriculture at Utah State University and affiliated with USU's Department of Plants, Soils, and Climate.

In total we comprise six climate scientists, a statistician, a staff meteorologist, several technicians and a physicist. Our work is divided into both research and service, and they are connected.

The research covers a wide range of the climate system, from natural variability to climate change. We are one of

the most active state climate centers in the nation in terms of research. On the service side, we use the research to develop tools for the public to use, including first-freeze forecasts and winter inversion forecasts. We also operate a network of roughly one hundred environmental sensing stations across the state, serving farmers, fruit orchards, and a variety of other groups. Finally, our website — developed in the past six years — provides public access to data from nearly 200,000 weather stations worldwide.

3. Have you enjoyed working with the Utah Climate Center? What is the best part?

The Utah Climate Center has been extremely active in the six years I've been with associated with them. The research is world-class, and our reach in communicating this science has been growing rapidly. It's a vibrant place and on the forefront of one of the most important issues Utahans will face in the coming decades, which is a changing planetary climate system.

4. Have you always wanted to be a physicist? Why are you passionate about this line of work?

I've been fascinated by science since I was a wee child, and physics is the most fundamental of the sciences. I think mine was a pretty standard progression — it started with dinosaurs, progressed to astronomy, then biology, then finally physics.

5. What is CoCoRaHS? Can people get involved?

CoCoRaHS — the Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow network — is the brainchild of Nolan Doesken, the state climatologist for Colorado. CoCoRaHS puts rain gauges in back yards in all 50 states and Canada — tens of thousands of them. The data is used for a wide range of purpose — from realtime severe storm warning, to climate and hydrology modeling. Anyone can participate — go to www.cocorahs.org and follow your nose.

6. What is the most rewarding thing about your line of work?

My work at the Utah Climate Center allows me to use a broad range of skills, from my training as a physicist, to communication, to artistic. I'm given a great deal of creative space to work.

7. Why is living sustainably important to you personally?

Flip the question, and it answers itself: Why would living unsustainably be reasonable to anyone? :)

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