

TURNING POINT

Katharine Hayhoe

The US government last month released the third National Climate Assessment — a report on climate-change impacts across the United States — with Canadian Katharine Hayhoe as a lead author. Hayhoe, who is director of the Texas Tech University Climate Science Center in Lubbock, describes her evolution as a science communicator.

Did you set out to study climate change?

No. I double-majored in astronomy and physics at the University of Toronto in Canada, but my interests shifted after I took a course on climate change. I was shocked by the magnitude of the problem as well as by the fact that nonlinear fluid dynamics is at the core of climate models. All of a sudden, I realized I'd been developing the skills necessary to study an urgent global problem. After getting my master's degree at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, I decided to become a consultant to help industry, government and non-profit clients to assess the impacts of climate change.

Did any consulting job alter your career?

Yes, I started working on the impact of climate change on the ecology of the Great Lakes region with funding from the Union of Concerned Scientists in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and the Ecological Society of America in Washington DC. It was an eye-opener to find that ecologists were using 20-year-old climate projections, which were considered obsolete in atmospheric science; I realized how huge the gap was between climate science and all other areas of science. Working on the resulting report, *Confronting Climate Change in the Great Lakes Region*, was a pivotal moment for me because it clarified the importance of generating high-resolution information and translating it into something that ecologists and water managers could use. I became frustrated by the limitations of the available tools, so I decided to return to academia.

How did you end up in Texas?

While on sabbatical from Notre Dame University in Indiana, my husband, a linguistics professor and pastor, was invited to Lubbock to serve as an interim pastor at a local church. Texas Tech University had an atmospheric-sciences programme, so we decided to move, and I got a grant-supported research-professor position. Climate change isn't a popular topic in some US communities, especially in conservative states, so it was stressful to move to a place where we knew that at least some



people in the community would be strongly opposed to what I do. But embracing the unexpected has been enormously positive for my career. I later went back to the University of Illinois to earn my PhD so I would be eligible for tenure at Texas Tech.

How did you become a voice for climate adaptation?

Soon after we moved to Texas, I was invited to speak at a women's group about climate change. The questions I got, such as "How do you know this isn't just a natural cycle?" and "Aren't the ice caps on Mars shrinking too, so it's the Sun's effect?", challenged me to find answers. Shortly thereafter, I started getting invitations to speak for other groups, and my husband's congregation began asking questions. Before long, we co-wrote a book, *A Climate for Change*. Writing this book felt like I was exposing my world views as a Christian. I believe the idea that scientists are completely objective is a myth. The only legitimate way to do science is to admit our views and, where appropriate, share them with others.

How did you approach the US National Climate Assessment?

We aimed to make sure the science could be communicated. We wanted to make the best-available science accessible to every person who is interested. So we included videos of scientists explaining climate change and answered common, specific questions, such as why we think it's human-caused instead of a part of a natural cycle. I think those efforts helped us to achieve the high level of interest that this report received compared to our past assessments. ■

INTERVIEW BY VIRGINIA GEWIN

FUNDING

Salk windfall

A US\$25-million gift to the Salk Institute for Biological Studies in La Jolla, California, is creating hiring opportunities in four research areas for scientists at all career stages. The bequest will help the institute to move into innovative areas of research, says Marsha Chandler, Salk's executive vice-president. Salk is recruiting researchers in cancer, metabolism and neuroscience, and Chandler says that the gift will help the institute to bring in more computational infrastructure and expertise to support these and other research areas. The bequest is from philanthropist Conrad Prebys and puts Salk within sight of its \$300-million fundraising goal, Chandler says.

RECRUITMENT

Sweden looks abroad

The Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, Sweden, is seeking scientists in four human-health research areas after receiving 522 million kronor (US\$78 million) from the Swedish Research Council towards international hiring. The institute has already recruited four top scientists: two from the United States, one from the University of Oxford, UK, and one from Singapore. It is hiring researchers at all career stages to work in four centres that will study eating disorders, cancer, stem cells and regenerative medicine, and psychiatric genomics. Hans-Gustaf Ljunggren, Karolinska's dean of research, says that the institute aims to expand and establish a stronger global presence. Birgitta Henriques-Normark, vice-dean for recruitment, is developing a strategic plan for hiring.

JOB SHARING

Game of clones

Four faculty members proposed taking job sharing to new levels this month when they jointly applied for the position of president-vice chancellor at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Canada. Twelve other faculty groups followed suit, and in their applications the groups took a light-hearted jab at the growing economic and social divide between faculty and administration. Kathy Cawsey, associate professor of English at Dalhousie University in Halifax, led the effort. None of the groups has been contacted for a job interview.