

Dave Reidmiller

Director of the Climate Center at the Gulf of Maine Research Institute



What is your current occupation?

I serve as the Director of the Climate Center at the Gulf of Maine Research Institute, a mid-sized nonprofit in Portland. Broadly speaking, we deliver climate services to coastal and marine stakeholders through a science-engagement-solutions framework. I oversee a growing team of scientists, community engagement specialists, and climate solutions experts that advances climate action throughout the Gulf of Maine region. I forge partnerships, talk with stakeholders to better understand their needs, provide supervision to staff, develop program strategy, engage in organizational management, collaborate with communications and development teams, and collaboratively write proposals.

What is your educational background?

I went to Colgate University for undergrad, where I majored in chemistry. For grad school, I went to the University of Washington where I received an M.S. and Ph.D. in atmospheric sciences, along with a certificate in Interdisciplinary Policy Dimensions of the Earth Sciences.

A key message for students is that the geoscience workforce is dynamic, and boundaries between sectors and occupations are fluid. How has this been true in your career?

In grad school, I specialized in atmospheric chemistry—not meteorology or climate science—which, at the time, was somewhat of an anomaly in the department at the time. The benefit of that was that I was versed (enough) in meteorology and climate science to ultimately forge a career in the climate science space. But I wanted to get into the policy space, so I had taken some policy-relevant coursework in grad school, attended some workshops, and even did a short-term

fellowship at the National to help springboard a career science policy. After getting my degree, I spent a year as a Congressional Science Policy Fellow in the Senate where I worked on energy and natural resource issues.

Wanting to focus more directly on climate change (instead of energy, broadly) and on the international state (instead of domestic), I took a fellowship in the climate office of the State Department where I led U.S. engagement in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), as well as the science and technology negotiations for the Paris Agreement. In that role, I was also engaging in the federal inter-agency climate research coordination process, led by the White House Office of Science & Technology Policy (OSTP). Given my work on IPCC, the OSTP folks recruited me to lead the Fourth National Climate Assessment (NCA4). Due to a bureaucratic complexity, I was detailed through the U.S. Geological Survey USGS, not the State Department, so when my OSTP detail was over, I returned to USGS to lead the Northeast and Southeast Climate Adaptation Science Centers (CASCs). The CASC network is a unique federal-academic partnership that advances science to support adaptation of fish, wildlife, and habitat. After a decade of federal service, an opportunity to lead a new Climate Center at the Gulf of Maine Research Institute was floated by me through one of the lead authors of NCA4. Wanting a new professional challenge in a beautiful place, the role has been an ideal match—enabling me to keep a foot in the science, while applying it on-the-ground to affect change at a local level.

Where do you see your sector moving in future years? How would you advise students to prepare to be competitive job applicants and successful employees?

There's a trend that's been happening for over a decade now towards approaching climate-related challenges through a multidisciplinary lens. Initially, this meant through different disciplines of natural sciences; then it came to include social sciences such as geography, anthropology, economics; and, most recently, the focus has come to include a layer of equity across all of that. So, one important skill to have is the ability to contextualize your specialty. Implicit in this, of course, is having some sort of disciplinary or topical expertise. But being versant in related disciplines will facilitate collaborations, making you a more valued partner and capable of communicating with a range of audiences. Practice telling stories about your work and/or research, and mentally catalogue anecdotes to illustrate the application of your work.

What is the role of networking in your sector? Do you have advice for a student who is just beginning to build their network? What is the best way for students to get their foot in the door?

Networking is exceedingly valuable, both on a personal and professional level. As a bit of an introvert, it can take some additional mental bandwidth, but new research ideas, collaborative projects, or professional opportunities (e.g., new jobs, candidates for positions in your organization / team). Two pieces of advice I was given early on in networking have proven to be fruitful: (1) Never be afraid to ask someone about their work—it's a surefire way to start a conversation as folks love talking about their work; and (2) Ask them to introduce you to or

suggest three additional people you should talk to. And if you're trying to get a foot in the door, see if you can find a small role to play on some project to build a relationship with peers and demonstrate the value you can add.

What does a “typical” day of work look like for you?

A typical day of work involves a lot of meetings: (1) meetings with staff I supervise to check in on project management and program strategy; (2) meetings with other senior leaders of the organization to chart organizational strategy and navigate operational issues; (3) meetings with external stakeholders to communicate science, understand the climate-related issues they're dealing with, etc; and (4) meetings with partners to share knowledge, brainstorm project ideas, or otherwise advance collaborative work. In between meetings, I review draft papers, develop slideshows and other materials to communicate our work, read up on the latest science, and, of course, respond to and send off email.

What is the best part of your job?

There are a lot of great aspects to my job. One is that I'm part of an incredible team that includes nationally-recognized scientists, trusted community engagement specialists, devoted STEM educators, and visionary organizational leaders. I get to constantly learn—whether it's deeper into some aspect of climate science or, more recently, becoming more familiar with coastal, marine, and fisheries science. And I get to talk with super interesting people all day long. I also really value the flexibility afforded to me in my job—both in a traditional sense (hours of the day, location), but also in a professional sense, to pursue the issues I feel are important in a manner I think would be efficient and effective.

Do you have any other comments or advice for students looking to enter your sector of the geoscience workforce?

Ask questions. Be humble and curious. Respond to email. Don't be a jerk.

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[Professional bio](#)

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Select Media

- *National Public Radio (Maine Public) – Maine Calling*, “[Climate Action: New State Goals to Prevent & Prepare for Climate Change](#),” December 2, 2020.

- *National Public Radio (Maine Public) – All Things Considered*, “[Former Top Obama Science Advisor: US Has 'Real Economic Opportunity' Rejoining Paris Climate Accord](#)”, February 25, 2021.
- *National Public Radio (Maine Public) – Maine Calling*, “[Climate & The Pandemic: Effects of the Pandemic on Climate Change & Lessons Learned about Global Crises](#),” July 7, 2021.

Select Blogs

- “[U.N. Climate Change Report Affirms Value of American Climate Science—and the Need To Double Down](#)”, *Center for American Progress*, with Dr. Kelly Kryc, August 11, 2021.
- “[Advancing Maine’s Climate Action Plan](#)”, *GMRI*, June 24, 2021.
- “[Seafood, Sustainability, and Climate Change](#)”, *GMRI*, with Dr. Lisa Kerr and Dr. Kanae Tokunaga, June 8, 2021.

Select Peer-Reviewed Scientific Publications

- Terando, A., **Reidmiller, D.**, Hostetler, S.W., Littell, J.S., Beard, T.D., Jr., Weiskopf, S.R., Belnap, J., and Plumlee, G.S., 2020, Using information from global climate models to inform policymaking—The role of the U.S. Geological Survey: U.S. Geological Survey Open-File Report 2020–1058, 25 p., <https://doi.org/10.3133/ofr20201058>.
- USGCRP, 2018: *Impacts, Risks, and Adaptation in the United States: Fourth National Climate Assessment, Volume II* [**Reidmiller, D.R.**, C.W. Avery, D.R. Easterling, K.E. Kunkel, K.L.M. Lewis, T.K. Maycock, and B.C. Stewart (eds.)]. U.S. Global Change Research Program, Washington, DC, USA. [doi: 10.7930/NCA4.2018](https://doi.org/10.7930/NCA4.2018).