

## Sustainability

[About](#)[Campus Initiatives](#)[Education & Research](#)[Take Action](#)[News & Events](#)

# Talking Climate Change in Duluth with Dr. Julie Etterson



March 27, 2019 | Kaija Schlangen

### **Leading by example through sustainable living and climate change action.**

From helping run an ancestral seed bank to driving a hybrid car to organizing a local sustainability conference, Dr. Julie Etterson implements sustainability in all aspects of her life. A biology professor at UMD, Dr. Etterson studies how native plant species respond to human impacts on the environment, like climate change. She is also the Campus Lead for the Institute on the Environment in Duluth.

These positions, combined with her passion for sustainability, led Dr. Etterson to help organize the climate conference “Our Climate Futures: Meeting the Challenge in Duluth.” The idea for this conference came from a colleague who shared an article published in The Guardian that argued that Duluth could become a future

relocation spot for climate refugees. The article featured an interview with Jesse Keenan, a climate researcher at Harvard, who agreed to be the keynote speaker at the event.

Over the course of two days, this conference encouraged discourse about Duluth as a potential refuge for displaced people and ignited sustainable conversations with UMD and the greater community.

“Our Climate Futures: Meeting the Challenge in Duluth” conference was held from March 19-20. Alongside discussing potential effects of climate change in Minnesota, the event featured keynote speakers Jesse Keenan and Kenny Blumenfeld, a Senior Climatologist at the Minnesota State Climate Office. Both lectures garnered a huge attendance from the surrounding community.

The committee estimates that at least 700 people attended the conference, including participation from 70% of the Institute on the Environment affiliates. Reflecting on the conference, Dr. Etterson says that it was “a tremendous success” and allowed “students to discuss the numerous ways that climate change may affect the future of Duluth.”

This focus on sustainability follows Dr. Etterson through her work and personal life. However, one doesn’t need to organize a sustainability conference to make a difference. Dr. Etterson says that “Sustainability, for me, is making personal choices that permit me to live a fulfilling life without compromising that opportunity for future generations.”

## Tags

[Sustainability](#)

### Contact us

[sustain@d.umn.edu](mailto:sustain@d.umn.edu)

(218) 726-8198

TTY/TDD:

(800) 627-3529

1208 Kirby Drive

Kirby Plaza 245

Duluth, MN 55812



[\(https://www.d.umn.edu/sustainability/news/spotlight-etterson/\)](https://www.d.umn.edu/sustainability/news/spotlight-etterson/)

© Regents of the University of Minnesota. All rights reserved.

The University of Minnesota is an equal opportunity educator and employer.