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David Sims

UNH Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans and Space

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Christa McAuliffe Planetarium To Premiere *Ice Worlds*, UNH Scientists Will Display Ice Cores Oct. 18

Media Contact: [David Sims](#)

603-862-5369

Science Writer

Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans, and Space

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DURHAM, N.H. - In conjunction with hands-on demonstrations by scientists from the University of New Hampshire, on Saturday, October 18, 2008 the Christa McAuliffe Planetarium in Concord will premiere a unique new 20-minute planetarium show, *Ice Worlds*, that transports viewers to the frozen landscapes of our solar system - most importantly the rapidly changing polar regions of our home planet.

The premiere will kick off subsequent national and international screenings of a different type of planetarium show - one grounded more in Earth science than astronomy - that will also be viewed on portable domes throughout the world to educate schoolchildren about the important role ice plays throughout the solar system.

On Oct. 18 there will be multiple screenings on the hour from noon to 5 p.m. UNH scientists and planetarium educators will provide an additional dimension to the show with hands-on exhibits, including a presentation on global warming featuring a live Arctic fox.

Ice core samples from Greenland and Antarctica preserved at the UNH Climate Change Research Center (CCRC) will be presented. Ice cores are like frozen time capsules and can reveal what the temperature and atmospheric makeup on Earth was hundreds of thousands of years ago. This information, in turn, can help scientists better understand our currently changing global climate.

Among other techniques used, *Ice Worlds* features state-of-the-art graphic technology to animate digital photographs gathered by scientists, including those from UNH, studying Earth's polar regions. These images include a huge iceberg coming loose from one of Greenland's fastest glaciers and NASA satellite images of sea ice changing in the Arctic Ocean.

Projected on the planetarium's dome, viewers are immersed into the Arctic and Antarctic - regions that are undergoing rapid changes as our planet warms.

"The idea is to get the science out to the public in an informal manner, to 'take them' to the polar regions since most people just can't go there," says research scientist Annette Schloss of UNH's Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans, and Space (EOS).

Schloss, along with EOS scientists Mark Fahnestock, Richard Lammers, and Jonathan Pundsack, received funding from the National Science Foundation to create *Ice Worlds* in partnership with the Houston Museum of Natural Science and digital theater show producer Evans & Sutherland Corporation.

In addition to the up-close-and-personal view of Earth's polar regions, *Ice Worlds* flies viewers to some of our frozen, extraterrestrial neighbors in space. "Here in the outer regions of the solar system," says the film's narrator, "we encounter some of the weirdest ice worlds."

Weird indeed, from an earth-bound perspective, is Saturn's giant moon Titan. Down through Titan's gauzy, pink-orange, methane atmosphere, viewers of *Ice Worlds* drift as a digitally animated Huygens spacecraft gently wafts towards the moon's icy surface via parachute. (The European Space Agency's Huygens probe made its landmark mission to Titan in 2004 after a seven-year journey to Saturn bolted to the side of the Cassini Orbiter. It was this mission that discovered Saturn's spectacular rings are made of water ice.)

"Studies of these ice worlds both near and far," the film's narrator tells us, "will help us understand our own planet, which is more dependant on ice than we realize." Indeed, current changes wrought by a melting Arctic, for example, could slow or even shut down the Gulf Stream, which provides Europe with as much as 30 percent of its heat.

Ice Worlds opens during the 4th International Polar Year, when thousands of scientists from more than 60 nations are exploring and researching Earth's polar regions. The show is designed to feature their latest discoveries and educate the public on their importance and how they are currently changing.

For details on *Ice Worlds*, visit the planetarium's website at http://www.starhop.com/events/special_events.html.

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Still images from *Ice Worlds* are available at http://www.eos.unh.edu/newsimage/stillimage2_lg.jpg and http://www.eos.unh.edu/newsimage/stillimage1_lg.jpg

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