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Character Of Northeast At Stake, Says Report Co-Authored By UNH Scientist

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October 5, 2006

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DURHAM, N.H. -- A report released yesterday by the Union of Concerned Scientists co-authored by University of New Hampshire researcher Cameron Wake asserts that global warming will substantially change the climate in the Northeast if heat-trapping emissions are not curtailed. The extent and reach of that change will depend on the choices that governments, businesses and citizens make today.

"The very notion of the Northeast as we know it is at stake," said Wake, research associate professor at the UNH Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans, and Space (EOS) Climate Change Research Center. Wake served as co-lead of the report along with research associate professor Katharine Hayhoe of Texas Tech University.

The two-year study, "Climate Change in the U.S. Northeast," is the first to be released by the Northeast Climate Impacts Assessment (NECIA), a collaboration between the UCS and a team of independent scientists from universities across the Northeast and the nation.

The study employed state-of-the-art science to project the regional consequences of continued reliance on energy sources such as coal and oil that produce high levels of heat-trapping emissions versus shifting to clean and renewable energy to power our economy.

Additional NECIA analyses are underway to assess the impacts of global warming on forests and agriculture, coastal and marine resources, human health, and urban centers across the Northeast, as well as options for mitigation and adaptation. UNH-EOS scientists Scott Ollinger and Barry Rock are involved in the assessment of future climate change on the forestry sector. A major synthesis report of these findings is expected in early 2007.

Said Wake, "The near-term emissions choices we make in the Northeast and throughout the world will help determine the climate and quality of life our children and grandchildren experience."

While the two emissions scenarios lead to similar consequences in early decades, the report finds the scenarios lead to starkly different outcomes as children born today reach middle age. The projections analyze the impacts in 30-year increments beginning in 2010.

Projections include average annual temperature increases of 6.5-12.5°F by the end of the

century under the higher emissions scenario and 3.5-6.5°F on the lower path; extreme heat days in cities, less snow, droughts, and extreme precipitation events.

To read the full report, visit www.climatechoices.org/ne.