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UNH Web Site Provides One-Stop Shopping On Climate Change Information

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DURHAM, N.H. -- How will changing climate affect ecosystems, human health, agriculture, and economic growth? As the topic of climate change rapidly becomes one of the world's more pressing issues, teachers, students, policymakers, community and business leaders, members of the media, and the public at large will need to become better versed in the subject and have easy access to the tools that provide answers to such questions.

To that end, EOS-WEBSTER, a University of New Hampshire web-based Earth science digital library, has launched a new site that is a compendium of the latest climate change information. The site provides one-stop shopping for the best scientific evidence to date on climate change, easy access to policy documents, concise summaries of specific climate change issues, and links to additional resources. At the heart of the site is state-of-the-art climate change modeling data that can be tailored to individual needs and downloaded free of charge.

The information available from the "Climate Changes in the 21st Century" collection can be used by a diverse group of people – from teachers and students at the elementary, middle, and high school level, undergraduate and graduate college students to scientists and researchers and members of the public. For example, teachers can use the scientific data in a variety of forms to show students how climate is expected to change over both short- and long-term timescales depending upon economic growth, energy usage, international cooperation, new technologies, etc.

The new collection is the result of a partnership between EOS-WEBSTER and the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR) in Boulder, Colorado. NCAR, under the sponsorship of the National Science Foundation (NSF) and in collaboration with the university community and several federal agencies, has developed a powerful supercomputer-based system called the Community Climate System Model (CCSM) to model Earth's climate and project global temperature rise and the effects of climate change in coming decades.

EOS-WEBSTER, which stands for "WEB-based System for Terrestrial Ecosystem Research," was developed through a \$3.5 million dollar grant from NASA and is now supported by UNH's Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans and Space (EOS). Some 250,000 Earth-science data products have been distributed to users worldwide since 1999.

The CCSM is yielding new insight into the complexities of the Earth's climate system and the

likely responses of our planet to natural and man-made influences. The model simulates all the major aspects of the global climate – the atmosphere, ocean, sea ice, and the Earth's land surface – using the most current data from climate scientists on different aspects of the Earth's climate.

The NCAR data will be a key part of the 2007 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Assessment Report. The IPCC is widely recognized as the world's foremost authority on climate change and released three previous assessment reports in 1990, 1995, and 2001. Because of the partnership between EOS-WEBSTER and NCAR, the critical data to be used in the new IPCC report is now available to the general public some two years before the next assessment is published.

Denise Blaha, a research associate in the Complex Systems Research Center at EOS, says that in her initial work developing the EOS-WEBSTER climate change site she discovered that while there was plenty of specific information to be found perusing the World Wide Web, there was no user-friendly, central repository of broad climate change information that could be used by the lay public.

Says Blaha, "People need to understand that scientists are in agreement that our climate is changing now, that human activities are contributing to these changes, and that projections for climate change in this century warrant governments getting involved and taking action. That's really an important piece with respect to creating this resource, because I think many people still believe there's a lot of debate on the topic."

To view the EOS-WEBSTER Climate Change Resource site, visit http://eos-webster.sr.unh.edu/climate_change.jsp. Step-by-step assistance on how to access and use the NCAR data and other resources is available online.