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UNH Releases Greenhouse Gas Inventory Report Technique Becomes A Model for Other Northeast Colleges

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DURHAM, N.H. – The University of New Hampshire’s Office of Sustainability Programs has released its Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory Report quantifying greenhouse gas emissions for the university and providing recommendations for future reductions.

Greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide, methane, water vapor, nitrous oxide, ozone and chlorofluorocarbons, trap heat from the sun and warm the Earth. Some greenhouse gases are produced naturally, but others are produced by human activities, particularly the burning of fossil fuels.

The greenhouse gas inventory was developed by the Office of Sustainability Programs and the non-profit group Clean Air-Cool Planet to clarify sources of emissions and guide short- and long-term reduction policies including education and research.

The “emission estimator technique,” developed by the UNH Climate Education Working Group, is the first of its kind in the nation. The technique has adapted international protocols to the unique scale and character of a university community. This technique has since been developed into a toolkit for estimating emissions used by more than 20 colleges in the Northeast, including University of Vermont, Bowdoin, Middlebury, Holyoke College, Harvard and MIT.

According to Office of Sustainability Programs Director Tom Kelly, “This inventory is part of our university commitment to making UNH a climate protection campus -- a public university that integrates the ethics, science, technology and policies of greenhouse gas emissions reductions into its community identity and practices.”

UNH President Ann Weaver Hart adds, “We are also striving to make UNH a model climate protection community by demonstrating that financial and environmental responsibility are not mutually exclusive goals.”

These values are corroborated by the USNH Board of Trustees approval of a combined heating and power (CHP) facility, currently underway and scheduled for operation in 2005. The CHP will provide both heat and electricity to the university.

The report projects that the CHP will result in a 40 percent decline in UNH’s emissions while saving the university \$35 million over the next 20 years. This level of emissions reductions will move UNH beyond internationally agreed upon reduction targets, including those established by the New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers Climate Action Plan.

The new emission levels will be achieved with existing technology deployed through a financially sound business model, “abolishing the myth that sustainability pits public and environmental health against economic productivity and competitiveness,” Kelly says. “The CHP facility represents the single most efficient way to reduce campus greenhouse gas emissions and serves as a central example of the university’s commitment to sustainability in general and climate protection in particular.”

UNH will continue to pursue additional avenues for overall emissions reduction outlined in the enclosed report as it strives together towards a sustainable future.

The 1990-2003 Green Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory Report exemplifies UNH’s commitment to this call to action, and is an important step toward synthesizing current understanding of human impacts on the environment, promoting research on greenhouse gas emissions and tracking progress over time.

For a copy of the report in PDF format, go to the Web site http://www.sustainableunh.unh.edu/climate_ed/greenhouse-gas-invnt/1990-2003_UNH_GHG_Report.pdf.

For more information, contact Tom Kelly, director UNH Office of Sustainability Programs, at (603) 862-4088.