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Learn More about Geographic Information Systems at UNH GIS Day Nov. 14

By Sharon Keeler
UNH News Bureau
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DURHAM, N.H. -- Geographic information systems (GIS) have changed the way people see the world. Businesses, schools, governments and organizations use GIS for a variety of applications, from modeling Earth processes and mapping natural resources at the global scale, to analyzing crime patterns and evaluating land use proposals at the local level.

The public is invited to come learn more about GIS and the geo-spatial sciences at the University of New Hampshire's GIS Day 2001 Wednesday, Nov. 14.

GIS Day is an international event held in more than 90 countries during National Geography Awareness Week to educate people of all ages about the important contributions that geo-spatial science-related technologies make in their lives.

GIS is a computer-based tool for mapping, analyzing, and displaying data related to locations on the Earth's surface. Simply put, a GIS combines layers of information to give people a better understanding of a place, so they can make better management decisions. For example, GIS can be used to help reach a decision about the optimum location of a new housing development that has minimal environmental impact, is located in a low-risk area, and is close to a population center.

"The use of computers and geographic information systems is particularly important in the current-day study of geography," says Michael Routhier, UNH information technologist and GIS Day events coordinator. "UNH and New Hampshire have been leaders in the development of GIS projects nationally

since the inception of the statewide GIS, known as GRANIT."

Many other research groups at UNH also use GIS and geo-spatial technologies in national and international level research projects for the study of global scale Earth phenomena such as hydrologic processes, ocean mapping, and land use and land cover change studies.

The UNH GIS Day 2001 events, sponsored by the New Hampshire Space Grant Consortium and UNH's Complex Systems Research Center, take place at the Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans and Space in Morse Hall on the Durham campus. The day is divided into two programs: 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. sessions for invited high school students, and 2 to 5 p.m. sessions for geo-spatial science professionals and the public.

Two-hundred high school students from Coe-Brown Academy in Northwood, The Community School in South Tamworth, Dover High School, Lebanon High School, Merrimack High School, Nute High School in Milton and Oyster River High School in Durham will attend the morning presentations. They will learn about the three key technologies used today in the geo-spatial sciences, -- GIS, GPS (global positioning system) and remote sensing -- will participate in a hands-on digital mapping tour of the Complex Systems Research Center's GIS and remote sensing laboratory, and get an overview of educational and career opportunities in the geo-spatial sciences from educators and professionals in the field.

A geo-science college fair at 2 p.m. will bridge into the afternoon session and the public, as well as students and professionals, is invited to meet with representatives from regional colleges and universities. Additional public tours will be held, more than 50 geo-spatial science maps and poster displays from education, urban planning, emergency management, resource management, science and industry presenters will be featured, and a series of professional hardware, software and data provider demonstrations and presentations will be offered by leading companies and organizations in geo-spatial science industry.

For more information, contact the UNH GIS Day 2001 events coordinator at 603-862-1792, or visit the UNH

GIS Day 2001 Web site at <http://gisday.sr.unh.edu>.

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