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Amy Seif

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MEDIA ADVISORY: UNH Professors Available to Comment on Recent Warm Weather and Global Change

By Amy Seif
Communication and Information Coordinator
Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans, and Space
603-862-5369

December 6, 2001

DURHAM, N.H. -- The Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans, and Space (EOS) at the University of New Hampshire houses the Climate Change Research Center and several prominent climate scientists, as well as the New Hampshire State Climatologist. The New England Regional Assessment report was coordinated and recently released by EOS as part of a national assessment of potential climate change impacts on different regions of the country.

New England Climatology, Provision of Climate Data, Extreme Weather
Barry Keim, (603) 862-3136

Barry Keim is an associate professor of geography and the New Hampshire State Climatologist. As State Climatologist, one of his primary tasks is to collect and archive high quality climate data for New Hampshire and then make these data available to the general public. He is also charged with educating the public on issues regarding the weather and climate, and he does this through the media and through presentations. Keim's primary focus is on extreme weather events in a changing climate, although he also has expertise in the impacts of climate and the climate-society interaction.

Says Keim: "On December 1 and 5, we broke Durham's (NH) all-time temperature record for those days. This fall has been the driest on record for Durham, looking at records that go back to 1895. This fall has been the second driest for the entire state. You can't say if the recent warm weather is due to global..."
climate change. There is no single event that can tell you much about climate change.

"The 90's have been an unusual decade; the climate has been warmer than any prior decade. Without a doubt, we are changing the atmospheric chemistry. However, the climate system is so complex and made up of feedback mechanisms that we don't understand very well. We are seeing warm temperatures right now because we are on the back side of a high pressure complex that is driving southern air into the area. There's brutally cold air over the Great Lakes and the Rockies right now, so if you averaged the temperatures out for the entire country, it would probably be near normal."

Predictions of Global Climate Change and its Consequences
George Hurtt, (603) 862-3136

George Hurtt, an assistant professor at EOS, combines mathematics and data to develop models for understanding and predicting the structure and dynamics of ecosystems. He models the carbon cycle and the effects of land use on climate, as well as the response of ecosystems to climate change. He is a co-author of the New England Regional Assessment of the Potential Consequences of Climate Variability and Change. He recently briefed the U.S. Congress on the state of scientific understanding regarding potential climate change in New England.

Says Hurtt: "There is a distinction between weather and climate that is important to keep in mind. Climate is the average of weather. Most scientists believe that the average weather is going to change, and the world will get warmer on average if greenhouse gases continue to rise."

Historical Climate Records
Cameron Wake, 603-862-2329

Cameron Wake, a research assistant professor at EOS, researches the development of climate records through the recovery and analysis of ice cores. Over the past decade, he has been involved in research expeditions to Nepal, China, Pakistan, the Canadian Arctic, Greenland and Antarctica. He is currently investigating the impact
of anthropogenic emissions on climate in New England through the AIRMAP project, as well as investigating the interactions of climate change and society's response.

Says Wake: "Climate is always changing, always has, always will. What is different now is that humans have become a major player in climate change, primarily through burning fossil fuels. We can't ascribe a warm week or month to human-caused climate change. However, the warm years that we've seen at the end of the 90's, and now this year, are certainly consistent with a world warmed by increased greenhouse gas due to human activities."

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