UNH New England Climate Initiative Receives $4M in Federal Funding

U.S. Sen. Judd Gregg treks to Mount Washington summit for announcement

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MT. WASHINGTON, N.H. -- The summit of Mount Washington was the backdrop for today's announcement of $4 million in federal funding for a University of New Hampshire project focusing on New England's variable climate.

U.S. Sen. Judd Gregg (R-NH) joined UNH and Mount Washington Observatory officials for the July 7 event. Gregg was credited with securing the federal dollars earmarked for AIRMAP.

The university's AIRMAP project (Atmospheric Investigations, Regional Modeling and Prediction) -- run by the Climate Change Research Center, located within the UNH Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans and Space -- received an initial allocation of $2 million from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) last year. This week, Gregg announced there will be an additional $2 million in the next NOAA budget.

AIRMAP's goal is understanding and predicting changes in climate, weather and air quality for the New England region. It began as the New England Climate Initiative, funded by $500,000 from the Iola Hubbard Climate Change Endowment, and has since evolved into AIRMAP.

"Through its Climate Change Research Center, the university has developed an expertise in the area of weather research," says Sen. Gregg, who chairs the Senate Appropriations panel that funds NOAA. "And as a result of UNH's cooperative ventures with the Mount Washington Observatory, New Hampshire has developed into a world leader in the area of weather research.

"The AIRMAP project will build on our previous success and expand our knowledge of atmospheric conditions and weather forecasting," Gregg continues. "The results of this research will hopefully lead to more

accurate forecasting that gives us advance notice of changing weather conditions in the New England region."

Climate Change Research Center Director Paul Mayewski explains, "In the last few years, our understanding of global scale climate change, both physical (temperature, precipitation, atmospheric circulation) and chemical (particles, gases, dissolved chemicals) has taken a quantum jump.

"The major challenge we now face is to understand these changes at the regional scale and to predict future changes and their impact on humans and ecosystems," he says. "Through AIRMAP, we will be able to undertake activities in northern New England, such as intensive air quality monitoring and high resolution weather analysis that build on existing networks and rapidly developing technological strengths all geared toward predictions both for daily weather forecasts and longer-term -- next month, next season, next year -- forecasts."

AIRMAP's specific activities will include:

- Reconstruction of detailed New England weather records for the past 250 years;
- Systematic, comprehensive and year-round air chemistry monitoring at sites from Mount Washington to the Seacoast;
- Application of global climate change models to the New England region;
- Research on global scientific issues ranging from climate history reconstruction using ice cores from the Greenland Ice Sheet to global weather circulation patterns like the North Atlantic, the Arctic Oscillation and the El Nino-Southern Oscillation;
- Field demonstration of weather forecast technologies still under development; and
- Integration of climate and air quality analyses with new weather prediction technologies.

Working with the UNH Climate Change Research Center on AIRMAP are the observatory, Plymouth State College's meteorology department, the NOAA Forecast Systems Laboratory and the NOAA Air Resources Laboratory.

Another UNH project, GroundWinds, also was the focus of remarks at the July 7 event. The project will include the use of LIDAR wind profile technology.

July 7, 1999

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