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University of Oklahoma Meteorology Team to Visit Croatia for Needs Assessment

NORMAN— Meteorology experts from the University of Oklahoma Weather and Climate Programs will visit Zagreb, Croatia, later this week to initiate a comprehensive modernization feasibility study for the Croatian Meteorological and Hydrological Service (DHMZ - Državni hidrometeorološki zavod).

Adverse weather, flooding activity and environmental hazards cost the Croatian economy approximately \$218 million annually, severely impacting the quality of life of its residents and reducing the potential for economic development. The feasibility study will ultimately provide critical information and justification required to proceed with obtaining the necessary funding to implement a national upgrade and modernization of the DHMZ services.

OU was selected by the DHMZ through an international, competitive bidding process. Led by Regents' Professor Ken Crawford, director of the Oklahoma Climatological Survey, the study team consists of a diverse group of meteorological experts from the National Weather Center, located on the OU Research Campus. OCS associate director Dr. Renee McPherson was included on the team of experts.

Last month, the team traveled to Croatia to launch the study, address administrative challenges and collect data. During the preliminary visit, the study was announced, and the plan for the study developed, including the current team deployment to Zagreb on Thursday.

The upcoming trip focuses on the needs assessment and will be carried out by a team of six project members. Through a series of interviews, site visits and forecasting observations, the team will document current capabilities and needs from the perspective of the DHMZ and its customers. While a majority of the team will remain in Croatia's capital city of Zagreb, several team members will travel throughout the country to observe key facilities, including several operational weather radar sites, road weather stations and the marine forecasting center in the coastal city of Split, Croatia.

The OU team will speak with DHMZ staff, users and ministry officials in the Croatian government to develop a prioritized set of requirements, which will lead to a full system design and recommendations for modernization.

As project manager, Crawford noted, "This is a unique opportunity to help our professional colleagues in southeastern Europe by drawing on the proven strengths and capabilities developed in Oklahoma at the National Weather Center. The Croatian study is that rare chance in life to make a difference in the lives of many."

The next steps include completion of a needs assessment report and initial preparations for an economic analysis report. A project team member will travel to Zagreb in the early

fall to collaborate with a Croatian economist on this task. The goal of the economic analysis report will be to quantify the costs and benefits that result from the full implementation of the proposed modernization plan.

This study has been organized through the recently established Office of Weather Programs and Projects at OU, which specializes in the transfer of meteorological knowledge to applied projects both nationally and internationally. OWPP is a part of the Weather Sphere -- a collaborative partnership centered in Norman, Okla., growing to become international leaders in weather and climate-related education and training, research and development, and operations and services.

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OU College of Atmospheric and Geographic Sciences Dean John Snow speaks to the (Croatia) state TV channel from the office of the director of the DHMZ.
From left to right, Vivian S. Walker, Deputy Chief of Mission, U.S. Embassy, Zagreb; Crawford; Snow; Ivan Cacic, Director, DHMZ; Nino Radetic, Associate Director, DHMZ; Hrvoje Mestric, Deputy Minister for Science, Croatia; Stjepan Vuk, Minister of Transport, Croatia.