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News Release

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UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA PRESENTS METEOROLOGICAL RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

NORMAN, Okla. – Representatives from the University of Oklahoma College of Atmospheric and Geographic Sciences presented recommendations for a comprehensive modernization of the Croatian Meteorological and Hydrological Service (DHMZ - Državni hidrometeorološki zavod) to the government of the Republic of Croatia in Zagreb, Croatia, on June 18.

“The modernization of the DHMZ and its resulting dividends are essential if the Republic is to become an economic force in the European Union,” said Ken Crawford, Oklahoma Climatological Survey director.

Throughout this yearlong study, a diverse team of meteorological experts, led by Crawford, evaluated the weather monitoring equipment now in place throughout Croatia and the forecasting techniques currently in use by the DHMZ. The team developed a plan to modernize all aspects of the Republic’s monitoring, analysis, forecasting and warning systems. The goal was to develop a roadmap to better services for the citizens of Croatia during a time of global environmental change to strengthen public safety and support growth of the Croatian economy.

“Establishing a state-of-the art monitoring and prediction system will project Croatia into a leadership position with its partners, particularly in central and southeastern Europe,” said Ivan Čačić, director of the DHMZ.

The final report for the “Meteorological and Hydrological Service Modernization Project in the Republic of Croatia” includes 10 cross-cutting recommendations that will contribute toward saving more lives, protecting property, reducing costs through advanced management techniques and enhancing economic development throughout Croatia.

“Croatia has challenging weather problems, such as strong thunderstorms and strong coastal winds, that impede economic activities such as tourism, agriculture and coastal shipping,” said John Snow, OU College of Atmospheric and Geographic Sciences dean. “Modernization of the DHMZ will increase the safety of the Croatian citizens through timely, more accurate warnings of severe weather and provide economic decision makers – such as shipping firms – with information to assist with routing, scheduling and energy use. The proposed modernization will be good for Croatia and good for southeastern Europe.”

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The next steps in the modernization program are for the Croatian government to review the recommendations, develop a timeline for implementation and secure funds from such agencies as the World Bank. Assuming that funds are made available during 2010, the Croatian government will procure state-of-the-art hardware and software from several American companies to implement recommendations from the feasibility study. By 2013, the DHMZ could be the leading national meteorological services organization in southeastern Europe.

The results of this feasibility study were delivered by the leadership of the OU Study Team — Crawford, Renee McPherson, Oklahoma Climatological Survey associate director, and Kodi Nemunaitis, program manager for the college's Office of Weather Programs and Projects.

A formal briefing took place in the Chamber of Economy Hall in Zagreb. The audience included ministers and staff from key ministries of the Croatian government, representatives of the U.S. Embassy to Croatia, the World Bank, members of the Croatian media and key staff of the DHMZ.

The study was organized and administered through the Office of Weather Programs and Projects at the University of Oklahoma, which specializes in the transfer of meteorological knowledge to applied projects both nationally and internationally. OU was selected by the DHMZ through an international, competitive bidding process. The study was funded by a grant to the DHMZ from the U.S. Trade and Development Agency. For more information, visit www.ustda.gov.

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Ivan Čačić, Croatian Meteorological and Hydrological Service (DHMZ) director and Ken Crawford, Oklahoma Climatological Survey director

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