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Media opportunity: 11:30 CDT, Monday, April 7, see below

WEATHER “SUMMIT” EXAMINES ROLE FOR RAPIDLY GROWING NEW NETWORK IN A CHANGING CLIMATE

Winnipeg – Weather experts from across Canada meet next week to discuss the need for better weather preparedness and potential uses of an innovative weather-monitoring network launched last summer by WeatherBug®, the CWB and Pioneer Grain.

The summit brings together public-sector officials with a stake in climate variability and weather forecasting, such as meteorologists, emergency measures strategists, agriculture researchers and natural resources representatives.

“These are the people who rely heavily on weather information, whether we’re working for farmers, industry or the general public,” said conference co-chair Guy Ash, the CWB weather analyst who developed the original concept of a network of on-farm weather stations, linked through the Internet. “With the increasing variability of our climate, we all have greater need for accurate and timely local weather information. By working together, we can vastly improve what’s available for everyone to access.”

The goal of the meeting, to be held April 7 and 8 at the CWB’s Winnipeg headquarters, is to engage current and future stakeholders in the WeatherBug network on the needs and requirements for better weather intelligence across Canada. Ken Crawford of the University of Oklahoma, a renowned expert on development of “mesonet” weather programs, will deliver a keynote presentation.

The new network has been greeted enthusiastically by farmers, schools and agricultural product retailers, who have created huge demand for the service. Bayer CropScience announced this week that it has signed on to deploy a network of 600 weather stations

on farms and businesses across Western Canada within the next three years. Within a six-month period, WeatherBug and the CWB have achieved commitments for 900 weather-monitoring stations, greatly surpassing initial projections to connect more than 600 stations over a three-year span.

The network – being built through the joint efforts of farmers, grain companies, schools, businesses, media partners and government agencies – is intended to augment the services of Environment Canada by providing greater density of monitoring stations and more frequent updates (every five seconds).

“We envision a national network that will leverage our technology to revolutionize weather gathering and information-sharing in Canada,” said conference co-chair Jim Anderson of WeatherBug. “The key is to build partnerships that can keep enhancing the critical mass of data that can be used to benefit everyone.”

WeatherBug users can access weather data and hourly forecasts through their home computers or personal handheld devices. The weather-tracking stations are wireless and solar-powered and require a high-speed Internet connection. They measure wind speed and direction, humidity, precipitation, temperature, barometric pressure and dew point. The general public can access live, local weather information and forecasts through the WeatherBug Web site at <http://weather.ca.weatherbug.com>.

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A media interview opportunity with conference co-chairs Jim Anderson of WeatherBug and Guy Ash of the CWB will be provided at 11:30 a.m. CDT on April 7 at the CWB office, 423 Main Street, Winnipeg. Examples of the technology will be on display and media can also view the CWB’s roof-top weather station.

Out-of-town media may participate via teleconference by calling 1-800-319-4610.

Please note: As a working session, attendance at the conference itself will be limited to invited participants only and closed to the public and media.

For more information, please contact:

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