

Contact:
Jason W. Anderson
Center for Environmental Leadership in Business
202.912.1464
j.anderson@celb.org



Center for Environmental Leadership in Business Praises Seattle's Protection of Global Biodiversity through "Climate Neutral" Strategy

SEATTLE/WASHINGTON, D.C., JULY 23, 2001 – The Center for Environmental Leadership in Business, a division of Conservation International (CI), applauds the city of Seattle for its commitment to become "climate neutral" in its electricity generation and use. The resolution to turn Seattle City Light into the nation's first major utility to produce zero net greenhouse gases is a bold step to reduce global warming and to protect global biodiversity.

As an active member of the Climate Neutral Network, the Center for Environmental Leadership in Business praises Seattle Mayor Paul Schell, the Seattle City Council and the other participating organizations for taking this leadership position. The Center is concerned that climate change will accelerate the loss of critical biodiversity. For example, tropical rain forests are predicted to be more susceptible to drought and wildfires. Over time, global warming may lead to the loss of entire plant and animal communities that are unable to adapt to changes in climate.

The Center is also concerned that the destruction of forests and other ecosystems is responsible for some 20 percent or more of global greenhouse gas emissions. The Center encouraged the city of Seattle to invest in biodiversity protection as a means to offset some of its CO₂ emissions. Protecting biodiversity is one of the most cost-effective strategies to offset emissions. Each acre of land that is not burned or cleared prevents several hundred tons of greenhouse gases from being emitted to the atmosphere.

Protecting biodiversity is one element of a climate protection strategy that should also include reducing emissions from the burning of fossil fuels, improving energy efficiency, and promoting renewable energy. Along those lines, the Center works closely with the private sector worldwide to reduce the climate impacts of their operations and products.

“The Pacific Northwest continues to be at the forefront in protecting biodiversity. As part of its ‘climate neutral’ strategy, we are encouraged that the city of Seattle recognizes the impact of global warming on biodiversity,” said Michael Totten, Senior Director of the Center’s Climate Program. “The private sector worldwide can follow this important example to implement better environmental business practices.”

“Cities and companies can provide a double benefit by offsetting carbon emissions through the protection and restoration of high-biodiversity landscapes,” added Totten.

About the organizations:

The Center for Environmental Leadership in Business was formed in partnership with the Ford Motor Company to engage the private sector worldwide in creating solutions to critical global environmental problems in which industry plays a defining role. The Center promotes business practices that reduce industry’s ecological footprint, contribute to conservation, and create business value for the companies that adopt them. To find out more about the Center for Environmental Leadership in Business, go to www.celb.org.

Conservation International (CI) is an environmental organization working in more than 30 countries around the globe to protect biodiversity and to demonstrate that human societies can live harmoniously with nature. CI develops scientific, policy and economic solutions to protect threatened natural ecosystems that are rich in biodiversity. Read more about CI at www.conservation.org.

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