

ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS BLAST CORPORATE ENVIRONMENTALISM AND THEIR PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A NATIONAL CARBON TRADING SCHEME

Environmental and social justice organizations call the proposal “The Cap-and-Trade Charade for Climate Change”

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CALIFORNIA (January 15, 2009) – As if oblivious to the economic crisis, the financial meltdown, and the failure of free market promises to address a range of environmental and social ills, today major corporations—some of whom have received billions of dollars of bailout money from tax payers—shamelessly promise that the free market is a perfect solution for addressing climate change. A handful of environmental organizations stood with them.

Environmental justice and social justice advocates reject the United States Climate Action Partnership (USCAP) proposal to establish a national cap-and-trade scheme to address climate change. “Reducing greenhouse gas emissions is without a doubt the most critical environmental and social issue of our time,” said Angela Johnson Meszaros of the California Environmental Rights Alliance, and the overwhelming body of evidence from prior pollution trading schemes proves that such a program will not reduce greenhouse gas emissions as called for by the international scientific community and it will not result in the needed shift to a clean energy economy, without which, the climate change problem will never be properly addressed.”¹

Over 150 organizations and individuals from around the United States and abroad have signed onto the California Environmental Justice Movement’s Declaration Against the Use of Carbon Trading Schemes to Address Climate Change,² which outlines the failures of pollution trading in general and carbon trading specifically. The Declaration also takes a strong stand against the use of offsets in trading schemes because of their documented failure to reduce emissions and their contribution to the destruction of communities in developing countries around the world.

“Pollution trading doesn’t work. We are baffled that at this late date these corporations would seek to replicate the resounding failure of the European Union Emissions Trading Scheme, which resulted in no net reductions of greenhouse gases, but caused higher energy costs and created windfall profits for the world’s worst polluters, and has exported environmental destruction around to the globe,” said Martha Dina Arguello executive director of Physicians for Social Responsibility-Los Angeles.³

¹ See a video of our critique at, <http://www.ejmatters.org/videos.html>

² <http://www.ejmatters.org/declaration.html>

³ See e.g., <http://www.iht.com/articles/2008/12/09/business/windfall.php>

USCAP is made up of some of the largest greenhouse gas polluters in the world, including General Electric, NRG Energy, Duke Energy, and ConocoPhillips. Environmental groups joining in the corporate effort include the Environmental Defense Fund, Natural Resources Defense Council, The Nature Conservancy, National Wildlife Federation, and World Resources Institute. “We are shocked that our environmental brethren are joining polluting corporations in this misguided effort,” said Jane Williams of California Communities Against Toxics.

“Political compromises that result in enacting fatally flawed policies like pollution trading are wrong and a mistake our communities cannot afford,” said Bill Gallegos, executive director of Communities for a Better Environment. “We must enact solutions that work, policies that truly reduce emissions and result in clean energy, including a carbon tax.”

“Our communities live on the front lines of these corporation’s toxic emissions. We live or die because of these policy choices. We expect these corporations not to care about our health, but we’re saddened and outraged that these environmental organizations are standing up to greenwash the failures of pollution trading,” said Dr. Henry Clark, executive director of West County Toxics Coalition. “They definitely don’t speak for us or our needs.”

The impartial Congressional Budget Office has found that a carbon tax could be implemented at a fraction of the cost of a trading program.⁴ Further, many challenge the idea that a “cap and trade” scheme is the way to address climate change including NASA Scientist James Hansen, Ralph Nader, New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg, and Vice President Al Gore. A loud alarm has also been sounded against offset use in these schemes.

“The same exact people and agencies that pushed deregulation and publicly stated that Enron could be trusted are pushing these state, regional, and federal carbon trading schemes,” said Luke Cole, executive director of the Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment. “Markets aren’t magic. The choices we make today helping businesses and utilities continue business-as-usual and allowing millions to be diverted to questionable offset projects across the globe, will shape every generation to come. If you’re not outraged about carbon trading, you’re not paying attention. We should be focusing on building clean, renewable energy instead.”

A number of signatories of the Declaration Against the Use of Carbon Trading briefed President-elect Obama’s transition team on these issues in Washington, DC in December, including Luke Cole, Bill Gallegos (Communities for a Better Environment), and Diane Takvorian (Environmental Health Coalition).

To obtain informational materials about the failures of pollution trading, offset use, and need for a carbon tax or fee, or to see the list of signatories, visit the Environmental Justice coalition’s website at <http://www.ejmatters.org>.

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⁴ <http://www.cbo.gov/ftpdocs/89xx/doc8934/02-12-Carbon.pdf>