



For immediate release, February 20, 2005

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New Tool for Reducing Campus Greenhouse Gas Emissions Unveiled

Clean Air - Cool Planet offers web-based resource

Clean Air - Cool Planet (CA-CP) today announced the release of a new resource to help colleges and universities take action to reduce the threat of global warming by cutting greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, saving money, and educating people about the issue.

Called the *Campus Climate Action Toolkit*, the on-line package of software, information and instructions, links, and case studies “will help people interested in making their educational institution more ‘climate friendly’,” according to Ned Raynolds, who manages CA-CP’s higher education program.

Raynolds made the announcement during this weekend’s 3rd Annual Northeast Climate conference for student climate activists at the University of Vermont, in Burlington, VT.

“College or university students, staff, faculty, administrators, trustees, alumni, community members, anyone can make use of this comprehensive guide to climate action on campus,” he said. In development for more than two years, the toolkit includes a spreadsheet for taking an inventory of emissions, a guide to identifying emissions reduction targets and developing a campus climate action plan, case studies of projects and measures from other institutions, and a variety of links to resources for specific action steps.

CA-CP, which advises dozens of colleges and universities across the region on cutting greenhouse gases (GHG) through its Campuses for Climate Action program, is partnering with Middlebury College, Tufts University, the universities of Vermont and New Hampshire, and Harvard, among others, in creating the toolkit. The Northeast’s leading nonprofit organization working to reduce the greenhouse gases that cause global warming, CA-CP also advises communities and corporations on action to prevent the build-up of heat-trapping gases in the atmosphere.

“The idea for the campus toolkit really came from students and faculty working on the goal of “carbon neutrality” for the Middlebury campus,” Raynolds said. “We had already worked with

UNH to develop the inventory tool, and thought expanding that into a comprehensive resource for campuses would be worthwhile, based on the experience at Middlebury, where the process really helped the students and faculty engage the college administration and staff in a very productive effort.”

The inventory tool, developed for CA-CP by Adam Wilson, a graduate student in environmental studies at UNH, has been used on scores of campuses in the region and as far away as California and the Carolinas. It allows an institution to use a spreadsheet to capture emissions from a variety of sources, including heating, cooling, electricity, steam, and transportation.

Institutions of all sizes, public and private, have been able to make significant reductions in emissions using the inventory tool to help them identify where changes can make the biggest difference, both in emissions reductions and money savings. Once an institution understands where their energy dollars are going, they can begin to prioritize the most cost-effective ways to reduce that, Reynolds said.

“Institutions often find energy improvements have a very good return on investment, especially when you figure in the global warming and public health benefits.”

“We wanted to make colleges and universities one of the priority groups we worked with,” said CA-CP Executive Director Adam Markham, “because they have such power to spread the word, to experiment and develop new resources, and because they are, in different ways, both businesses and communities.

“The successes they enjoy and the lessons they learn are often things we can then share with the corporations and communities we advise as well,” he said, noting that the New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers, in their landmark 2001 Climate Action Plan, specifically cited colleges and universities as important to the success of reducing greenhouse gases in the region.

“Now, as a result of close work with a number of important institutions, we’re able to offer an important new resource,” Markham said. Reynolds said that the toolkit is designed to be “continuously upgraded” by the people who use it.

“We are happy to be hosting this on our website (www.cleanair-coolplanet.org),” he said, “but it now really belongs to all those who use its resources and share their successes – and information about what can be improved and changed – so that it becomes ever more useful in the future.”

With that in mind, Reynolds notes, the on-line toolkit is designed so that institutions with a formal partnership with Clean Air - Cool Planet can sign in and make annotated entries, sharing technical resources, case studies and useful Web links.

For more information on the toolkit, its development and use, contact Reynolds at nraynolds@cleanair-coolplanet.org.