

For Immediate Release: 16 July 2007
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"Cool Counties" Launch Major Global Warming Initiative

*Calls for 80% Reduction in Carbon Emissions by 2050;
Urges Action by the Federal Government on Warming, Fuel Economy*

(Richmond, Va.)-Large counties from across the country today joined the Sierra Club in announcing the creation of the Cool Counties Climate Stabilization Declaration, a major new initiative to combat global warming. The counties - led by King County, Washington, Fairfax County, Virginia, and Nassau County, New York - pledge to reduce global warming emissions 80 percent by 2050, an achievable average annual reduction of 2 percent. The Cool Counties Climate Stabilization Declaration also urges the federal government to adopt legislation requiring an 80 percent emissions reduction by 2050 and calls for fuel economy standards to be raised to 35 miles per gallon within a decade.

"I am proud to stand here with the Sierra Club and my fellow county officials to launch a powerful commitment to tackle the most important challenge of our generation," said Ron Sims, King County Executive. "We no longer have time to waste. We know what it takes to reduce CO2 emissions in our regions and we owe it to our children and grandchildren to make the tough decisions and right investments now."

In the face of continuing inaction at the federal level to combat some of America's most pressing problems-global warming and our dangerous addiction to oil-the Sierra Club has been working closely with cities, states, and counties to implement policies that will help fight global warming, save consumers and taxpayers money, and encourage the use of clean, renewable energy. The Sierra Club's Cool Cities program encourages cities to sign on and implement the U.S. Mayor's Climate Protection Agreement, initiated by Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels in 2005. Nearly 600 cities have signed on to that agreement, 100 more than just a few months ago.

"The American public is clamoring for action to tackle global warming and fix our badly broken energy policy," said Carl Pope, Sierra Club Executive Director. "While our leaders in Washington remain asleep at the wheel, cities, states, and now counties are demonstrating extraordinary leadership as they come together to address these pressing national concerns. The county leaders joining us today understand the seriousness of the problems we face and are taking the kind of bold, visionary action that will protect both our climate and their own citizens."

In addition to the principles embodied in the Cool Counties Declaration itself-establishing a local greenhouse gas inventory and the target of an 80 percent reduction in global warming emissions by 2050, Fairfax County, working in conjunction with the Sierra Club, has produced a roadmap showing the kinds of concrete actions that counties can take to reduce their emissions. The roadmap lays out a template for reducing emissions through actions in seven key areas: energy efficiency, renewable energy, greening county vehicle fleets, land use, transportation, water conservation, and educational outreach.

"Responding to global climate change may appear to be a daunting task, but we as elected leaders can and must make strategic investments to reduce our own emissions and lead by example within our communities," said Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chairman Gerald E. Connolly. "The national call for a meaningful response to the threats of climate change has largely gone unmet by our federal leaders. By marshaling the collective efforts

of 3,066 counties, a campaign that begins today, we will deliver a cleaner, cooler future for the next generation."

"As we wait for Washington to act, local governments must take immediate action to address global warming," said Nassau County Executive Thomas R. Suozzi. "Nassau County, with its many coastal communities, is particularly vulnerable to climate change. But we are not alone in this battle. Cool Counties provides the framework we all need to reduce our emissions and help solve the problem."

The launch counties represent a diverse array of some of America's largest counties, including counties from every region in the country. Over 17,000,000 people across ten states live in the founding counties participating in today's event. In addition to King, Fairfax, and Nassau the founding counties include Arlington (VA), Montgomery and Queen Anne's (MD), Miami-Dade (FL), Alameda (CA), Cook (IL), Shelby (TN), Hennepin (MN) and Dane (WI). Today's launch is merely the start of the Cool Counties campaign and the lead counties-King, Fairfax, and Nassau-and the Sierra Club will begin a major effort to add new counties to the initiative, as well as provide new and existing members information to assist them in developing their implementation plans.

Leaders from counties across the country are eager to take action and had the following comments on the Cool Counties Declaration:

Alameda County, CA:

"We see the Cool Counties partnership as a key step towards local government leading the nation on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and preparing for climate change," said Scott Haggerty, President of Alameda County Board of Supervisors. "We're working with our cities through the Alameda County Climate Protection project to address climate change within our own county. With the State of California and our Cool Counties partners, we call on the federal government to set strong national goals, support state and local leadership, and realignment of national energy, transportation, and agriculture policies to stimulate new and existing clean technologies at a large scale."

Arlington County, VA:

"Arlington County adopted Fresh AIRE (Arlington Initiative to Reduce Emissions) on Jan. 1, committing to reduce County government emissions 10 percent by 2012," said Paul Ferguson, Arlington County Board Chairman. "The fight against global warming requires the commitment of every city and county across this nation. Arlington is proud to join the first wave of Counties that have agreed to an emissions reduction plan. The significance of this partnership lies in the fact that each of the localities has agreed to take inventory of their total greenhouse gas emissions and has committed to a plan for reducing emissions. It is important that local governments join together and act – because the federal government has failed to do so. We thank Fairfax County Chairman Gerry Connelly and King County Executive Ron Sims for their leadership on this issue."

Cook County, IL:

"Cook County is committed to leading by example in the effort to reduce greenhouse gasses," said Cook County Board President Todd H. Stroger. "As the County that houses the City of Chicago and its dynamic suburbs, we know that our efforts have the opportunity to immediately impact literally millions of people in the region – and our partnership in Cool Counties and our commitment to its goals is a linchpin in our efforts."

Dane County, WI:

"In Dane County, Wisconsin we proved you can be a cool county, reduce greenhouse air pollution and save taxpayers money at the same time," said Supervisor Brett Hulsey, Chair of the Dane County Finance Committee. "Our efforts like more efficient lighting and buildings save taxpayers \$150,000 in energy costs and reduce greenhouse air pollution by 5,000,000 pounds per year. We know if counties can do it, America can cut its greenhouse air pollution also."

Hennepin County, MN:

"Halting global warming will require the mobilization of individuals and institutions --- public and private --- around the world. This is America's counties' contribution to this historic undertaking," said Hennepin County Commissioner Peter McLaughlin.

Miami-Dade County, FL:

"Miami-Dade County has been a leader in the fight against global climate change for over a decade, including our recent decision to join the Chicago Climate Exchange, making a legally binding commitment to reduce our government's greenhouse gas emissions," said Natacha Seijas, Miami-Dade County Commissioner. "One of the most important lessons learned from our work over this time is a recognition of the need to coordinate local, regional and national climate policy to effect meaningful change. The Cool Counties Declaration does just that. I will encourage passage of this declaration in Miami-Dade county first and then look forward to working with leading governments across the country."

Montgomery County, MD:

"Montgomery County is a leader in the fight against global warming and we are making a difference through our initiatives to cut greenhouse gases," said Montgomery County Executive Isiah Leggett. "We are proud to join the Cool Counties Program as we continue to do all we can on the local level to safeguard our climate and set a course for future improvements. But, we can't do it alone. For our actions to be successful, the states and the Federal government must also be at forefront of efforts to reduce these harmful emissions."

Queen Anne's County, MD:

"Queen Anne's County, Maryland, Gateway to the Eastern Shore, is proud to be among the first Maryland counties to sign the U.S. Cool Counties Stabilization Declaration. We look forward to implementing the commitments we have made to achieve the 2050 goal and beyond," said Queen Anne's County Commissioner Carol R. Fordonski.

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