

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Green Groups to Schwarzenegger: You Don't Need to Pave the Environment to Pump the Economy**

### ***Governor Proposes End Run around California's Environmental Standards***

SACRAMENTO (January 7, 2009) – Environmental groups today urged Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger to uphold critical environmental safeguards affecting a dozen major transportation projects that could harm California's air, water and wilderness. In an alarming letter sent Tuesday, Governor Schwarzenegger asked President-elect Obama to "waive or greatly streamline National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) requirements consistent with our statutory proposals to modify the California Environment Quality Act (CEQA) for transportation projects." This dangerous precedent would allow the state to build the transportation projects without environmental review.

If such safeguards are removed at federal and state levels, billions of dollars of new, polluting projects could receive federal funding priority over approved clean projects that are designed to protect public health and natural resources. The governor has frozen roughly \$16 billion in existing, state-approved, environmentally reviewed projects that could be started this month and would provide badly needed jobs.

#### **Following are reactions from several of California's environmental leaders:**

Warner Chabot, CEO of the California League of Conservation Voters (CLCV):

"We urge Governor Schwarzenegger to uphold his long-standing principles that the economy and the environment are compatible. We can achieve a swift, effective economic stimulus without sacrificing our bedrock environmental laws and our health. We call on the Governor and the leadership of both parties in the state Senate and Assembly to provide the solutions that our state and nation require to solve this economic crisis."

Ann Notthoff, California advocacy director at the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC):

"All Californians care about the fiscal health of our state, but relaxing environmental law is not the way to do it. California's dedication to our workforce and investment in developing clean energy technology has built our economy into the eighth largest economy in the world. These are tough times, but it's times like this that we need to work toward what's best for California."

Kathryn Phillips, the Sacramento-based director of the California Transportation and Air Initiative for Environmental Defense Fund (EDF):

"Dirty projects that circumvent environmental protections are more costly in both the short and long run than clean ones. California should only fund projects that deliver good jobs and clean air instead of ones that will make matters worse."

Tina Andolina, legislative director for the Planning and Conservation League (PCL):

"At a time when our nation has embraced the concept of investing in a clean and green future, in energy independence and a better quality of life, Governor Schwarzenegger is insisting on steering our state in the opposition direction. He is holding the entire state budget hostage and

demanding that we throw out our basic public health and environmental safeguards to advance a few of his favorite pet projects. Then to suggest that the entire federal stimulus package sidestep environment review of any kind shows us clearly that he has turned his back on the promise of clean air and water.”

Dan Jacobson, executive director, Environment California:

“California can and should continue to lead the way in showing a clean environment and a strong economy go hand in hand. Relaxing environmental laws is the wrong way for California.”

Paul Mason, deputy director, Sierra Club California:

“This move flies in the face of Governor Schwarzenegger’s global warming agenda. He is wrong. We don’t have to weaken environmental and public health protection to stabilize California’s budget and keep people working. This looks like a play from the Bush/Cheney playbook.”

**Background:**

California has the largest economy in the United States as well as some of the highest environmental standards in the world. Governor Schwarzenegger has repeatedly said that the state’s economy cannot flourish without a clean and healthy environment, and that principle has guided decades of public policy in the state.

For instance, last month the California Air Resources Board adopted two air pollution rules that will save nearly 10,000 lives, more than \$40 billion in healthcare costs, prevent thousands of air pollution-related illnesses, and contribute to California’s global warming emission reduction goals. California also has some of the strongest coastal conservation laws, ensuring California’s Ocean Economy will continue to provide hundreds of thousands of jobs, more than \$40 billion in revenue, and more than \$11 billion in annual wages. Many state and federally funded programs are designed to protect California’s natural resources and save taxpayer dollars that can go back into the economy instead of toward cleaning up after poorly designed infrastructure projects.

**Related links:**

Ann Notthoff blogs on California legislation and advocacy:

<http://switchboard.nrdc.org/blogs/annotthoff/>

California League of Conservation blog: <http://www.ecovote.org/blog/>

Environmental Defense Fund blogs: <http://www.edf.org/page.cfm?tagID=576>

Paul Mason’s blog for Sierra Club California: <http://www.sierraclubca.blogspot.com/>

###

The Natural Resources Defense Council is a national, nonprofit organization of scientists, lawyers and environmental specialists dedicated to protecting public health and the environment. Founded in 1970, NRDC has 1.2 million members and online activists, served from offices in New York, Washington, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Beijing.

Environmental Defense Fund, a leading national nonprofit organization, represents more than 500,000 members. Since 1967, Environmental Defense Fund has linked science, economics, law and innovative private-sector partnerships to create breakthrough solutions to the most serious environmental problems. For more information, visit [www.edf.org](http://www.edf.org).

The political muscle of the environmental movement in America's leading environmental state, the California League of Conservation Voters (CLCV) uses sophisticated campaign tools to help elect pro-environment officials – and to hold them accountable for passing legislation to protect health, communities and the environment. CLCV publishes the annual California Environmental Scorecard, which rates the actions of every state legislator and the Governor on the state's environmental priorities each legislative year. For more information, please visit [www.ecovote.org](http://www.ecovote.org)

The Planning and Conservation League (PCL) is a 501(c)(4) nonprofit lobbying organization, working in the State Legislature and at the administrative level in state government to enact and implement policies to protect and restore the California environment.

Environment California is a statewide, citizen-based environmental advocacy organization. Our professional staff combines independent research, practical ideas and tough-minded advocacy to overcome the opposition of powerful special interests and win real results for California's environment. Environment California draws on 30 years of success in tackling our state's top environmental problems.

Sierra Club California represents nearly 200,000 California Sierra Club members before the Legislature, Governor and state agencies.