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U.S. Stands By While the Kyoto Protocol Goes Into Effect

The Kyoto Protocol goes into effect today, as the international community confirms the serious threat of global warming and takes action to move toward a cleaner energy future.

"As the Kyoto Protocol goes into effect today, the rest of the developed world is affirming the serious threat of global warming and taking action to move forward," said AkPIRG's Steve Cleary. "Unfortunately, the U.S. has its head stuck in the sand while the rest of the world moves into the next millennium with clean energy solutions."

The "Kyoto Protocol," a protocol of the UN Framework Convention on climate change adopted in Rio de Janeiro in 1988, achieves the status of a treaty in force and in terms of international law today. Despite the fact that the U.S. is responsible for one-quarter of all the pollution that causes global warming, Congress and the Bush administration have taken no steps to reduce global warming emissions, and the U.S. is not a participating member of the Protocol.

According to a new report released today by the state PIRGs, */Redirecting America's Energy: The Economic and Consumer Benefits of Clean Energy Policies/*, enacting a national standard of 20% renewable energy by 2020 could save American consumers more than \$16 billion on electricity bills, create an average of 154,000 net new jobs per year, reduce global warming emissions from power plants by 27 percent, and save residential, commercial, and industrial consumers \$11 billion on natural gas bills by 2020.

"For consumers, U.S. inaction represents a missed opportunity to save money and create jobs by implementing clean energy solutions," said Steve Cleary of AkPIRG.

Scientists are connecting the dots between global warming and dramatic weather changes, which impact communities in the form of decade-long droughts in the West, reduced snow pack in the North, reduced crop yield in the Midwest, and severe floods and hurricanes in our coastal states. These scientists warn that doing nothing to reduce global warming pollution will increase the severity of these global warming impacts. Extreme weather events cost Alaska nearly \$20 million in 2002, a cost that could increase if the U.S. does nothing to curb global warming.

"It's time for American technology developers and investors to start innovating technology that will increase our standard of living while decreasing global warming emissions," said PIRGER. "It's time to establish national emissions goals for reducing global warming pollution. The Climate Stewardship Act is a good first step toward solving the real and serious environmental threat posed by global warming."

The Climate Stewardship Act, sponsored by Senators John McCain of Arizona and Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut, would cap global warming pollution at 2000 levels by 2010, and set up an emissions trading system.