

For immediate release:
June 20,2006

Contact:

Angela Altomonte, U.S. PIRG.....202-546-970
Eric Olmstead, Trout Unlimited-Mountaineer Chapter.....304-637-7201
Rev. Dennis D. Sparks, WV Council of Churches.....304-344-3141
Judy Bonds, Coal River Mountain Watch.....304-854-2182
Janice A. Nease, Coal River Mountain Watch.....304-854-2182
Myra Bonhage-Hale, La Paix Herb Farm.....304-269-7681

****NEW REPORT: WEST VIRGINIA GLOBAL WARMING POLLUTION UP 115% SINCE 1960****

Power Plants, Cars Main Culprits Cited in Report

Washington, D.C.—Global warming pollution in West Virginia jumped 115% between 1960 and 2001, according to *The Carbon Boom*, a new analysis of government data released today by the U.S. Public Interest Research Group (U.S. PIRG). Increased coal emissions and oil emissions were responsible for 86% and 14% of this increase, respectively.

“When you find yourself in a hole, the first thing you should do is stop digging. To protect future generations from the effects of global warming, we need to stop this trend of increasing pollution,” said Angela Altomonte, U.S.PIRG West Virginia Spokesperson.

“Here in West Virginia our greatest natural resource is not coal or timber, but rather our water. We have thousands of miles of reproducing trout streams, making us one of the greatest trout fisheries here in the east. But, climate change is a major player now. Our native brook trout require cold water and with global warming expected to raise temperatures, these streams won’t have trout for much longer. I have always hoped that my children would be able to experience all that West Virginia has to offer, however, I cannot help but feel that trout fishing will eventually become a fairy tale for them,” Eric Olmstead, president of the Mountaineer Chapter of Trout Unlimited.

“Until our passion to protect the earth and the air we breathe catches up with our quest for energy, global warming will continue to increase and West Virginia will continue to make its unfortunate and unnecessary contribution,” Reverend Dennis D. Sparks, executive director of West Virginia Council of Churches.

Existing energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies could substantially reduce global warming pollution, but the federal government has so far rejected mandatory pollution limits.

Using data compiled by the U.S. Department of Energy's Oak Ridge National Laboratory, U.S. PIRG's new report examines trends in carbon dioxide emissions and fossil fuel combustion nationally and by state between 1960 and 2001, the most recent year for which state-by-state data are available. Major findings of the report include:

- West Virginia emitted 47.8 million metric tons of carbon dioxide in 1960; by 2001, the state's emissions had grown to 102.7 million metric tons, an increase of 115%.
- Nationwide, emissions of carbon dioxide nearly doubled between 1960 and 2001, jumping from 2.9 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide in 1960 to almost 5.7 billion metric tons in 2001, an increase of 95%.
- A dramatic growth in oil combustion in the transportation sector and coal combustion for electricity generation fueled the rapid increase in U.S. carbon dioxide emissions between 1960 and 2001. Increased coal and oil combustion each accounted for 40% of the increase in carbon dioxide emissions.
- In West Virginia, increased coal combustion—primarily to generate electricity—accounted for 86% of the state's increase in carbon dioxide emissions from 1960 to 2001. Coal has the highest carbon content of any fossil fuel, meaning that burning coal for electricity produces more carbon per unit of energy than does burning oil or natural gas. Over the four decades analyzed, as demand for electricity boomed, West Virginia added 12,426 megawatts of new coal-burning power plant capacity. Increased combustion of oil has contributed to 14%, of the state's growth in emissions from 1960 to 2001.

The early effects of global warming are evident in West Virginia and worldwide. According to NASA, 2005 was the warmest year ever recorded. Left unchecked, global warming threatens to

- Cause more frequent and more severe heat waves in West Virginia that would result in a higher number of patients suffering from heat stress and stroke.
- Increase the occurrence of flooding in West Virginia, which would increase erosion and spread pollution from runoff areas devoted to manufacturing, coal mines, and oil and gas extraction.

The U.S. could substantially reduce its global warming pollution by making cars go farther on a gallon of gas and using clean, renewable energy sources.

“Our government, both state and federal, is pushing so called ‘clean coal technology’, which is not the answer to our environment and global warming problems. Not only am I concerned with where they intend to sequester the carbon dioxide pollution, there's no plan for toxics like mercury and sulfur oxide, that would be emitted in the process,” Janice A. Nease, executive director of Coal River Mountain Watch.

Oil companies, automakers, and the electric generation industry continue to fight common sense solutions to global warming, Altomonte pointed out. For instance, ExxonMobil gave at least \$15 million between 1998 and 2004 to groups working to confuse the public about the broad

scientific consensus on the causes of and solutions to global warming.

Today, Rep. Henry Waxman (CA) introduced the Safe Climate Act, which provides a long-term, science-based solution to global warming. The bill requires the U.S. to reduce its global warming pollution by 15% from today's levels by 2020 and by 80% by 2050. To achieve these targets, the bill calls for improved energy efficiency and a greater reliance on clean, renewable energy sources, while providing companies flexibility in meeting the pollution-reduction goals through a "cap-and-trade" program.

Rep. Waxman commented, "PIRG's report shows state-by-state how the problem has been growing for decades. Now is the time to heed the scientists and start healing the climate. The Safe Climate Act will dramatically reduce emissions of greenhouse gases to the levels needed to avoid dangerous global warming. We start now and increase improvements over time, as we replace dirty old energy sources with clean renewable energy and energy efficiency."

"We need to stop killing ourselves with coal and switch to clean renewable energy if our children are to have a chance for life. We are selling our children's feet to buy ourselves fancy shoes," says Judy Bonds, president of Coal River Mountain Watch.

"We are all connected. What affects the air, the trees, the rivers and creeks affects the farms. As a woman who runs an herb farm, I understand the connection between increased temperatures and farms. There are children in Logan County suffering from devastation of the flattened mountains and hopes," shared Myra Bonhage who runs the La Paix Herb Farm in Alum Bridge.

"Our leaders urgently need to take decisive action to stop the worst effects of global warming. We call on Representatives Rahall, Mollohan and Capito to support the Waxman bill," concluded Altomonte.

U.S. PIRG is a nationwide non-profit, non-partisan public interest advocacy organization.

The report is available at www.uspirg.org