



CLIMATE WATCH

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Executive Director's Column

NEW POLICY BRINGS NEW CONCERNS

By John Shlaes

From the actions of last month it is obvious that the Clinton administration is embarking on a series of new and aggressive policies related to climate change. On Earth Day, the president said, "I reaffirm my personal, and announce our nation's commitment, to reducing greenhouse gases to their 1990 levels by the year 2000." He expressed his intent to have the administration produce a "cost-effective" plan by August that "can continue the trend of reduced emissions."

On the heels of that announcement, Undersecretary of State designate Tim Wirth testified before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs on May 18 and again to the House Committee on Energy and Commerce on May 26. Former Senator Wirth indicated that the administration

is "committed to seeing the [Framework] Convention promptly implemented and, if necessary, strengthened." He indicated that "joint implementation would be an important piece of the solution" and could be used "to offset domestic emissions of greenhouse gases," perhaps signaling the establishment of a new environmental currency and further international negotiations. EPA Deputy Administrator Robert Sussman and Susan Tierney, the new DOE assistant secretary for domestic and international policy, also testified. Both hearings concentrated on the methods or institutional structures the administration will use to reduce emissions.

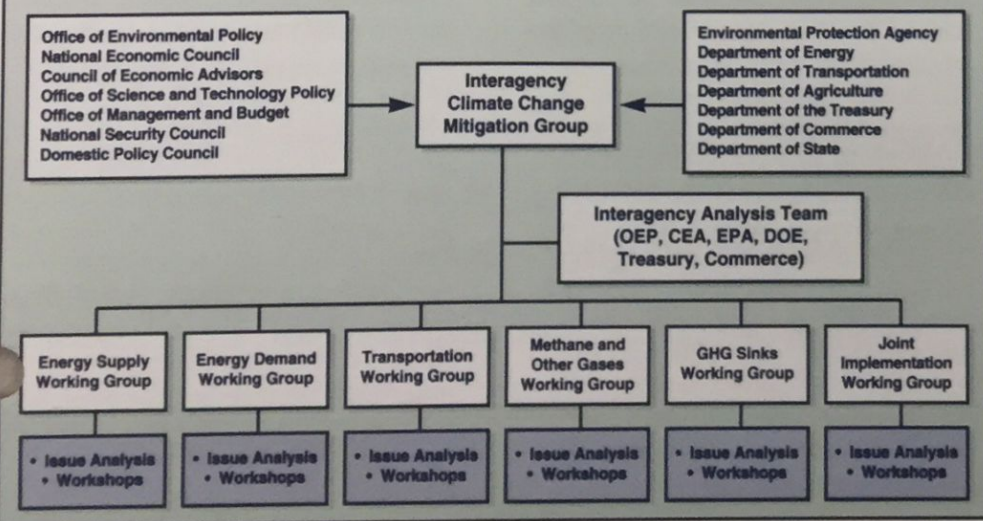
The administration has set up a new Interagency Climate Change Mitigation Group (see chart below) with six working groups, each with designated lead federal agencies: 1) energy supply (DOE); 2) energy demand (DOE and EPA); 3) transportation (DOE, DOT and EPA); 4) methane and other gases (EPA); 5) greenhouse gas sinks (Agriculture); and 6) joint implementation (State). These groups will review underlying assumptions for the

existing U.S. National Action Plan, baseline estimates and analytical instruments. Most important, the working groups will also examine "additional measures" the administration may employ both domestically and internationally to reduce greenhouse gases. The administration will select some industries to participate in the six "by-invitation-only" working groups. These groups will meet three times, with the first meetings held on June 10-11. Those not invited to participate in the working group meetings can attend special sessions for the general public.

Representative Mike Synar (D-Okla.) indicated in the May 26 hearing that he would soon introduce legislation that would establish a system of tradeable permits and offsets for greenhouse gas emissions. He and Representative Jim Cooper (D-Tenn.) made a similar proposal, which was fashioned after the Clean Air Act trading scheme, during the last session of Congress.

Commenting on the president's initiative, some environmentalists have indicated that the president will be judged on his ability to "set the United States on a course of action that would keep emissions below 1990 levels well beyond the year 2000." A group of 16 environmental groups has gone even further, calling for 21 measures the president should undertake to achieve his goal. A close examination of the environmentalists' options leads to the conclusion that they contemplate additional actions that could consist of new federal taxes, added spending or additional regulatory measures. These options include measures such as: 1) decoupling utility profits from electricity sales and including externalities in energy-planning; 2) removing subsidies for mature, conventional energy resources, such as fossil fuels and nuclear energy; 3) increasing fuel economy standards to 45 miles per gallon; and 4) extending envi-

Interagency Climate Change Mitigation Plan Process



Continued on third page

SINGER CONFERENCE CALLS FOR SCIENTIFIC INTEGRITY

On May 24 and 25, the Science & Environmental Policy Project (SEPP) and the International Institute of George Mason University sponsored a conference entitled "Scientific Integrity in the Public Policy Process." The conference focused on the problem of scientific bias and its effect on the media, public opinion and public policy. It also examined current institutional standards and strategies for preserving scientific integrity in the legislative process.

The conference featured panel discussions with scientists and journalists, including Dr. S. Fred Singer, founder and president of SEPP; Dr. Robert Jastrow, president of the George C. Marshall Institute; Prof. Richard Lindzen of MIT; and Dr. Philip Abelson, deputy editor of *Science* magazine.

Panels discussed the problems in the use of scientific research on global warming and ozone depletion, as well as on genetically engineered products and cancer risk from toxics.

Organizers expect to publish speeches and panel presentations in an anthology of environmental readings. For more information, contact Candace Crandall at 703/527-0130. ●

INDUSTRY INITIATIVES: NATIONAL AIRPORT ELECTRIFICATION PROJECT WILL HAVE MAJOR EFFECT ON AIR QUALITY

The Electric Power Research Institute and the Edison Electric Institute have announced plans to cooperate with several airport authorities across the country to study how replacing conventional fossil-fueled ground vehicles with electric counterparts can reduce air pollution and help cities improve air quality. Boston's Logan International Airport is the first to be studied. Other plans include studies of Los Angeles International and LaGuardia.

Off-road source emissions have a significant impact on air quality. Many airport vehicles spend a majority of time idling and accelerating, producing high emissions rates for short distances. Replacing ground support equipment, shuttles, personnel and burden carriers with electric models could cut some emissions by almost 100 percent. For example, replacing a diesel-driven Northwest Baggage Tractor with an electric model would reduce carbon monoxide emissions by about 98 percent, nitrous oxide by over 97 percent, and both VOC and particulates by over 99 percent. Sulfuric oxide emissions

would be decreased about 66 percent and carbon dioxide emissions would fall by about 89 percent.

With more than 850 airports in the United States serviced by at least 400 cargo carriers and supported by 1,400 equipment manufacturers, the environmental impact of electric ground support systems and vehicles will be significant. ●

Climate Watch is published monthly by Global Climate Coalition, an organization of business trade associations and private companies established to coordinate business participation in the scientific and policy debate on global climate change.

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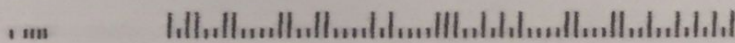
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