

For Immediate Release
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Earth Day is Cause for Celebration: Environmental Trends Mostly Positive

SAN FRANCISCO – The ninth annual *Index of Leading Environmental Indicators*, released today by the Pacific Research Institute and the American Enterprise Institute, shows that the environment continues to be America's single greatest policy success. Environmental quality has improved so much, in fact, that it is nearly impossible to paint a grim, gloom-and-doom picture anymore.

Environmental quality is improving steadily and in some cases dramatically in key areas:

- Average vehicle emissions are dropping about 10 percent per year as the fleet turns over to inherently cleaner vehicles, including modern SUVs.
- Ninety-four percent of the population is served by water systems that have reported no violations of any health-based standards.
- There has been a 55-percent decline in toxic releases since 1988, even while total output of the industries covered by this measurement has increased 40 percent.
- Despite most popular assumptions, U.S. air quality trends are found to be at least equal, if not slightly better, than in Europe.

This year's *Index* includes a list of the media's best environmental reporting. Featured outlets include *Boston Globe*, *Washington Post*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *The New Republic*, and *Wall Street Journal*.

There have also been notable improvements in government reporting, with the EPA's first-ever composite on national trends and state-based initiatives to improve water-quality monitoring.

Private conservation efforts, such as Ducks Unlimited and the Peregrine Fund, and private water trusts have been highly successful.

And recent findings in climate-change science also give reason for hope. Because the climate models have been based on flawed economic assumptions, there is even greater uncertainty now in the range of CO₂ emissions projections. This means the prognosis is probably not as grim as conventional wisdom would have us believe.

The *Index* shows that one of the few areas to show a decline in quality is that of public lands. While funding and land allotments have increased, quality has deteriorated by most significant measures. The root of the problem is an excess

of political management, and the answer can be found in innovative solutions such as land trusts and resource leases.

This year's *Index* also includes a special section comparing air quality in the U.S. and Europe.

“Doomsaying and know-nothingism get better headlines and work well for direct-mail fundraising,” said lead author Steven Hayward, “but a serious look at the data helps us appreciate how far we’ve come, and helps set priorities for the next generation of environmental activism.”

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To download a copy of this year's *Index of Leading Environmental Indicators*, please visit <http://www.pacificresearch.org/jump/enviro04/cm.html>.

To purchase a hard copy of the *Index* for \$14.95 please call 415/989-0833.

To arrange an interview with authors Steven F. Hayward, Michael De Alessi, Holly Lippke Fretwell, Brent Haglund, Joel Schwartz, Ryan Stowers, or Samuel Thernstrom, please contact Susan Martin at 415/955-6120 or smartin@pacificresearch.org.

About PRI

For 25 years, the Pacific Research Institute for Public Policy (PRI) has championed individual liberty through free markets. PRI is a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to promoting the principles of limited government, individual freedom, and personal responsibility.

About AEI

Founded in 1943, the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research is dedicated to preserving and strengthening the foundations of freedoms, limited government, private enterprise, vital cultural and political institutions, and a strong foreign policy and national defense – through scholarly research, open debate, and publications.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

STEVEN F. HAYWARD

Steven F. Hayward is the F.K Weyerhaeuser fellow in law and economics at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, D.C., and senior fellow at the Pacific Research Institute. He had been the principal author of the *Index of Leading Environmental Indicators* since its launch in 1994. Hayward writes AEI's regular newsletter, *Environmental Policy Outlook*, and has written for a wide range of publications including *National Review*, *Weekly Standard*, *The Public Interest*, *Regulation*, and *Policy Review*. His newspaper articles have appeared in the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Baltimore Sun*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *Chicago Tribune*, and dozens of other daily newspapers. Hayward holds a Ph.D in American Studies and an M.A. in Government from Claremont Graduate University in California. He has testified about environmental issues before the U.S. Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, the House Government Reform Committee, several state legislatures, and numerous local planning bodies.

MICHAEL DE ALESSI

Michael De Alessi is director of natural resource policy for the Reason Public Policy Institute in Los Angeles, and a fellow in environmental studies at the Pacific Research Institute. He is the former director of the Center for Private Conservation at the Competitive Enterprise Institute. De Alessi specializes in water policy, marine conservation, and wildlife issues. He is the author of *Fishing for Solutions* (London: Institute of Economic Affairs, 1998), and his articles have appeared in such publications as *New Scientist*, *International Herald Tribune*, *The Wall Street Journal Europe*, and *The Asian Wall Street Journal*. He received a B.A. in Economics and an M.S. in Engineering Economic Systems from Stanford University, and an M.A. in Marine Policy from the Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science at the University of Miami.

HOLLY LIPPKE FRETWELL

Holly Lippke Fretwell is a research associate at PERC (the Property and Environment Research Center) and an adjunct professor at Montana State University. She was formerly with Northwest Economics Associates in Vancouver, Washington, examining timber export regulation in the Pacific Northwest. She has consulted for organizations including Plum Creek Timber and the Center for International Trade in Forest Products. The author or coauthor of numerous articles on natural resource issues, Fretwell currently emphasizes public lands management in her research. She has published in professional journals and the popular press including the *Wall Street Journal*, *Journal for Environmental Economics and Management*, *Duke Environmental Law and Policy Forum*, *Journal of Forestry*, and *Consumers Research*. She has presented papers promoting the use of markets in public land management and has provided expert testimony on the state of our national parks and the future of the Forest Service. She has a bachelor's degree in political science and a master's degree in resource economics from Montana State University.

BRENT HAGLUND

Brent Haglund is president of the Sand County Foundation. His research interests include ecosystem-level effects of weather modification, fire management, and wildlife populations. Haglund is the author of *Wild Wisconsin*. He served as ecological consultant to the Wisconsin Legislative Council on non-point water pollution, a member of the Wisconsin Sesquicentennial Commission, and a private sector conservation advisor to the Cabinet of Premier Nick Greiner, New South Wales, Australia. He is currently a member of the Executive Committee of the Wisconsin Public Utility Institute. Haglund earned a Ph.D in ecology from the University of Georgia.

JOEL SCHWARTZ

Joel Schwartz is a visiting fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, and the author of *No Way Back: Why Air Pollution Will Continue to Decline* (AEI, 2003). He is a former executive officer of the California Inspection and Maintenance Review Committee, a government body charged with evaluating California's Smog Check program. He received his B.A. in chemistry from Cornell University and an M.A. in planetary science from the California Institute of Technology.

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Samuel Thernstrom is managing editor of the American Enterprise Institute Press and director of AEI's W. H. Brady Program on Culture and Freedom. He served as director of communications for the White House Council on Environmental Quality in 2001 and 2002. He is a graduate of Harvard University.



What is the Pacific Research Institute?

Located in the heart of San Francisco, Pacific Research Institute (PRI) is a non-profit 501(3)(c), non-partisan, free-market public policy think tank. Since its founding in 1979, PRI has remained steadfast to the vision of a free and civil society where individuals can achieve their full potential. PRI champions freedom, opportunity, and personal responsibility for all individuals by advancing free-market public policy solutions.



What Are PRI's Key Policy Areas?

- **Business and Economics** – Empowering individuals and promoting economic growth by examining the impact of taxes, regulations, and government programs.
- **Education** – Advancing educational opportunities for all children through high academic standards, accountability, and parental choice.
- **Environment** – Sustaining the trend toward a cleaner environment through local action, property rights, technology, private initiative, and sound policy.
- **Health Care** – Promoting free-market competition in the health care field so that medical innovation and quality care can thrive.
- **Social Policy & Women's Studies** – Dispelling patronizing myths and politically correct ideologies.
- **Technology** – Identifying and limiting harmful government regulations in the technology sector.



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