

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 1, 2012

CONTACT:

Kathryn Phillips, Sierra Club California (916) 893-8494, kathryn.phillips@sierraclub.org

Jim Metropulos, Sierra Club California (916) 557-1100 x109, jim.metropulos@sierraclub.org

**LEADING ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS LAUNCH CAMPAIGN TO ROLL
BACK ANTI-ENVIRONMENTAL RHETORIC**

Local, State Groups Lead Half-Day Hearing on the State of California's Environment

Sacramento, CA --State, regional and local environmental, environmental justice, and public health groups joined forces today to push back on the strong anti-environment rhetoric of heavily funded special interests in the State Capitol.

“The radical right and big polluters, and their representatives, people who have never supported efforts to clean up the air and water in this state, have taken advantage of a down economy. They have used that as a hammer to force regulators and others to retreat from the business of protecting California,” said Kathryn Phillips, director of Sierra Club California. “They’ve kept a constant drumbeat of demands to roll back environmental protections.

“Today we begin our organized response. Our goal is to give voice to the majority of Californians who are tired of waiting for clean air, clean water and a toxics free environment. Our goal is to give voice to the majority of Californians who want their children to have parks and open space and a state still rich in natural beauty and healthy forests.”

The groups’ effort, called the Protect California Campaign, launches with a half-day update on the environment for legislators and staff at the Capitol. The update includes panels of experts focused on air pollution, water pollution, toxics exposure, state parks closures, and forest clear cutting.

“Environmental issues are like motherhood and apple pie. Everybody loves clean air, clean water and open space--except for polluters,” said Dan Jacobson, legislative director of Environment California. “The special interests that would profit by destroying California’s environment have been using the power of disinformation to run roughshod over some of our strongest allies. Now we’re here to help push back.”

During the day’s first panel on air pollution, Kevin Hall, Executive Director of the Central Valley Air Quality Coalition will draw attention to an issue which Californians consistently rank as one of their greatest health concerns. “More than 90 percent of Californians live in areas that suffer from health threatening air pollution. Children in this state have among the highest asthma rate in the country, and recent research has linked air pollution to heart disease, brain tumors, and low birth weight,” Hall said. “Health costs in this state could be dramatically cut just by finishing the job of cleaning up our air.”

The Protect California Campaign groups will build on today's hearing with a series of events and briefings at the Capitol and around the state to educate government officials and staff about environmental problems and the need for solutions.

###