



For Immediate Release: Monday, Dec 15, 2008
For Info, Contact: Christina Montorio, (732) 991-2285

Coalition of Environmental, Public Health, Community, and Worker Advocates Collects Diesel Truck Emissions Data Near Schools, Port Neighborhoods

New "Blue-Green" alliance to use findings to urge NY-NJ Ports, political leaders to take bold action, replace broken port trucking system with a sustainable 21st century business model

NEWARK – Following last week's disturbing front-page reports in *USA Today* detailing school children's exposure to air pollution and toxic chemicals nationwide, several dozen environmentalists, community residents, port drivers, and students from George Washington Carver and Hawkins Street schools today monitored emissions from dirty diesel port rigs outside several congested routes in the Ironbound and the South Ward. The Coalition for Healthy Ports, a diverse New Jersey alliance, sponsored the "Truck Count" to raise awareness of the dangerous effects that pollution from goods movement has on local port communities, drivers, and their families, many of them immigrant and low-income.

"Every week, thousands of trucks going to and from the port spew toxic diesel emissions that we know are a major cause of asthma," said Cynthia Mellon, a resident and organizer with the Ironbound Community Corporation. "Until the Port becomes a better neighbor, residents and workers will get sicker, and our kids will literally gasp for air."

The 20 local, state and national organizations united in the Coalition for Healthy Ports will soon analyze and distribute the data to urge the NY & New Jersey Port Authority to react swiftly on the broken trucking system responsible for "diesel hot spots" that have led to soaring rates of childhood asthma and other respiratory illnesses.

"The health impacts from diesel soot in our state will soon have an annual cost of approximately \$4.8 billion, and our ports are a major source of this pollution," said Amy Goldsmith, Director of the New Jersey Environmental Federation and the Clean Water Fund, who also serves as Chair of the Coalition for Healthy Ports. "We cannot afford to bury our heads in the sand."

The Coalition is pushing for officials here to adopt a comprehensive clean-air plan modeled after a landmark Port of Los Angeles policy developed under the leadership of Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa. The LA "Clean Trucks Program" has been lauded by economists and environmentalists alike, as the green-growth initiative launched on Oct 1 will reduce emissions from port trucking by 80%, deliver over \$5 billion to the regional economy, and drastically reduce security risks through key enforcement provisions that require a polluting industry to take responsibility for clean vehicles and its workforce. Villaraigosa has been widely praised in the press by clean-air and labor advocates for rejecting band-aid fixes that will fail to sustain clean-up or generate middle-class jobs.

Newark Councilman Oscar James said he is encouraged that Southern California is already yielding benefits for business, port drivers and area residents alike in the nation's largest seaport.

(over)

“Anyone who works along or lives near our transportation corridors pays a price with their lungs and livelihoods, and its time for port and public officials here to pay attention,” said James.

The councilman’s comments were welcomed by a so-called “independent” port driver who lost wages to volunteer in the Coalition’s monitoring activities this afternoon.

“If anyone knows how broken the port trucking system is, how diesel pollution harms us, our families, the community, it’s the drivers,” said Kenel Hyppolite. The Haitian-American immigrant has hauled cargo professionally for eight years but earns a paycheck too small to fix his old, non-EPA compliant rig. “My industry will only bring more dirty air and dead-end jobs unless the companies are required to take responsibility for clean trucks and workers like me.”

Earlier this fall, in a public forum on the green port policy that included LA officials and Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D-NY), Port Authority Executive Director Chris Ward acknowledged that a clean-trucks program, which would only add a nickel to the cost of a pair of sneakers, is “inevitable.”

About the Coalition for Healthy Ports

The Coalition for Healthy Ports is the sister organization of the Coalition for Clean & Safe Ports in LA, Oakland, and Seattle (www.cleanandsafeports.org) and is a broad coalition of environmental, labor, faith, community, environmental justice, and business organizations that seek to create sustainable ports in New York and New Jersey. The Coalition is committed to a lasting solution to clean the air and stimulate good, middle-class jobs for surrounding port communities, and includes the following organizations: Environmental Research Foundation (Rachel.org); Environment NJ; Future City, Inc.; Garden State Alliance for a New Economy (GANE); GreenFaith; Haiti Solidarity Network of the North East (HSNNE); International Brotherhood of Teamsters; ILA Local 1588; Ironbound Community Corporation; Jubilee Immigrants' Rights Task Force; NJ Environmental Federation; NJ Environmental Justice Alliance; NJ Sierra Club; NJ Work Environment Council; Clean Water Fund; United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1360; United Nations Association USA, NJ Division; Urban Environmental Institute; Change to Win

###