



*Local governments working together for a better metropolitan region*

## MEMORANDUM

January 14, 2008

*District of Columbia*

*Bladensburg\**

*Bowie*

*College Park*

*Frederick*

*Frederick County*

*Gaithersburg*

*Greenbelt*

*Montgomery County*

*Prince George's County*

*Rockville*

*Takoma Park*

*Alexandria*

*Arlington County*

*Fairfax*

*Fairfax County*

*Falls Church*

*Loudoun County*

*Manassas*

*Manassas Park*

*Prince William County*

*\*Adjunct member*

**TO:** COG Climate Change Steering Committee

**FROM:** George L. Nichols  
Principal Environmental Planner

**SUBJECT:** Policy Subcommittee Recommendation on Participation in Cool Capital Challenge

At its November 28, 2007 meeting, the Climate Change Steering Committee (CCSC) requested that its Policy Subcommittee make a recommendation regarding participation in the Cool Capital Challenge. A conference call was held on Dec. 14 to discuss, among other issues, participation in the Cool Capital Challenge. Participants in the conference call included: Montgomery County Councilmember Roger Berliner; Falls Church Councilmember David Snyder; Harriet Tregoning, District of Columbia Office of Planning; and Elizabeth Entwisle, Maryland Dept. of the Environment.

### **Recommendations**

The Policy Subcommittee recommends a two-fold strategy for participation in the Cool Capital Challenge. The Cool Capital Challenge, described further below in the Attachment, is a grassroots campaign to engage citizens, institutions, business, and government agencies to make commitments to reduce a total of 1 billion pounds of greenhouse gases in the region by April (Earth Day) 2008. Several of COG's members are already participating or considering formal declarations of participation (see page 3).

### **1 - Endorse the Cool Capital Challenge and Encourage Member Jurisdictions to Join Effort**

The Policy Subcommittee recommends that the CCSC endorse the Cool Capital Challenge and encourage COG-member jurisdictions to join the Challenge. The Policy Subcommittee believes the Cool Capital Challenge has good features and presents options for engaging the public and private sectors. This endorsement involves encouraging individual COG members and potentially their citizens to consider joining the Challenge, and could include co-sponsorship of certain activities. In this manner, individual COG jurisdictions would decide for themselves whether they want to become full partners.

Upon formal endorsement of the Challenge, the Policy Subcommittee asked staff to help disseminate information about the Challenge and pass along to jurisdictions information they may have regarding Challenge participation, and

reductions achieved. The Policy Subcommittee emphasizes the Challenge is a “soft” approach (in terms of targets and quantification), but provides empowerment to citizens and organizations throughout the region and is an excellent means of raising awareness of climate change issues through an already-established partnership.

### **2 - COG Join the Cool Capital Challenge as a Corporation and Builder Owner**

The Policy Subcommittee recommends that COG as an organization and corporate entity join the Campaign. COG has begun an internal “greening” initiative for its own operations and staff activities, several of which could be pledged as commitments to the Challenge. In addition, COG is a 1/3 owner of 777 North Capitol Street, NE, and in collaboration with COG’s building partners, COG may be able to extend its commitments by quantifying energy efficiency and technological improvements in COG’s headquarters building.

### **Next Steps**

If the CCSC concurs with the Policy Subcommittee recommendations as presented or revised, these recommendations would be presented to the COG Board of Directors for adoption at the February 13, 2008 Board meeting.

Should you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact me at 202/962-3355 or [gnichols@mwkog.org](mailto:gnichols@mwkog.org).

On behalf of the Policy Subcommittee, thank you for your consideration of these recommendations.

## **Attachment**

### **Background on Cool Capital Challenge**

#### What is Cool Capital Challenge?

Cool Capital Challenge is a positive campaign to prevent one billion pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the Washington region in the next year – 2008 (or 0.45 million metric tons CO<sub>2</sub>e. For comparison, total greenhouse gas emissions in the Washington region equals approximately 74 million metric tons CO<sub>2</sub>e.”

The Cool Capital Challenge was started in early 2007 by volunteers from business, institutions, government agencies, congregations, and community and environmental organizations in the Metro Washington region. It is coordinated out of the offices of Washington Parks & People in the Josephine Butler Parks Center.

Cool Capital is structured like a capital campaign with contributions of carbon saving instead of cash. According to their website(<http://www.coolcapitalchallenge.org>), the Campaign has already amassed over 270,000,000 pounds of carbon reduction pledges during the first six months since it was launched, which will produce an estimated energy cost saving for household, businesses, agencies, and communities across the Washington region of over \$26 million.

#### What Does It Mean to Join the Challenge?

A Cool Capital Challenge partner means that an agency or organization shares a commitment to helping the people and institutions in our region combat global warming through a transition to an energy-efficient economy that reduces, and eventually eliminates, unsustainable emission of greenhouse gases. As a Cool Partner, organizations and jurisdictions become leaders in this effort by committing to specific reductions of greenhouse gases through energy efficiency improvements, renewable energy use, and/or a reduction in consumption. By endorsing this program, COG and its members could increase their capacity to engage citizens in taking actions at home and at work to reduce greenhouse gases, and broaden the ability to meet the region’s reduction goal. An example of a possible action that local governments in our region could embark on for the Cool Capital Challenge is a pledge to replace existing light bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs or light-emitting diodes (LEDs). Communities could also pledge to conduct energy audits for existing buildings, encourage van pooling, and help low-income residents weatherize their homes, or employ transit-oriented development strategies. COG and the Cool Capital Challenge could help jurisdictions calculate the energy savings and greenhouse gas reductions of specific actions.

### **Existing Cool Capital Challenge Participants**

Although there has been no official endorsement of the CCC by local governments, several local government offices and staffs have offered support for the Challenge. This support has come from both elected and senior officials, representing the District of Columbia, and Montgomery and Arlington Counties. These local governments note that official recognition as a partner may be requested in the future.

#### Local Government Agencies/Offices

District of Columbia Department of Environment  
District of Columbia Office of Planning  
Montgomery County Dept. of Environmental Protection (partner but not yet official member)  
Arlington County (not yet official member)

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#### Other

EPA ENERGY STAR  
Arlingtonians for a Clean Environment  
Washington Parks & People  
Cool Cities DC  
Coalition for Smarter Growth  
Politics and Prose Climate Action Group  
Greater Washington Interfaith Power & Light  
Resources for the Future  
WWF  
Washington Area Bicyclists Association  
Downtown DC Business Improvement District  
Long and Foster  
Committee on Public Services and Consumer Affairs, DC Council  
Politics & Prose Climate Action Group  
Institute for Market Transformation (chair)  
Sustainable Community Initiatives  
Global Environmental Systems  
Sierra Club Montgomery County  
Keep Washington DC Beautiful  
Downtown DC Business Improvement District  
Capitol Riverfront Business Improvement District  
Energy Action Coalition  
DC Environmental Network

#### **What are the steps to become a Cool Partner?**

The steps involved to become a Cool Partner are flexible and could take several forms (resolution or formal letter of support). However, regardless of the actual form of action, the following steps are recommended:

1. Accept recognition as a “Cool Partner” on the Cool Capital Challenge’s website and in other communications;
2. Reach out to constituents and citizens promoting greenhouse gas reduction and the goals of the Cool Capital Challenge;
3. Commit to making an achievable CO<sub>2</sub> reductions pledge by Earth Day (April 22) 2008 and begin on-the-ground implementation no later than October 2008;
4. Work with the Challenge and COG to estimate the annual CO<sub>2</sub> savings from these actions;
5. Optional: Calculate (or use existing information inventory) for agency/department/government Carbon Footprint as baseline;
6. Execute plans and improve and adapt.

Partners are free to take the steps in whatever order works best for their organization.

