

Nov. 27, 2007

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Climate Change Steering Committee

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

**SUBJECT:** Cool Capital Challenge

### Purpose

During previous deliberations, the Climate Change Steering Committee expressed the desire to further explore partnership opportunities with existing climate change initiatives in the region. The purpose of this memo is to provide background information on the Cool Capital Challenge, a timely partnership opportunity, and identify options for committee consideration.

### Background

#### 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 – CO<sub>2</sub> equivalents). 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 (0.12 million metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub>e) of carbon reduction pledges during the first six months since it was launched, which the Campaign stated 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 participating in 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)

#### 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.

### Options for Consideration

Option	Pros	Cons
<p><b>1. Endorse Campaign and Encourage Member Jurisdictions to Join</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Previous endorsement of environmental programs, e.g., Energy Star, Clean Cities</li> <li>-Expands COG effort to harness grassroots approaches that empower individuals, and individual institutions to make reductions</li> <li>-Focuses on energy efficiency measures</li> <li>-Complement existing local government strategies for energy efficiency measures, Energy Star, recycling, alternative fuels and hybrid vehicle technology vehicle fleets</li> <li>-Flexibility – Local governments could decide what actions are most appropriate for their jurisdiction</li> <li>-Attractive Website tool for calculation carbon footprint</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Not well funded</li> <li>-Recent effort</li> <li>-Still proving value</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. COG Join Campaign As An Org./Building</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Could be helpful tool for ongoing sustainable building efforts</li> <li>-Set an example for other organizations</li> </ul>	

### Recommended Next Steps

Staff believes the Cool Capital Challenge has good features and presents options for engaging the public and private sectors. Staff believes it would be useful to further explore, in more detail, the above options with Cool Capital Challenge officials. It is further recommended that this matter be addressed by the Climate Change Steering Committee's Policy Subcommittee, with a recommendation to the full committee at the January 2008 meeting.