



For Immediate Release

Contact:

Vince Heald, Beck Ellman Heald
858-453-9600
vheald@behmedia.com

Dr. Emily Young, Senior Director, Environment Analysis and Strategy
The San Diego Foundation
(619) 235-2300
eyoung@sdfoundation.org

San Diego Becomes Surprising National Model for Dealing with Climate Change Impacts

First Region to Gain Unprecedented Involvement of All City Governments

(San Diego, CA) – The controversy over climate change continues to polarize across the U.S., even as sea levels rise, droughts grow more prolonged and weather patterns seem ever more extreme. An area of the world known for its ideal climate and stunning coast line, the San Diego region has sidestepped the controversy and has unexpectedly taken a leadership role to become a national model for dealing with the challenge of climate change preparedness. It has done so by forging an unprecedented collaboration of philanthropy, business, and all local governments in the region, to protect the region’s spectacular natural resources and enviable quality of life.

“In many respects,” said Dr. Emily Young, Senior Director of The San Diego Foundation’s Environment Program, “this leadership is borne out of necessity as the U.S. Southwest is likely to face some of the first and worst impacts from climate change nationwide, with one local study projecting a 50-50 chance of a major source of water – Lake Mead – essentially drying up by 2021. Dwindling water supplies, increased wildfire risks, and coastal erosion will have significant impacts on the region’s clean air and water, natural lands and the health and well-being of residents, businesses and future generations.”

“The San Diego region is among the first in the nation with such a complete understanding of their emissions and climate change impacts, and regions across the country are following the San Diego region’s efforts closely as a model,” noted Brian Holland, National Director of Climate Programs for ICLEI, a membership association

of more than 600 U.S. cities. To date, all 18 cities and the County of San Diego have performed greenhouse gas emissions inventories, and about half have begun working on or have completed a plan to reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions and prepare for climate change.

Among the other innovative programs developed by asserted collaboration in the San Diego region include:

- ❖ Spearheaded by The San Diego Foundation's Climate Initiative, ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability is working directly with the region's local governments and public agencies to address issues affecting San Diego's clean air and water, miles of coastline, extensive natural lands and the health and well-being of its people and future generations due to the impacts of climate change.
- ❖ ICLEI has been working with the Unified Port of San Diego and its five member cities to prepare for and manage the risks from sea level rise, the first such comprehensive action by port authorities in the nation. Sea levels — already up 6 inches since 1900 — are expected to rise 12 to 18 inches more in the next 40 years according to research by Scripps Institution of Oceanography.
- ❖ San Diego County Water Authority is one of the few metropolitan water agencies nationwide to work with local climate scientists to integrate climate change projections into planning for the region's future water supply and demand, in part with funding from The San Diego Foundation.
- ❖ The first municipality in southern California to do so, the City of Chula Vista recently developed an assertive plan to prepare for the impacts of climate change, with guidance from a committee of community residents and businesses, and based on local climate research funded by The San Diego Foundation. The City is now beginning to implement 11 new strategies, including adopting cool roof and pavement provisions, improving local water supply and reuse, increasing the number of shade trees, emergency planning for extreme heat events, as well as efforts to preserve the coastal wetlands.

Maureen A. Stapleton, General Manager of the San Diego County Water Authority, added, "We recognize that climate change could have impacts to the reliability of our region's water supply, which is why we have incorporated climate change and adaptation strategies into our region's long-term water management plan and taken steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from our operations. It also reinforces the importance of diversifying our water supply sources and investing in major water storage and conveyance projects for our region."

Since 2006, The San Diego Foundation has taken a unique and determined leadership role in preparing the San Diego region for the impacts of climate change. The Foundation has invested \$1.5 million to help reduce the region's polluting emissions

and the harmful effects of climate change, and on building a strong economy and healthy environment that expands business opportunities while protecting the San Diego region's spectacular natural beauty.

The Foundation's strategy includes supporting technical assistance to local governments, funding research on regional emissions and climate change impacts, and bringing organizations together, rather than them doing so on their own, to collectively answer tough questions about how to build and sustain a strong economy while addressing impacts of climate change on the region's clean air and water, natural lands and the health and well-being of its people and future generations.

According to public opinion research commissioned by The Foundation in 2010, San Diego residents suggested that the region take a leadership role in planning for climate change. "The San Diego Foundation has done that, and philanthropy has played a catalytic role in providing that leadership, but we cannot and have not done it alone," said Bob Kelly, President and CEO of The San Diego Foundation. "We are grateful to elected officials and staff of all the cities and public agencies that have taken leadership on this issue, with a planned and proactive approach for the benefit of future generations."

In addition to partnerships with government and nonprofits, businesses such as QUALCOMM, Bank of America and Kaiser Permanente have provided critical funding to augment The Foundation's collaborative efforts. The region's innovation has also attracted investments from national funders such as the Kresge Foundation and the National Science Foundation, in anticipation that what happens in San Diego will serve as powerful examples for other areas of the country.

By preparing in advance for these changes and not waiting until climate change impacts have intensified, the region can save money and has the potential to receive other economic benefits. "Taking a leadership role in climate change" said Ruben Barrales, President and CEO of the San Diego Chamber of Commerce, "positions San Diego to benefit from strong and sustainable business development and increased potential for employment."

Last year, The San Diego Foundation commissioned a report, *Economic Vitality: Clean Jobs in the San Diego Region*, which found that one in 10 jobs in the region are linked to green industries and that traditional industries are starting to change in order to take advantage of emerging technologies. The report highlights how the San Diego region has developed as one of California's fastest growing areas for clean jobs, attracting \$445 million in venture capital in the last five years alone.

"No matter what one believes about climate change and its causes," said Kelly, "San Diegans throughout the region expect local government, business and the community to work together and act now, as a leader in the state and the nation, to address the very real impacts of climate change."

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About The San Diego Foundation

Founded in 1975, The San Diego Foundation's purpose is to promote and increase effective and responsible charitable giving. The Foundation manages more than \$560 million in assets, almost half of which are in permanent endowment funds that extend the impact of today's gifts to future generations. Since its inception, The Foundation has granted more than \$750 million to the San Diego region's nonprofit community. The San Diego Foundation recently unveiled the Malin Burnham Center for Civic Engagement. The Center will focus on educating and inspiring people to participate in the betterment of their communities, by addressing climate change and other critical community issues that affect the region's quality of life. For additional information, please visit The San Diego Foundation at www.sdfoundation.org.

About The San Diego Foundation's Climate Initiative

The San Diego Foundation's Climate Initiative supports efforts to deepen community awareness about the local impacts of climate change and spur regional action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Over the next few years, The San Diego Foundation will continue to work with government, nonprofits, businesses, and consumers to engage donors in advancing regional efforts to curb greenhouse gas emissions and preparing for climate change, in order to avoid some of its most harmful effects. For addition information, please visit www.sdfoundation.org/CivicLeadership/Programs/Environment/Climate.aspx.