

A collaborative of:

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

Natural Resources Defense Council

New York City Community-Based Organizations

Con Edison

Northeast States Clean Air Foundation/

Northeast States for Coordinated Air Use Management (NESCAF/NESCAUM)



For Immediate Release

Contact: Cindy Drucker
(617) 367-8540
1-866-NESCAUM (toll free)

New Collaborative Commits \$5 Million for Clean Air Projects
in New York City's Impacted Communities

Local Communities Assist NRDC, New York State, Con Edison & NESCAF

New York, NY (September 21, 2000) -- A multi-stakeholder collaborative of community, environmental, business and government entities today announced a new, non-profit enterprise, Clean Air Communities, designed to reduce air pollution and advance the goals of environmental justice. Clean Air Communities (CAC) will award up to \$5 million, donated by Con Edison, over the next six months to fund clean air and energy efficiency projects in New York City's low-income communities and communities that are disproportionately affected by air pollution. This initial funding will be supplemented by additional resources from corporations, philanthropic entities and manufacturers of clean air technologies. Examples of the types of initiatives that could be funded through the CAC program include diesel truck retrofits, conversion of coal-fired school boilers, and switching from diesel to natural gas buses.

Clean Air Communities was initiated as a partnership among Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), Con Edison, Northeast States Clean Air Foundation (NESCAF), a research and educational foundation affiliated with the Northeast States for Coordinated Air Use Management (NESCAUM), with guidance from New York City community-based organizations and prominent environmental, health and academic entities. Northeast States for Coordinated Air Use Management (NESCAUM), a non-profit organization representing the eight northeast states on air quality issues, is providing program management and staff support for CAC. Clean Air Communities is the first program in the nation to use economic market-mechanisms, such as emission trading, as a tool to advance environmental justice.

Ashok Gupta, senior energy economist of Natural Resources Defense Council stated, "The quality of the air you breathe in New York City shouldn't be based on the neighborhood in which you live. This program gives disproportionately affected New York City communities the ability and resources to lead the clean air charge. Clearly, the community organizations are best positioned to identify emission reduction strategies that meet the needs of their local residents. By implementing locally-based energy efficiency and clean air strategies, neighborhood residents will experience the full benefits of emission reductions."

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Tel: 718.384.7363
1.866.NESCAUM (toll-free)
Fax: 718.384.3394
617.742.9162

113Berry Street
Brooklyn, NY 11211
www.cleanaircommunities.org
coordinator@cleanaircommunities.org

In announcing the new program, Clean Air Communities released a Request for Proposals (RFP), outlining the criteria and deadlines to receive funding. The initial \$5 million will be distributed in two phases to allow ample time for RFP submissions. Phase I will include total funding of up to \$1-\$1.5 million with proposals due on October 31, 2000, with notification to selected projects by early December. Phase II will include total estimated funding of up to \$3.5-\$5.0 million with proposals due on February 15, 2001 and notification by early April. In addition, CAC will be awarding eight planning grants, of up to \$5,000 each, to assist community-based organizations in preparing a Request for Proposal response. Following the program announcement, CAC will hold educational and technical assistance workshops in New York City communities on September 21st, 22nd and 25th to provide additional information and assistance to interested parties. Ongoing information sessions and workshops will continue throughout the CAC program implementation.

Jason Grumet, executive director of Northeast States for Coordinated Air Use Management (NESCAUM) stated, "This initiative enables local communities to take meaningful action to improve the air quality in New York City neighborhoods. For over a decade, communities have been provided the right to know about the air pollution sources that affect them. Through this project, we are also giving local communities the right and the resources to act."

Vice president of Con Edison, Peter Lanahan, added, "This collaboration clearly shows that clean air is everyone's business. We hope to empower communities with the resources and technologies they need to make immediate air pollution reductions within a sustainable, long-term framework. This initiative will help move clean air concepts that may otherwise lay dormant into actionable strategies."

The emission reduction strategies funded by CAC will be based on environmental, technical and economic merit, the basis of the project's ability to educate the affected community, and the capability of each project partner to contribute toward project implementation. CAC seeks to help build coalitions and improve communications among diverse air quality stakeholders. With this in mind, CAC has enlisted a diverse, voluntary Advisory Group consisting of community-based organizations, environmental and health organizations, academic representatives, philanthropic entities, and political and government representatives, as well as the US Environmental Protection Agency, to provide ongoing guidance and input regarding the program framework, offer guidance to advance environmental justice goals and assist with program outreach, education and communications.

"This innovative initiative allows communities to participate fully in identifying and reducing lethal air emissions which have led to epidemic-levels of asthma in Northern Manhattan neighborhoods and represents the potential to craft models that can rebut the usual approach to air emissions trading," said Peggy Shepard, executive director of West Harlem Environmental Action, Inc. and member of CAC's Advisory Group.

Barbara Warren, project director at the Consumer Policy Institutes/Consumers Union and board member of the New York City Environmental Justice Alliance, who is participating on the Advisory Group added, "Communities and the public often receive too little information too late to change programs and actions that affect the air they breathe. Under this project, community members will be first, not last, to use their creative energy in the struggle for clean air."

Additional information, including Request for Proposals (RFP) materials, is available on the CAC web site: www.cleanaircommunities.org

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