



# UNEP in North America

NEWSLETTER



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## Comings and Goings

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Summer and fall interns



Image: U.S. Department of Energy

## Obama announces new fuel efficiency standards

On July 29, 2011 President Obama announced a historic agreement with 13 major automakers to pursue the next phase in the Administration’s national vehicle program, increasing fuel economy to 54.5 miles per gallon for cars and light-duty trucks by Model Year 2025. On August 9, the White House also announced fuel efficiency and greenhouse gas pollution standards for work trucks, buses, and other heavy duty vehicles. The US Environmental Protection Agency noted that, “Beyond the direct benefits to businesses that own and operate these heavy-duty vehicles, the program will also benefit consumers and businesses by reducing costs for transporting goods, and spur growth in the clean energy sector by fostering innovative technologies and providing regulatory certainty for manufacturers.”

According to the EPA press release on the 54.5 mpg by 2025, this fuel economy standard “will save American families \$1.7 trillion dollars in fuel costs, and by 2025 result in an average fuel savings of over \$8,000 per vehicle. Additionally, these programs will dramatically cut the oil we consume, saving a total of 12 billion barrels of oil, and by 2025 reduce oil consumption by 2.2 million barrels a day – as much as half of the oil we import from OPEC every day.”

## New UNEP focal point at U.S. State Department



UNEP RONA is now working with a new U.S. State Department focal point. Michael Byrne, a Foreign Service Officer, has replaced Richard Rosenmann as UNEP Desk Officer in the Bureau of Oceans and Environmental and Scientific Affairs. Mike has worked in the State Department for seven years, most recently serving in Afghanistan. Previously, he worked at Hewlett

Packard in Denver, Colorado. Mike also served as a city councilman in Colorado Springs.

## Canada-to-Texas oil pipeline

*The Washington Post, By Juliet Eilperin, August 26, 2011 (excerpt)*

The U.S. State Department issued its final environmental impact statement Friday for a controversial 1,700-mile oil pipeline stretching from Canada to Texas, affirming earlier findings that its construction and operation will have “limited adverse environmental impacts.”

The assessment moves the \$7 billion Keystone XL pipeline closer to fruition, though State Assistant Secretary for Oceans, Environment and Science Kerri-Ann Jones emphasized the analysis “is one piece of the information that will be considered” in making a final decision on the permit by the end of the year. The department will have to conduct a 90-day review of whether the project is in the “national interest” before deciding whether to allow the pipeline to go through.

Still, the conclusion of the 2 1/2-year-long review is significant because the primary objection raised against the pipeline is its potential environmental impact — during construction and in case of ruptures during operation — on wildlife, land and drinking water supplies.

In addition, the proposed pipeline, which could transport as much as 500,000 barrels of crude oil a day from Canada’s “tar sands” or “oil sands” fields to refineries in the Gulf Coast, has sparked an outcry from environmentalists in both countries on the grounds that the extraction of oil will increase emissions linked to climate change.

Oil sands contain a viscous oil called bitumen in formations of sand, clay and water, and to extract it, companies expend more energy and water than they do to tap other crude deposits.

Activists have mounted daily sit-ins for a week at the White House to protest the project, resulting in 376 arrests so far.

American Indian culture resources and the endangered American burying beetle could be affected. The pipeline’s sponsor, TransCanada, will work with American Indian tribes to monitor and minimize the project’s impact and had proposed measures to compensate for any toll its activities could have on the imperiled beetle.

The State Department announced it would hold 13 public meetings in nine cities across states such as Montana, Nebraska, Kansas and Texas between Sept. 26 and Oct. 6 to get feedback on whether the pipeline should win federal approval.

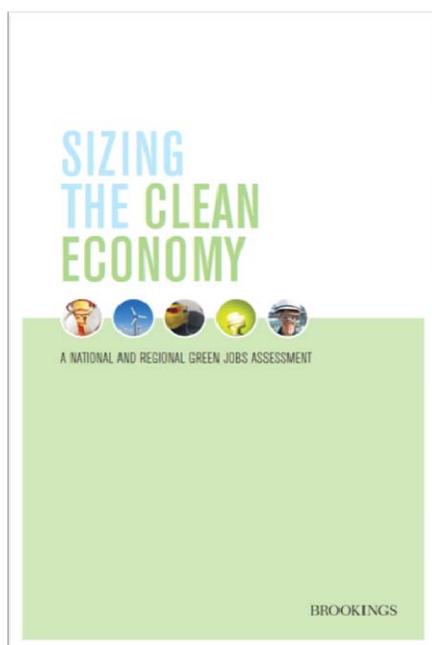


## Environment Canada cuts hundreds of jobs



Environment Canada plans to cut as many as 776 positions, or 11 percent of its workforce as Canada's Conservative Government seeks to rein in spending to eliminate a Cdn\$32 billion deficit, according to press reports. Over the next three months, Environment Canada will determine which employees will receive new jobs and which ones will be deemed "surplus" and let go, reported the *Toronto Star* on August 5, 2011. UNEP RONA is in close contact with Environment Canada regarding whether and how these changes could affect their financial and in-kind support of UNEP's programs.

## The Brookings Institute: "Sizing the Clean Economy: A National and Regional Green Jobs Assessment"



On July 13<sup>th</sup>, the Brookings Institute, a Washington, D.C.-based think tank, released a report entitled "Sizing the Clean Economy: A National and Regional Green Jobs Assessment." According to the press release, the report aims to fill a crucial gap in the clean economy dialogue in the United States by providing comprehensive, timely, and detailed data that will allow national, state, regional, and metropolitan leaders to accurately measure and compare the nature, size, and growth of America's clean economy.\*

The report's analysis of employment in 'clean' or 'green' sectors in the U.S. highlights both opportunities for significant job growth as well as the challenges faced in enabling such opportunities to be realized. The report finds, for example, that the U.S. clean economy already encompasses a diverse group of industries and employs approximately 2.7 million Americans (more than the fossil fuel industry). Furthermore, emerging clean technology sectors, particularly those focused on low or zero carbon energy generation, have seen explosive job gains in recent years, despite the global economic recession. And the clean economy offers more opportunities and better pay for low and middle skilled workers than the national economy as a whole. You can read more of the

report's key findings here: [http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/Programs/Metro/clean\\_economy/0713\\_exec\\_summary.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/Programs/Metro/clean_economy/0713_exec_summary.pdf).

Nonetheless, challenges remain in fostering continued growth in clean economy industries. The report notes that significant policy uncertainties and gaps weaken market demand for clean economy goods and services, stall critical financial investments, and hinder technological innovation. The report provides recommendations for addressing such challenges, arguing that complementary engagement and policy reforms at all levels of government will be key to enabling and promoting private sector efforts, which will be the primary driver of economic growth in clean industries. More about the report's specific recommendations can be found here: [http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/Programs/Metro/clean\\_economy/0713\\_exec\\_summary.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/Programs/Metro/clean_economy/0713_exec_summary.pdf)

The Brookings Institute's report, the first of its kind, is accompanied by an interactive online clean energy indicator map as well as a wealth of state and city level statistics. The indicator map can be found here: [http://www.brookings.edu/metro/Clean\\_Economy/Map.aspx#/?ind=1&geo=2&vis=0&dt=1&z=0&x=0&y=0](http://www.brookings.edu/metro/Clean_Economy/Map.aspx#/?ind=1&geo=2&vis=0&dt=1&z=0&x=0&y=0) and Metropolitan and State Clean Economy profiles can be found here: [http://www.brookings.edu/metro/Clean\\_Economy/metro\\_profiles.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/metro/Clean_Economy/metro_profiles.aspx)

\* The report uses the term "clean" economy but notes in the introduction that this is synonymous with what others refer to as the "green" economy. The following is the official definition used in the report: *The clean economy is economic activity—measured in terms of establishments and the jobs associated with them—that produces goods and services with an environmental benefit or adds value to such products using skills or technologies that are uniquely applied to those products.*

## Key Developments

### Arctic sea ice to reach record lows

Arctic sea ice may reach a record low in September after experiencing the biggest July melt since 2007, said researchers at the U.S. National Snow and Ice Data Center (NSIDC). "It will be another low year, very likely one of the five lowest," said Walt Meier, an NSIDC scientist. "One year doesn't say too much in and of itself, but the long-term downward trend and the series of very low years is indicative of a thinner ice cover and warming temperatures."

Last month, ice covered about 3.06 million square miles of ocean. That's 130,488 square miles less than the record low year of 2007. Scientists say the shrinking ice pack is an indication of global warming. According to Meier, by 2030 little or no ice may remain in the ocean during the summer. Ted Scambos, another NSIDC scientist, said these record changes in Arctic coastal areas show that something "outside the normal range of climate" is taking place.

Temperatures that were on average 1.5 to 2.5 degrees Celsius higher from May through July led to the large melt this year. The most recent data, for August 3, show that Arctic ice cover is back above the 2007 level, though Antarctic sea ice is "slightly" below average for this time of year.

Winds also have a significant effect on ice melt. According to Scambos, winds from the south were a "big factor" in the 2007 melt. This year, he said, "it would take a major shift of winds, or warming, to really break" the record. Still, the trend is toward less and less ice cover because of warmer summers.

"As summers have warmed, old ice has melted, and less and less ice of more than a few years old has been retained. Old ice is thick ice, and can survive one warm season," said Scambos.

– Article by Energy and Environmental Policy News, 8 August 2011

## Activities

### Mitigating short-lived climate forcers

UNEP RONA Director Amy Fraenkel represented UNEP at a high-level brainstorming session on mitigating short-lived climate forcers (SLCF) that was convened by the U.S. State Department.

The day-and-a-half session offered an opportunity for countries to exchange views on the value, scope, and potential structure of an initiative that would be devoted specifically to reducing SLCFs, in order to slow the rate of near-term climate change as well as achieve significant health, energy, and agricultural co-benefits. A chairman's summary will be circulated to UNEP colleagues along with internal UNEP RONA notes.



### Rio+20 and Sustainable Cities: Promoting North American Engagement

On August 4, UNEP RONA hosted a meeting of key stakeholders to share information on current sustainable city activities and initiatives and discuss possible city-related outcomes at the Rio+20 Conference, and how North American cities and institutions might best contribute to such outcomes. The meeting was well attended and included representatives from a spectrum of U.S. Government agencies (including the Department of State, the Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Transportation, U.S. Agency for International Development, and Department of Housing and Urban Development), international organizations (including the World Bank and Cities Alliance), and non-governmental organizations (including ICLEI-USA, ICLEI-CA, National Association of Counties, National League of Cities, and C-40). The meeting provided a useful forum for key players to share their work, on-the-ground experiences, and views with respect to sustainable communities, as well as the challenges and barriers cities face on the road to sustainability. The meeting also provided an opportunity to exchange information about relevant Rio-related initiatives and possible outcomes, including potential collaborative efforts. Participants agreed to reconvene in later in 2011.

## Third Annual Tunzana Youth Network Conference at UC Berkeley

Fifteen young environmental leaders, between the ages of 18 and 24 from the United States and Canada, met at the University of California at Berkeley on 11 and 12 August 2011 to participate in the third Tunza North America (Tunzana) Youth Network Conference. The Tunzana Network, established in 2008 by UNEP's Regional Office for North America (UNEP RONA), provides an opportunity for North American youth to showcase their environmental work on a regional and international platform, while also connecting them to UNEP and its global Tunza Network. In support of UNEP's mandate, these youth raise environmental awareness and take action in their school and their communities.



UNEP Tunza North America (TUNZANA) Youth Network at third annual conference

The conference included workshops on fundraising, leadership, event programming and social media. It also included the election of two representatives who will represent North America at UNEP's International Children and Youth Conference in Bandung, Indonesia in September 2011, at UNEP's Governing Council in Nairobi, Kenya in February 2012, and at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (or Rio+20) in Brazil in June 2012. The youth prepared a statement on their environmental concerns to be presented at the three afore-mentioned meetings. The two-day event provided the participants with a



## UNEP RONA Represented at AYUSA World Leaders Conference

As part of its partnership with the University of California at Berkeley, on 12 August Elisabeth Guilbaud-Cox delivered the keynote address at the graduation ceremony of the World Leaders program – a global youth exchange initiative that creates and maintains programs that cultivate leadership skills and global knowledge. The goal of AYUSA is to prepare students to become leaders in an increasingly inter-connected world. The long-term goal is to create a World Leaders Youth Corps of alumni who are committed to continue their work to improve the environment.

## Montreal Eco-City Conference



UNEP RONA presented UNEP's role in promoting sustainable cities at the 9th Eco-City World Summit in Montreal on August 24. The summit attracted more than 1,000 participants from 75 countries, including elected officials, public and private sector professionals, civil society organizations, academics, and university students. UNEP RONA's Hilary French participated in a panel discussion entitled "International Organizations: Key Actors for Ecocities" that was moderated by Amara Ouerghi of Metropolis International Institute. Other panelists included representatives of ICLEI-Canada, UN-Habitat, the Urban Climate Change Research Network, and the World Bank. Hilary's presentation highlighted findings from UNEP's recently launched *Green Economy Report*. She noted that while cities are a large and growing contributor to global greenhouse gas emissions and overall resource consumption, there are also numerous opportunities for greening cities and local economies both in North America and worldwide. For more information about the summit, see [www.ecocity2011.com](http://www.ecocity2011.com)

## Upcoming Events

### September

**Global Oceans Forum Workshop on Oceans at Rio+20**, New York, 12 September 2011

**Climate Week**, New York, 19-26 September 2011, [www.climateweeknyc2011.org/](http://www.climateweeknyc2011.org/)

**Ocean Conservancy's International Coastal Cleanup**, Washington, D.C, 17 September 2011

**UNEP RONA Rio+20 Consultation**, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, 21 September 2011



### October

**U.S. Green Building Council's GREENBUILD Expo and Conference**, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 4-7 October 2011, [www.greenbuildexpo.org](http://www.greenbuildexpo.org)

**UNEP RONA Major Groups and Stakeholders Consultation**, Washington, D.C., 13-14 October 2011

**UNEP Finance Initiative Global Roundtable**, Washington, D.C. 19-20 October 2011

**UNEP Sustainable Buildings and Climate Initiative Symposium on Sustainable Buildings**, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 27-28 October 2011



## Comings and Goings

### Staff



**Brennan Van Dyke**, UNEP RONA's Director until 2007, was housed in the regional office for a week in August on her way to Nairobi to take up her new post as Director of UNEP's Resource Mobilization section. Brennan left RONA to take up a three-year secondment at the Global Environment Facility.

**Leanne Rios** currently serves as the Associate Funds Management Officer at UNEP RONA. In this capacity, she addresses budgetary, human resource and administrative issues for UNEP staff and the regional office. Leanne came to UNEP from the UN Development Programme (UNDP) where she worked as an Advocacy and Communications Officer addressing outreach, advocacy, and communications surrounding the Millennium Development Goals. She has also worked with other United Nations organizations including: the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), where she wrote organizational policy and guidelines on program management; the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), where she helped develop a new international comprehensive cancer-related program; and, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), where she oversaw an anti-human trafficking campaign in Eastern European countries. Leanne has also directed two national grassroots outreach programs in the United States. Leanne is an organizational recipient of the 2005 Nobel Peace Prize, has received several academic awards, and has a Masters of Science in Community Health from the University of New Mexico.

### Interns

RONA has an active internship program, which adds about a dozen university graduates to its ranks every year. RONA would like to express its gratitude to its summer interns **Stephen Armstrong** of the United States, **Maria Paula Bermudez** of Colombia, **Jordan Menzel** of the United States and **Céline Ramstein** of France for their contributions to UNEP's work. The interns are an integral part of the office, and our work in government affairs, communications, policy and research could not be done without them. To read more about our interns, please see [www.rona.unep.org/internships](http://www.rona.unep.org/internships). This fall we will be welcoming four new interns: **Paloma Friedman** of Canada, **Olivia Gilmore** and **Taylor Murray** of the United States, and **Christian Gonzales** of Honduras.