



Conference of New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers



ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMS

For Immediate Release

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New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers

Conduct Symposium to Examine Adaptation to Climate Change in the Region

Scientific Experts Address Strategies to Adapt to Anticipated Climate Change Impacts

March 15, 2004 (Boston, MA) - As scientific evidence increasingly shows that the Earth's atmosphere is warming and that air pollution is contributing to this trend, many policy makers recognize the need to take two types of actions: 1) to reduce levels of current and future emissions, and 2) to adapt to the emerging impacts of emissions already accumulated in the atmosphere. This concept of "adaptation" is the focus of a two-day symposium of leading scientists, academic experts, environmentalists and policymakers that will examine strategies for addressing anticipated impacts of existing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions on the New England and Eastern Canada region.

This landmark symposium, initiated and hosted by the Conference of New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers, is the first venue to provide a comprehensive view of potential adaptation strategies to address climate impacts on northeast forests, fisheries, coastal zones, agriculture, and wildlife. The meeting will serve as a forum for developing recommendations to the governors and premiers to help their jurisdictions better manage their natural resources.

An assessment of potential climate change impacts on New England sponsored by the U.S. Global Change Research Program in 2001, forecast a range of stresses on natural resources, including more infestations of forest diseases, declining water quality, toxic algal blooms, and increased flooding due to rising sea levels. This conference will bring together experts to update these predictions, and to identify actions that the states and provinces can take to protect their natural resource base and related economy. Relevant issues include, for example, adapting to anticipated impacts to the maple sugar and fishing industries that are unique to the region's economy.

In 2001, the Conference of New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers (NEG/ECP) adopted a regional action plan to address climate change. The plan, which has been widely cited as one of the most significant initiatives of its kind, lays out a comprehensive approach for responding to climate change in the region, including goals and strategies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Broadening regional understanding of the likely impacts of predicted climate change, and developing plans to adapt to the anticipated impacts is a key component of the regional action plan.

"The governors and premiers are working to promote continued economic growth and preserve a high quality of life in the Northeast, and that includes protecting the natural resources that are such a central part of our heritage," said John Shea, Director of Energy and Environment Programs of the New England Governors' Conference, Inc (NEG/C). "The information from this symposium will provide the governors and premiers with the information they need regarding those sectors that may be affected by climate change so that policies can be appropriately adjusted."

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Shea provided a few examples of potential adaptation strategies for evaluation in light of expected climate change impacts:

- 1) Purchasing elevated land suitable for new wetlands as rising sea levels destroy existing wetland habitats.
- 2) Changing the species of trees planted in public places to favor those that can withstand warmer or drier conditions.
- 3) Designing municipal sewer infrastructures to accommodate overflow resulting from severe storms and increased downpours.
- 4) Improving electricity infrastructures, such as transmission wires, utility poles, etc., to withstand extreme weather events.
- 5) Evaluating new tourism products and strategies in recognition of the region's economic vitality derived from beaches and natural attributes.

Referencing the importance of the symposium, Shea added, "We are examining the complex impacts of climate change on our region, and looking for successful adaptation strategies, to advance our collective knowledge. By bringing together the scientific community from critical areas specifically relating to our region's resources, we can be proactive in continuing to build our economy while protecting our environment."

The conference is taking place at Suffolk University Law School in Boston on Monday and Tuesday, March 15-16, 2004. An agenda and logistical information are available at <http://www.negc.org/ClimateChange04.html>.

The Conference of New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers was established in 1973. At annual conferences, the governors and premiers discuss issues of common interest and concern, and enact policy resolutions that call for action by the state and provincial governments, as well as by the two national governments. The Conference of the New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers is composed of the governors of Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont and the premiers of New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Quebec.

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