

THIS WEEK

New Green Legal Team

February 23, 2009

Reporting by Roddy Scheer

The Center for Biological Diversity (CBD), a groundbreaking nonprofit activist group working to save endangered species, launched the Climate Law Institute. The institute is dedicated to extending the reach of current environmental and human health laws to encompass global warming, pass new climate legislation and help protect endangered species and public lands. CBD raised \$17 million to fund the new initiative over the next five years, mostly from foundation sources.

In recognition of the severity of the climate issue, CBD will replace its existing Climate, Air and Energy program with the Climate Law Institute. Kassie Siegel, who ran CBD's climate program and was instrumental in winning Endangered Species Act protection for the polar bear due to global warming in 2008, will run the new institute.

The primary goals of the Climate Law Institute include: establishing legal precedents requiring existing environmental laws to be fully implemented to regulate greenhouse gas emissions, land management and wildlife management; establishing new state and federal laws and policies to rein in global warming; ensuring all new laws and policies are judged against the scientific standard of whether they will lead to a reduction in atmospheric carbon dioxide; preventing the construction of new coal-fired power plants and coal mines while quickly phasing out existing coal-fired power plants; preventing the creation of an oil-shale or tar sands energy sector; reversing the deadly process of ocean acidification; and preventing the loss of Arctic ice cover and the runaway global warming that would likely ensue.

The new institute's board consists of experts from across the legal and environmental worlds, including Luke Cole, Raul Grijalva, Sean Hecht, Cara Horowitz, Pamela Martin, Patrick Parenteau, Cymie Payne and Deborah Sivas. Funding for the initiative has come from the California Community Foundation, The Sandler Foundation and The Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund, among others.



The Center for Biological Diversity's new Climate Law Institute is turning its legal attention to staving off climate catastrophe.