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A NEW, GREEN VISION FOR TRADE IS NEEDED, CONSERVATION GROUPS SAY

Statement of Defenders of Wildlife, Friends of the Earth and the Sierra Club

Washington, D.C. - In his speech today in Peoria, Illinois on the economy, President Bush is expected to call for an extension of Fast Track trade negotiating authority. Defenders of Wildlife, Friends of the Earth and the Sierra Club issued the following statement:

"Trade done right can help lift living standards and promote sustainable development. Unfortunately, this administration cannot be counted on to protect the environment in trade agreements without greater oversight from Congress and the public. Any authority granted to President Bush must ensure that trade deals will have strong environmental rules that can be guaranteed through the democratic process.

"The United States Trade Representative (USTR) has been negotiating bilateral trade agreements one after another with some of the planet's most biologically rich and diverse countries, including Peru, Colombia and Malaysia - and a deal with Indonesia is in the works. Until now, the USTR has only felt obliged to include weak environmental provisions filled with gaps and loopholes.

"Congress must supply the administration with a more detailed roadmap for negotiating trade agreements that safeguard the environment. The environmental chapters of trade agreements must incorporate provisions that will ensure enforcement of international environmental standards and prohibit the rampant trade in illegal timber that is destroying our world's forests. Trade agreements must also promote safe and healthy communities in the U.S. and abroad by rewriting rules that currently allow challenges to environmental and public health laws and regulations.

"As Democratic members of the House Ways and Means Committee highlighted recently in a letter to United States Trade Representative Susan Schwab, trade deals will have to effectively address these environmental concerns if a consensus on trade policy is to be built. If President Bush wants renewed trade authority, he must heed these voices."

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Defenders of Wildlife is recognized as one of the nation's most progressive advocates for wildlife and its habitat. With more than 500,000 members and supporters, Defenders of Wildlife is an effective leader on endangered species issues.

Friends of the Earth is a national environmental advocacy organization and a member of Friends of the Earth International, the world's largest grassroots environmental federation, with groups in more than 70 countries worldwide.

The Sierra Club's members are more than 750,000 of your friends and neighbors. Inspired by nature, we work together to protect our communities and the planet. The Club is America's oldest, largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization.