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For information: David West, 206 919-2774

Puget Sound Sage Calls on Congress to Protect the Los Angeles Clean Truck Program; Port of Seattle Needs Similar Life-Saving Solution

SEATTLE – (OCT 1, 2009) – Community and environmental leaders fighting for environmental clean-up at the Port of Seattle today recognized the one year anniversary of the landmark Clean Truck Program enacted by the City of Los Angeles and its Harbor Commission last October. Since the Port of Los Angeles took action with new standards and market incentives, in twelve months over 5,500 clean trucks have entered service at the Port and 2,000 of the dirtiest trucks have been retired.

However, because of legal opposition from industry clean-air opponents, the long-term success of this critical program is being threatened.

“The American Trucking Association wants to shift the cost for pollution its companies create onto port workers and taxpayers, while communities closest to the Port suffer the consequences,” said David West, Executive Director of Puget Sound Sage.

The regional partnership of community, environmental, faith and civil rights organizations believes Congress needs to take action to update the Federal Aviation Administration Authorization Act (FAAAA) provisions regulating motor carriers because Port trucking has a large impact on environmental, safety and security issues in the Seattle area and other port cities. The problems are due to a broken system that allows a high volume of cargo moves to be made with an aging trucking fleet owned and operated by underpaid contract drivers, rather than the capitalized companies that hire them.

Puget Sound Sage has been at the forefront of research and policy advocacy to convince the Port of Seattle to develop a truck plan for the Northwest’s largest port that follows LA’s successful approach.

The Port of Seattle is the fifth largest port in the nation, as measured by cargo volume. The Port of Seattle depends on a fleet of 1,500-2,000 drayage trucks to move freight containers from dockside to rail yards in South Seattle. Under the current system of truck operation, these trucks are some of the oldest and most polluting trucks in the region. These trucks generate massive amounts of diesel pollution causing high rates of cancer, asthma, respiratory illness and premature death. Seattle is in the top five percent nationally of communities affected by cancer-causing particular matter from diesel trucking, according to a 2008 EPA study.

“We join with the West-coast based Coalition for Clean & Safe Ports to urge Congress to protect the LA Clean Truck Program as an essential step to make it possible for other ports around the country, including the Seattle, to adopt a similar solution to solve the long-running pollution and sweatshop conditions generated by the current system of port trucking,” West added.

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1032 South Jackson Street, Suite 203, Seattle, WA 98104 • Phone: 206.568.5000 • Fax: 206.568.3798

www.pugetsoundsage.org