



NEW \$2 MILLION NETWORK TO HELP THREATENED ECOSYSTEMS AND SOCIETIES ADAPT TO THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Chicago, February 3, 2009 – Recognizing the significant impacts climate change is already having on both nature and people, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation today announced it is providing \$2 million to the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) to develop a new Ecosystems and Livelihoods Adaptation Network. The Network will serve as a resource for conservation groups, governments, international agencies, and others working to make vulnerable ecosystems more resilient and help human communities adapt sensibly to changing climates.

“The scale and urgency of climate change demands global cooperation and innovation to help animal and human populations adapt to our changing planet,” said Jonathan Fanton, President of the MacArthur Foundation. “Mitigation is a necessary but insufficient response. We can no longer afford to dismiss adaptation as ‘giving in’ or worry that it will reduce incentives for addressing the root causes of climate changes. This creative new network will nurture the emerging field of adaptation science, helping to build knowledge and catalyze new ideas.”

In October, 2008, at the World Conservation Congress in Barcelona, Fanton stated that MacArthur planned to invest \$50 million to support efforts aimed at helping adapt to the threats posed by climate change. The new Network announced today is an important component of that larger overall MacArthur investment. MacArthur’s climate change grantmaking builds on the Foundation’s long-standing work to conserve large land- and seascapes; and strengthen training and research centers, civil society organizations, and government agencies seeking to preserve biodiversity.

The Network will take a targeted, localized approach to climate change adaptation, focusing initially on the developing world, where climate impacts are generally more acute and response capacity more limited. Climate change assessments funded by the MacArthur Foundation have already been carried out in eight hotspots in the developing world, providing a starting point for addressing biodiversity adaptation challenges in those regions. Projects include using geographical information systems to determine how a rise in sea level will impact coastal ecosystems and communities in the Caribbean, Madagascar, and Melanesia, and developing models to determine how specific species’ elevational distribution will change in the Andes, the Himalayas, and Africa’s Albertine Rift. The Network will organize similar assessments in other parts of the world to develop critical baseline information for prioritizing adaptation needs.

“This generous grant from the MacArthur Foundation will enable WWF and IUCN to develop and implement important measures that will help protect fragile ecosystems and the societies whose livelihoods they support.” said Carter Roberts, president and CEO of WWF. “Make no mistake: mitigation efforts to reduce emissions are vital if we are to keep climate change from far surpassing a dangerous and rapidly approaching threshold. But the fact is, the effects of climate disruption are already upon us and are growing rapidly. While curbing emissions, we must also prepare for and respond to the impacts – we must adapt.”

The Network will connect scientific researchers with resource managers and local and regional decision makers to ensure ecosystem-based management approaches benefit from the latest science and practical experiences. By linking various adaptation and ecosystem management groups, the Network will serve as a platform for sharing information globally. MacArthur’s support will help expand the consortium of participating institutions and provide staffing

To ensure sustained funding for adaptation projects, the Network will work with multilateral financing bodies, including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to coordinate and prioritize funding for adaptation to ensure resources will be used most effectively, particularly in the developing world.

“Well-managed ecosystems provide a valuable resource in helping people adapt to climate change, for example through regulating water flows during periods of heavy rain or coastal storms,” said Julia Marton-Lefèvre, Director General of IUCN. “However, these values are all too often disregarded in climate adaptation strategies. If we are to meet the growing challenge of adapting to the world’s changing climate, we need to recognize and value the importance of this ‘natural infrastructure.’ Maintaining healthy ecosystems can often provide a cost-effective alternative to other investments in natural hazard defenses, and ecosystems also provide additional benefits to local communities.”

About the MacArthur Foundation

The MacArthur Foundation supports creative people and effective institutions committed to building a more just, verdant, and peaceful world. In addition to selecting the MacArthur Fellows, the Foundation works to defend human rights, advance global conservation and security, make cities better places, and understand how technology is affecting children and society. For more information, visit www.macfound.org.

About World Wildlife Fund

WWF is the world’s largest multinational conservation organization, working in more than 100 countries for nearly half a century. With the support of nearly five million members worldwide, WWF is dedicated to delivering science-based solutions to preserve the diversity and abundance of life on Earth, stop the degradation of the environment and combat climate change. Visit www.worldwildlife.org to learn more.

About IUCN

IUCN, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, helps the world find pragmatic solutions to our most pressing environment and development challenges by supporting scientific research; managing field projects all over the world; and bringing governments, NGOs, the UN, international conventions and companies together to develop policy, laws and best practice. For more information, visit www.iucn.org.

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Media Contacts:

Jennifer Humke, MacArthur Foundation, 312 920 6266; jhumke@macfound.org

Joe Pouliot, WWF-US; 202 476 9919; joe.pouliot@wwfus.org

Sarah Horsley, IUCN (Geneva); +41 22 999 0127; Sarah.HORSLEY@iucn.org