




earthwise

News and Ideas for UCS Members and Activists

Progress on Offshore Wind Power

Cape Wind, a proposed wind power facility to be located five miles off the coast of Cape Cod, Massachusetts, cleared a major hurdle last November when the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers released a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). This 3,800-page document, which represents three years' worth of work by 17 federal and state agencies, concludes that Cape Wind would create significant economic, public health, and environmental benefits, and that the majority of potential negative consequences would be minor and mitigated.

As the first offshore wind power facility in the United States, Cape Wind would set an important precedent for siting similar facilities and would make New England a national leader in clean electricity generation. The project would supply enough renewable power to meet as much as three-quarters of local residents' electricity needs.

UCS commented on the DEIS findings and testified at public hearings earlier this year. The Corps of Engineers is currently reviewing these and other public comments in order to determine whether additional studies are needed before it issues a final impact statement. We expect the Corps will decide this year whether to grant Cape Wind a permit. 

close to home

Forest Friendly Flooring

Flooring is just one of the choices facing someone building a new home or an addition to an existing home, but it's a choice that gives environmentally conscious consumers pause. Many people like the look of wood floors, for example, and may not want to use carpet or tile in certain rooms. But the harvesting of wood has implications for both climate change and biodiversity.

Deforestation accounts for approximately 20 percent of annual carbon dioxide emissions worldwide—more than

the amount generated in the United States each year by burning fossil fuels. In addition, conventional logging methods pollute local air and water supplies and damage natural habitats. Together, deforestation and destructive logging are the most significant cause of species extinction worldwide.

Is it possible to enjoy the beauty and durability of wood floors in your home while conserving forest resources?

Guilt-free Wood

You might consider using **reclaimed wood** that has been salvaged from old houses, factories, and schools or milled from trees that fell during storms. It can lend a rustic or antique look to your home with its unique grain, color, and markings. One drawback is the price, which is about double the three to six dollars per square foot that new wood costs. Be sure to buy enough for your entire project, since reclaimed wood can be hard to match.



Rainforest Alliance's SmartWood program.

If you prefer the look of new hardwood floors, or reclaimed wood doesn't fit your budget, choose wood bearing the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) logo.

(continued on back page)



Bamboo flooring offers durability and beauty without depleting forest resources.

© Eco-Friendly Flooring

on a personal note

A Deception That Couldn't Go Unchallenged



UCS works with the business community whenever we find good-faith efforts to make environmental progress. But when corporations use their enormous resources to fight against the public interest, we don't hesitate to speak out. Such was the case in February, when the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers launched a deceptive advertising campaign claiming today's cars are "virtually emission-free."

Domestic automakers, after initially resisting, have produced less-polluting vehicles to satisfy Clean Air Act requirements, but that doesn't mean these vehicles are close to being emission-free. In fact, today's regulations still allow new cars and trucks to pump out hundreds of thousands of tons of smog- and soot-forming pollutants every year. And the automakers' ad ignored entirely the millions of tons of heat-trapping global warming gases their vehicles emit each year.

This ad campaign came at a critical time—automakers are suing to block California's landmark regulations to reduce global warming emissions from automobiles, and critical Clean Air Act protections are under attack in Congress. We reacted swiftly to denounce the campaign, mobilizing nearly 25,000 people to demand that the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) investigate the Alliance's deceptive tactics, creating our own hard-hitting ad to debunk the automakers' claims, and raising more than \$40,000 to run our ad in the same newspapers and magazines in which the Alliance had bought space. We also complained directly to key auto company executives, who launched their own internal evaluations of the Alliance's advertising strategy.

I am grateful to the many UCS members and activists who responded to our call to action, and I am also happy to report that, as *Earthwise* went to press, the FTC was considering our complaint and the Alliance had replaced its original ad with one that contains no deceptive claims about emissions. While we take pride in the effectiveness of our response to this episode, we will also continue looking for opportunities to work with the automakers. We can achieve greater things together than on our own.




KEVIN KNOBLOCH, *president*

UCS in the news

Political intervention documented at federal agency

On February 10, UCS and Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility revealed the results of a survey that documents extensive political intervention within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). Of the more than 400 scientists who responded, one in five have been directed to inappropriately exclude or alter technical information from an FWS scientific document.

Lexi Shultz, Washington representative for the UCS Restoring Scientific Integrity campaign, noted in *Newsday* that the survey results "illustrate an alarming disregard for scientific facts among political appointees entrusted to protect threatened and endangered species." And a March 8 article in the *Washington Post* underscored a possible motive for the political interference by reporting that "hundreds of the agency's scientists think scientific findings have been altered to help business or political interests at the expense of wildlife. Many scientists...are afraid to speak out."

The survey was cited widely in other print media outlets including *USA Today*. 

Double Your Gift

Thanks to a generous UCS donor, any donations made to our No New Nukes campaign until July 15 will be matched dollar for dollar! Visit www.ucsusa.org/nonewnuke or call (800) 666-8276 to take part.

Congress Considers Cleaner Electricity



What's at Stake

Clean air, energy security, and economic well-being.

How You Can Help

Ask your representative to support renewable energy legislation in Congress.

What's Happening

Our current energy system relies primarily on burning fossil fuels that pollute our air, water, and land—harming human health and threatening the planet with global warming. Fortunately, we can secure a cleaner energy future by tapping into renewable energy resources such as the wind and sun. A renewable electricity standard (RES) can help achieve this goal by requiring utilities to gradually increase the percentage of power they generate from renewable resources.


U.S. Representatives Jim Leach (R-IA) and Tom Udall (D-NM) have introduced legislation (HR 983) to establish a national RES of 20 percent by 2027. UCS has found that the United States would reap significant environmental and economic benefits under such a standard:

- Significant reductions in power plant emissions of carbon dioxide—a major contributor to global warming

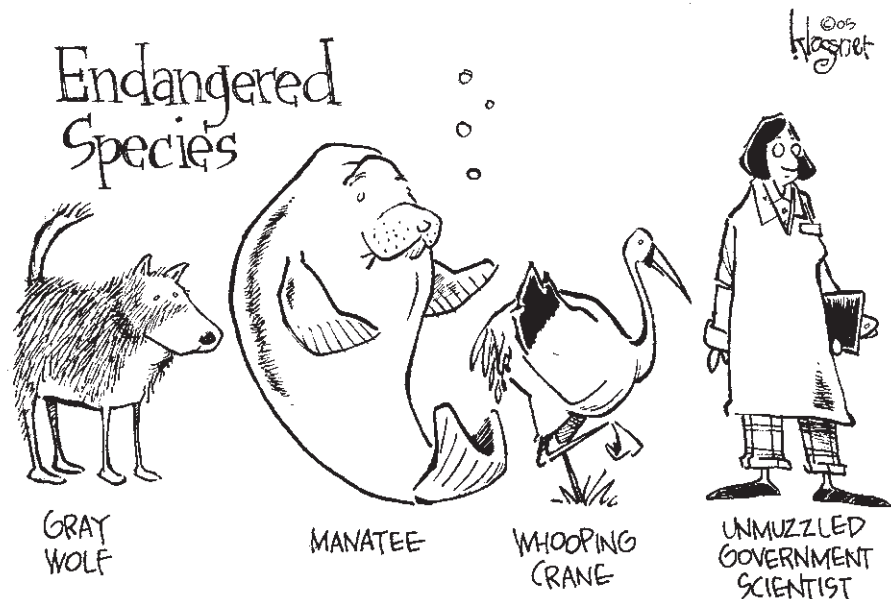
- Billions of dollars in consumer savings on gas and electric bills
- Hundreds of thousands of new, high-quality jobs
- New renewable energy facilities that will provide an economic boost to rural communities in the form of capital investments, payments to landowners who generate wind power or grow bioenergy fuels, and property tax revenues.

Thanks to broad public support, the U.S. Senate has twice passed a moderate 10 percent RES as part of a comprehensive energy bill. Unfortunately, House leaders have opposed these provisions. If we are to achieve final passage of a national RES, we must therefore build support in the House for the Leach-Udall bill.

What You Can Do

Contact your House representative and urge him or her to support a clean, reliable, and affordable energy future by co-sponsoring HR 983 and insisting that any national energy legislation include a strong RES. You can send an email from the online UCS Action Center at www.ucsaction.org or call the Capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121 and ask to be connected to your representative's office. 

drawing conclusions



Forest Friendly Flooring *(continued from front page)*

FSC-certified wood comes from well-managed forests and is sustainably harvested. You'll pay 5 to 15 percent more compared with regular wood.



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Natural Alternatives

If you're willing to forego wood entirely but don't want to sacrifice its natural appearance, durability, and maintenance, consider bamboo or cork flooring.


Bamboo, a fast-growing grass, offers the look and durability of hardwood and can be used in any room where wood floors would normally be used. Bamboo costs approximately four to eight dollars per square foot, and ranges in shade from light straw to deep caramel. Formaldehyde-based glues are often used in the manufacturing process but formaldehyde-free bamboo is available.

Cork, most often associated with wine bottles and bulletin boards, is a good flooring material for several reasons. It costs about the same as hardwood, is easy on the feet because it "gives" under pressure (a plus for the avid home cook), and its natural insulating properties can help reduce heating and cooling costs. As with bamboo, look for floor tiles and planks that are formaldehyde-free and sealed with a water-based varnish.



© Eco-Friendly Flooring

Cork flooring is easy on the feet and is a natural insulator.

Other sustainable flooring options include recycled glass, rubber, linoleum, and stone. Ask your local flooring supplier for details, or visit the GreenHomeGuide website at www.greenhomeguide.com/index.php/plain/519. 

UCS on the web

Looking to prove a point? If you've ever wished you had at your disposal the single best fact to support your argument about the value of renewable energy or the risks of fossil fuels, our new Just the Facts online database is for you. Go to www.ucsusa.org/just_the_facts and search for the statistics and figures that will make your case!

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dialogue

I'd like to learn more about organic farming, antibiotic use in livestock, and pesticides. Can you recommend a resource?

Many of the foods you see at the supermarket (genetically modified corn, meat from chickens and hogs raised with antibiotics, apples sprayed with pesticides) reflect the heavily industrialized state of agriculture today. But there are organic and locally grown alternatives that promote a more sustainable food system—one that is better for the environment, small farmers, and consumers.

To help the public better understand food production issues, UCS has created *FEED* (the *Food and Environment Electronic Digest*), a newsletter that provides consumers with up-to-date information on biotechnology, antibiotic resistance, and sustainable agriculture. Each month, *FEED* highlights recent news items that address agriculture "from farm to fork." Topics include genetically modified food, organic standards, use of hormones and antibiotics in livestock, crop biodiversity, and pesticides, with an emphasis on how each of these issues relates to human and environmental health. *FEED* also provides opportunities for readers to send their opinions to government and corporate decision makers who influence U.S. food policies.

You can become an effective advocate for a more sustainable agriculture system, encouraging laws and corporate policies that protect not only our environment but the livelihoods of family farmers as well. To learn more about *FEED* or sign up for a free subscription, visit www.ucsusa.org/food_and_environment/feed. 