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ADEQ Director Steve Owens Named Co-Chair of Western Climate Initiative

PHOENIX -- Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) Director Steve Owens has been selected co-chair of the Western Climate Initiative (WCI), a multistate, international collaboration to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the West.

The WCI was launched in February by Arizona, California, New Mexico, Oregon and Washington. Those states have since been joined by Utah and the Canadian provinces of British Columbia and Manitoba. Other states and provinces may join the WCI in the near future.

Director Owens was selected co-chair by representatives of the WCI member states and provinces by acclamation.

“My selection for this very important position is really an acknowledgement of Governor Napolitano’s leadership on dealing with climate change in the face of inaction by the federal government,” Owens said. “I am pleased and honored to have been asked to help lead this critical initiative.”

The WCI members agreed to establish a Western regional GHG reduction goal by the end of August 2007 and design a multisector market-based mechanism, such as a load-based cap-and-trade program, by the end of August 2008 to help reach the goal. Last week, WCI members announced that they had agreed on a regional goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the West to 15 percent below 2005 levels by 2020. WCI members now are beginning work on meeting the August 2008 deadline for designing the multisector market-based mechanism.

In addition to his role with the WCI, Director Owens is helping lead other efforts to reduce GHG emissions as well. In May, Director Owens was elected Secretary of The Climate Registry, a GHG emissions registry consisting of more than 40 U.S. states, tribes, Canadian provinces and Mexican states. Director Owens also is chairing Arizona’s Climate Change Executive Committee, which is developing strategies to implement the recommendations of the Governor’s Climate Change Advisory Group.

More information is available on the Arizona Climate Change Initiative Web site, www.azclimatechange.gov and the Western Climate Initiative site, www.westernclimateinitiative.org.