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ADMINISTRATION ANNOUNCES PLAN TO DEVELOP NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL INDICATORS

WASHINGTON, DC –The Council on Environmental Quality, the Office of Management and Budget, and the Office of Science and Technology Policy today directed Federal agencies to begin developing a set of national environmental indicators and to kick off a major pilot project in this area. National Environmental Status and Trends (NEST) indicators are envisioned as high quality, scientifically based statistical measures of selected conditions of our environment and natural resources that will facilitate public discourse and decision-making. They will be used by Federal decision makers, other partners and stakeholders, and the public to analyze national trends and assess the impact of national programs on the Nation’s environment and natural resources.

The pilot project announced today will focus on producing consistent, regularly recurring indicators in the area of water quantity and quality. The NEST pilot will demonstrate collaborative interagency processes and provide a forum to engage the public in the identification of questions that should be addressed by the indicators.

“Our Nation will benefit from a consistent set of indicators for our environment and natural resources,” Council on Environmental Quality Chairman James L. Connaughton said. “Most NEST indicators will be produced from data collected by ongoing Federal and State programs. This action plan will improve the quality and uniformity of those data to provide nationally consistent, and more widely accessible, indicators.”

“High-quality, statistical measures of conditions and trends are important indicators of the effectiveness of government policies and programs,” said Clay Johnson, Deputy Director for Management, Office of Management and Budget. “We currently lack consistent information on the environment and natural resources to analyze national trends. We sought the advice of the National Academy of Public Administration on the best way to move forward, and this action is based on their recommendations.”

“The science community has pilot-tested several approaches to national reporting on environmental conditions over the past decade,” said Dr. John H. Marburger III, director of the

Office of Science and Technology Policy. “For example, the project *The State of the Nation’s Ecosystems* conducted for the government by the H. John Heinz III Center for Science, Economics and the Environment, produced a useful, credible set of indicators. But we need to go farther, and the development of such national indicators is a Federal responsibility. So we are moving now to the next level.”

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