



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Everyday Heroes v. Special Interests: New Report Documents Statewide Successes of Landmark Environmental Law**

#### ***As California Environmental Quality Act Turns 35, Powerful Lobbies Gear Up For Attack***

SACRAMENTO, CA – A new comprehensive report by a group of California’s leading environmental organizations showcases the sweeping achievements of a cornerstone 35 year-old law, the *California Environmental Quality Act*. The law, which gives ordinary citizens the ability to stand up to the powerful and well-connected, has forced special interests to do their fair share to protect California’s natural resources. And those special interests, warn environmentalists, are gearing up for an aggressive attack on the basic environmental rights of Californians.

“Because of the Environmental Quality Act, ordinary Californians have successfully protected our magnificent beaches, reduced traffic and commute times, and otherwise safeguarded the health and well being of their families and their communities,” said Karen Douglas, the leading editor of the report and Acting Executive Director of the Planning and Conservation League. “The environmental protections they’ve helped to achieve have set standards for the nation and the world, contributed to the Golden State’s prosperity and preserved our spectacular natural environment for future generations.”

The report, “*Everyday Heroes Protect the Air We Breathe, the Water We Drink, and the Natural Areas We Prize: Thirty-Five Years of the California Environmental Quality Act*,” is a compilation of over 75 Environmental Quality Act success stories written by a number of California’s foremost environmental leaders. It features over 75 examples of how Californians, through the Environmental Quality Act, have contributed to a legacy of environmental and public health protections that have shaped California for the better.

*“Everyday Heroes”* is a joint publication of the Planning & Conservation League, the Planning & Conservation League Foundation and the California League of Conservation Voters. The complete report can be found at [www.ecovote.org](http://www.ecovote.org).

Examples of stories featured in *Everyday Heroes* include:

- How Mothers of East LA joined neighborhoods to topple a toxic waste incinerator project slated to be built only 7500 feet from homes, churches, hospitals and schools.
- How a coalition of community groups achieved a historic settlement with the Port of Los Angeles to reduce air pollution in surrounding neighborhoods.
- How local residents and refinery workers joined with Contra Costa County leaders to get ConocoPhillips to reduce air pollution when expanding its refinery.
- How public outcry in eastern Contra Costa County led local officials to shelve a large development project when an Environmental Impact Report showed the project would result in 140,000 more car trips on the main transportation artery, destroy a major greenbelt corridor, and expose residents to nearby hazards.
- How environmental advocates reached an agreement with the developers of the massive Mission Bay project in San Francisco to reduce sewage outflow, adopt state of the art technology and restore a critical wetland.
- How a public hearing under the Environmental Quality Act became the catalyst for a successful citizens’ revolt against a proposed heavy industrial development near the San Diego River that threatened to pollute local drinking water in the predominantly low-income town of Lakeside.

In recent months, developers and other special interests have pushed proposals to weaken the protections of the Environmental Quality Act. A host of legislative proposals affecting the Act have been introduced in the California Legislature. Governor Schwarzenegger is expected to unveil a proposal as early as next week. Schwarzenegger’s proposal is expected to favor the special interest developers and builders who have contributed over \$6 million in the past year.

“The battle to defend the Environmental Quality Act is galvanizing environmental, labor and community groups,” said Susan Smartt, Executive Director of the California League of Conservation Voters.

“Over the years this premier environmental law has protected Californians from countless projects that would have spewed toxins into our air, contaminated our land, and poisoned our drinking water,” said Smartt. “We need it now more than ever to fight back against powerful builders and developers who are eager to find a way around this popular law. The California Environmental Quality Act helps Californians achieve the American Dream – a good home in a safe and clean neighborhood.”

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