

# PLANKTOS

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

## **San Francisco, CA December 15, 2004 – UN Kyoto Meetings Underway in Buenos Aires – American Geophysical Union Meeting Simultaneously Underway in San Francisco – Participants Lost in Debate Over Minutia Ignore Obvious Global Warming Solutions**

The United Nations climate conference underway in Buenos Aires is the last gathering of its kind before the Kyoto Protocol comes into force on 16 February 2005. Meanwhile the American Geophysical Union holds annual meeting in San Francisco where climate research is featured.

Delegates and experts at the conferences endlessly debate whether curbing global climate change, now undisputed as occurring, will bring high costs for business, because the main method slow it is to limit the use of fossil fuels to produce energy. Some argue that it makes no sense to incur these costs in the near term to avoid damage in the more distant future.

Richard Bradley, of the International Energy Agency, says there is a very good case for taking action soon. "These gases stay in the air for a hundred years and longer so if you put things off then you are taking the risk that you won't be able to reduce the effect," he says. "A choice to put CO<sub>2</sub> in the air today is something we live with for a hundred years."

However Russ George, scientist for The Planktos Foundation of California and a pioneer in the field of biomass sequestration (such as what results when one grows forests to remove CO<sub>2</sub> from the air) takes a differing point of view. "It is not sufficient for us to only talk about limiting emissions; we have to work to remove CO<sub>2</sub> that is already in the atmosphere. The largest ecosystem on the planet and the one most engaged in removing CO<sub>2</sub> from the air is the ocean. As a consequence of the levels of CO<sub>2</sub> we already see in the air the oceans capacity to remove CO<sub>2</sub> has become greatly diminished. This reduction in ocean productivity can be affordably remedied, more affordably than by any other climate change mitigation strategy. The budgets expected to be spent protecting the planet from rampant climate change will be about \$3 trillion USD between now and 2010. For mere tens of millions we might accomplish half the desired Kyoto Accord result."

The mechanisms about to go into force under the Kyoto Accord seek to address about 10% of the greenhouse gas climate change problem. Even so, delegates and nations maintain that this is a significant starting point and that additional steps will surely follow.

Russ George of Planktos notes, "There is broad agreement that the oceans could readily be made more productive but that the added productivity would only remove up to 20% of the CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere. At Planktos we believe that if we only manage to restore ocean health and productivity by half this amount we will have provided half the solution mandated by the Kyoto Accord."

The mechanism Planktos advocates is the restoration of iron, a critical micronutrient, to natural levels in the oceans of 50 years ago. The impact of rising CO<sub>2</sub> has reduced delivery of iron to the oceans which is a process largely dependent on dust blowing off the dry lands of the Earth. As CO<sub>2</sub> levels have risen in the air dry land grasses have grown a little greener and survived a little longer into the summer. The introduction of modern soil conservation by the US Soil Conservation Service during the Okalahoma Dust Bowl Days showed farmed that by growing grass as soil cover precious topsoil would be preserved.

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Presently high and rising levels of CO2 are having the same effect in areas of the world where critical ocean dust originates, such as the dry lands of western China and Mongolia. Studies by many agencies now show that the North Pacific, closest and most dependent on this Asian dust, has lost a quarter of its productivity over the last 50 years. At the same time studies show grass lands of Asia have grown more stable and less dust is in the air.

Planktos says that restoring iron to the ocean may be as simple as having a handful of the 30,000 large cargo ships that now criss-cross the oceans distribute powdered iron ore dust, dirt, as they make their ocean journeys. Carbon Credits as provided for by the Kyoto Accord could easily pay the cost of this effort, which would help slow the progress of climate change and restore the productivity to the oceans. As a side benefit, fish populations would be helped to return to higher levels.

The Planktos Foundation seeks to demonstrate the environmental and economic viability of restoring the health of ocean plankton to the oceans and in doing so help mitigate global climate change and help restore declining fisheries.

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