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Symposium Examines Implications of Global Warming for Toxins Containment at Bay Area Landfills

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For Immediate Release:
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Symposium Examines Implications of Global Warming for Toxins Containment at Bay Area Landfills

The Citizens' League for Environmental Action Now (CLEAN) is sponsoring a symposium titled "Global Warming: Toxins @ Bay," to be held on Saturday, June 2, at Golden Gate University School of Law from 9 am to 4 pm in Room 2203. The School of Law is located at 536 Mission Street in San Francisco. The event is free, and lunch will be provided to the first 75 participants.

Speakers from community and environmental groups, research institutions, and governmental agencies will address whether San Francisco Bay Area communities should follow the standard strategy of leaving toxins in place at landfills and other waste sites or whether, in light of anticipated rising sea levels and increased flooding triggered by global warming, they should take more decisive action to see that toxins are safely removed from waste sites.

"This symposium offers a rare opportunity for Bay Area residents to learn more about how global warming might increase their exposure to toxins leaching from waste sites," says Dana Dillworth, director of CLEAN and a longtime wetlands advocate in Brisbane. "This is not a 'change-your-lightbulbs global warming symposium; it's more about protecting ourselves and our estuaries from the migration of toxins in groundwater. Scientists, clean-up specialists, and environmental protection activists will together explore this emerging issue. Community members will ask for innovative, effective, and natural solutions so that we don't pass this problem on to future generations."

The symposium's morning sessions will address the impacts of rising sea level on Bay Area communities and transportation infrastructures and how toxins migrating from waste sites into wetlands affect plants and animals that rely on these ecosystems. The afternoon sessions will offer scientific, legal, and grassroots advice for cleaning up the contaminated sites and better protecting local communities.

Scheduled speakers include Guido Franco of the California Climate Change Research Center; Joshua Collins of the San Francisco Estuary Institute; Jane Williams of California Communities Against Toxics; Michael Warburton of the Public Trust Alliance; and remediation specialists from the US Environmental Protection Agency, among others.

"The theme and approach of this meeting are so important for Bay Area development planning as we face the impacts of climate change," says Michael Warburton, executive director of the Public Trust Alliance. "Just what might public and private responses be, and what legal standards should be applied to precautions that might be required for public health and benefit? The changing positions of shorelines and new hydrological pathways for pollutants to impact the health of navigable waters and fisheries have very direct public trust implications."

Conference organizers plan to compile a follow-up report on the symposium's conclusions to send to community decision makers and opinion leaders, regulatory agencies, and others.

The symposium is cosponsored by the Golden Gate University School of Law Environmental Law and Justice Clinic, which, in conjunction with the school's Environmental Law Program, is holding a series of programs over the coming year relating to global warming and the law. Additional support to the symposium is provided by the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, Clean Water Action, California Communities Against Toxics, Brisbane Baylands Community Advisory Group, and San Bruno Mountain Watch.

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Note to Editors: Members of the news media who wish to cover the symposium should contact Dana Dillworth at Citizens League for Environmental Action Now (CLEAN) at 415-468-8587 or earthhelp@earthlink.net. Parking is available on the street or at the US Parking lot on Mission Street, directly across from Golden Gate University.