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NEWS RELEASE

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GROUPS FORCE BUSH ADMINISTRATION TO UPDATE CLEAN AIR STANDARDS FOR REFINERIES *New Agreement Forces EPA to Protect Communities from Air Pollution*

San Francisco, CA—Petroleum refineries will have to meet stricter clean air standards thanks to a court decree filed today that settles a lawsuit filed by two environmental groups against the Bush administration. According to the decree, the Bush administration must develop and enforce stronger pollution control standards for new refineries over the next two and a half years.

Our Children's Earth Foundation (OCE) and Sierra Club sued the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in January because EPA failed to review and update pollution standards for new petroleum refineries as required by the federal Clean Air Act. EPA has not updated standards since 1974, allowing petroleum refineries to use 20 year old technology in some cases. Decades later, it is now "appropriate" to update pollution standards at these sources, since new technology is readily available to reduce substantial amounts of emissions from refineries. This lapse has allowed existing refineries to expand their operating capacities without state of the art pollution controls.

"This is an important victory for us because these technology forcing standards, which have been ignored again and again by the government, are finally going to be updated to ensure that refineries use readily available technology to control pollution," said Tiffany Schauer, Executive Director of Our Children's Earth. "With more reports out daily linking disease to air pollution, this is one much needed revision to the law."

Under the Clean Air Act, EPA's administrator is required to review and, if appropriate, update new source performance standards or NSPS, including standards for petroleum refineries, every eight years. Yet, some standards have gone unreviewed for two decades. The pollutants at issue are smog-causing hydrocarbon compounds, nitrogen oxides (NO_x), sulfur dioxide (SO₂), particulate matter (PM), and carbon monoxide (CO).

"In this political climate it is so hard to make positive environmental changes," said Pat Gallagher, of the Sierra Club. "This case proves that the courts are still a place where average citizens can go to effect change."

According to the consent decree, EPA must immediately evaluate and establish more stringent limits on pollutants like particulate matter, nitrogen oxides and sulfur dioxide in light of technological advances in pollution control technology. EPA's delay has meant that emission standards have not been updated, despite considerable advances in pollution reduction technology and scientific research linking air pollution to adverse health effects. Numerous studies have found that air pollution causes disease and premature deaths and increases the frequency and severity of asthma attacks. According to the American Lung Association, more than 150 million Americans live in counties with unhealthy levels of ozone pollution and/or particulate pollution.

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