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## REPORT ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND ITS IMPACT ON NATIVE PEOPLES TO BE SENT TO CONGRESS

A new report by researchers of the Natural Resources Law Center of the University of Colorado at Boulder Law School examines the impact that global warming will have on native communities in the coming decades and offers recommendations to Congress and federal agencies to deal with these changes.

Titled “Native Communities and Climate Change: Protecting Tribal Resources as Part of National Climate Policy,” the report was researched and prepared by the Law School’s Natural Resources Law Center and was funded by the Turner Foundation.

The Center will be sending the report to members of the Congress, to the directors and deputy directors of the U.S. Department of the Interior, the U.S. Geological Survey, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, and other appropriate federal agencies and interest groups. In addition, the document is being sent to the leadership of Native American tribes throughout the U.S.

“Rising sea levels, melting tundra, coastal flooding, warmer streams and severe drought are just a few of the calamities facing native communities in North America as global warming gains a foothold,” said Jonathan Hanna, the Center’s Research Fellow and principal author of the report.

“While climate change will affect everyone, it will affect some disproportionately and Native American communities are among the most vulnerable to a changing climate,” said Hanna. “The unfortunate irony is that the traditional lifestyles historically followed by tribes and continued to a large extent today contribute very little to the climate change problem.”

Beyond describing the ways in which tribes will be affected, the report discusses the implication of this disparity and it urges federal policymakers to recognize the special burdens facing tribes as they develop climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies.

The report recommends that Congress holds hearings focusing on the impact of climate change on tribes. Because addressing tribal impacts will be costly, it is important that Congress establish adequate revenue-raising mechanisms such as a carbon tax or fee-based emissions allowances.

“The federal trust responsibility requires the government to protect tribal land and resources, and is rooted in the numerous treaties, statutes, executive orders, and judicial opinions recognizing the very tribal rights at risk from climate change,” noted CU law professor Sarah Krakoff, a contributor to the report.

“While tribal lands host plentiful renewable energy resources like wind and solar power, developing these technologies requires investment capital and expertise that tribes often lack,” said Hanna.

The report recommends that the government provide financial and technical assistance to tribes to take advantage of these opportunities and it urges the federal government to administer government programs to protect treaty and other tribal rights from climate change impacts.

Copies of the executive summary and full report are be available on the Natural Resources Law Center website at

<http://www.colorado.edu/law/centers/nrlc/pubs.htm>