

irreplaceable

Wildlife in a Warming World

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RHODE ISLAND LEADERS DISCUSS GLOBAL WARMING'S THREATS TO WILDLIFE

U.S. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse, state and city officials host Earth Day talk at "Irreplaceable: Wildlife in a Warming World" exhibit

PROVIDENCE, Rhode Island – April 21, 2008 - With compelling photographs of animals and plants threatened by global warming as a backdrop, representatives of three levels of government came together today to speak out on the issue of global climate change on the eve of Earth Day.

Speaking at the [Irreplaceable: Wildlife in a Warming World](#) exhibit in downtown Providence, U.S. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) focused his remarks on the plight of imperiled species and habitats affected by global warming. The senator, joined by R.I. State Representative Art Handy and Providence City Councilman Cliff Wood, spoke to an audience of community and faith-based groups, environmental advocates and students, then toured the exhibit with audience members.

Global warming will become a leading cause of species extinction in the coming decades. Recognizing this threat, Senator Whitehouse has sponsored legislation -- the [Global Warming Wildlife Survival Act](#) (S. 2204) -- to protect wildlife threatened by climate change. Representative Handy has also taken the lead, introducing the Rhode Island [Global Warming Solutions Act](#), which calls for statewide caps on emissions as other states, including California, Hawaii, New Jersey and Washington, have adopted.

"Global climate change impacts our entire planet, and every one, and every thing, on it," said Whitehouse, a member of the Senate Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee. "As we celebrate Earth Day, I hope these stunning photographs, and the plight of the species they depict, will inspire more people in Rhode Island to press for urgent action to address the challenge of global climate change and its devastating effects on our wildlife and our oceans."

The Global Warming Wildlife Survival Act, introduced in October, would develop coordinated national strategies to protect wildlife populations and habitats likely to be harmed by global warming. It also seeks to protect and restore coastal and marine ecosystems, helping them better withstand ocean acidification, sea level rise, and other stresses related to climate change. The bill was incorporated into

the Climate Security Act (S. 2191), which passed the EPW Committee in December and now awaits consideration by the full Senate.

The Rhode Island Global Warming Solutions Act requires reductions in global warming pollution in Rhode Island 20 percent by 2020 and 80 percent by the year 2050. Representative Handy's bill sets the caps, then requires the state to develop a plan to achieve the required reductions. It also calls for the state to lead by example in reducing global warming pollution by state agencies and state-funded projects.

"The [Global Warming Solutions Act](#) is not just about reducing greenhouse gas emissions and inspiring a new green economy – it is an important measure to forestall the effects of climate change on our environment, and can protect critical habitats and wildlife," said Handy. "This is a real opportunity for Rhode Island in terms of leading the country in the right direction and placing our state at the forefront of real action on climate change."

Rhode Island is home to an incredible diversity of native wildlife species, including 277 birds, 53 mammals, 37 fish, 25 reptiles and 18 amphibians. As a small coastal state, Rhode Island will be disproportionately affected by rising seas triggered by global warming, changing the makeup of entire ecosystems and forcing wildlife to shift their ranges or adapt. Rhode Island's nearly 400 miles of coastline are particularly susceptible to destruction as sea level rises and barrier reef islands are stressed.

"We are impressed with Rhode Island's leadership on the issue of global warming," said Susan Holmes, Senior Legislative Representative of Earthjustice, one of the Irreplaceable campaign's sponsoring organizations. "While Rhode Island may be a small state, it has set a strong example, combating the threat of global warming on several fronts. We hope the rest of the nation takes notice."

Today's event is a 'green' event, powered by *GreenStart.net*, an alternative energy service provided by [People's Power & Light](#) that devotes electric usage to renewable sources including solar, wind, biomass, and small hydroelectric plants.

About Irreplaceable: Wildlife in a Warming World

[Irreplaceable: Wildlife in a Warming World](#) is a national campaign by faith, science, art and justice groups to tell the story of how plants and animals are struggling to adapt to a rapidly warming world. Featuring work by award-winning wildlife photographers, the campaign seeks to bring the public face-to-face with the wildlife most threatened by climate change – from the iconic polar bear to Rhode Island's own piping plover. The 40-print exhibit debuted in Rhode Island in April (April 3-26) at the Peerless Building in downtown Providence. The campaign is presented by [Earthjustice](#), [Noah Alliance](#), [International League of Conservation Photographers](#) (ILCP), [Conservation International's Center for Applied Biodiversity Science](#) (CABS) as well as local partners. Local sponsors include [The Rhode Island Climate Coalition \(RICC\)](#), [People's Power and Light](#) and the [Endangered Species Coalition](#).

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