

## **NEWS RELEASE**

---

**For Immediate Release: May 25, 2005**

**Contact: Sandy Bahr (602) 253-8633**

### **“It’s déjà vu all over again.” Legislators Recycle Bad Environmental Bills**

**PHOENIX** – Today, the Sierra Club’s Grand Canyon Chapter released its 2005 Environmental Report Card for the Arizona Legislature and the Governor. This year there were many replays of bad ideas from previous sessions. They included the animal and ecological terrorism bill, the anti-initiative and referendum bills, yet another Heritage Fund raid, and as if the Legislature had not mucked up the statutes enough last year with a bad forest program, they compounded it this year by adding on additional property and use tax breaks with no protections for old growth or the larger trees.

“With Arizona’s explosive growth, we need strong environmental protections and citizen involvement more than ever,” said Sandy Bahr, Conservation Outreach Director for the Sierra Club’s Grand Canyon Chapter. “Unfortunately, the Arizona Legislature continues to focus on weakening environmental protections and recycling the bad ideas from previous years — promoting logging of old growth forests, raiding the Heritage Fund, and undercutting citizen initiative rights are just a few examples.”

The Legislature was so hostile to environmental protection that it even proposed eliminating the lead agency for enforcing Arizona’s environmental laws — the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality.

“It’s ironic that the Legislature proposed to get rid of an agency and take away its funding because it was actually doing its job,” said Sandy Bahr, Conservation Outreach Director for the Sierra Club’s Grand Canyon Chapter. “The Arizona Department of Environmental Quality got into trouble with certain legislators for enforcing our environmental laws and for trying to keep our air and water safe. It is sad that more legislators were not cheering this action.”

**-More-**

Especially disturbing this year was the number of legislators who failed on the Report Card. The “F’s” earned are at an all time high with more than half of the Legislature failing to vote to protect the environment. In the House, 36 (out of 60 total members) and in the Senate 18 (out of 30 total) earned “F’s”. At the bottom of the barrel and earning “Back to the Minors” recognition were **Senators Gould, Harper, Johnson, and Verschoor**. These senators failed to vote to protect the environment —at all.

On the bright side, a major bill to establish energy efficiency standards for products not covered by federal law was signed into law and we took a small baby step on improving the environmental conditions in Arizona schools. Unfortunately, a bill that would have provided additional incentives for the use of solar energy did not make the cut and was so weak near session’s end that it had no advocates.

The Sierra Club recognized Lawmakers as Session All Stars for earning a perfect score and therefore A-pluses on the Report Card. They include **Senators J. Garcia, Giffords, and Mitchell and Representatives Burton Cahill, Cajero Bedford, Gallardo, M. Garcia, Kirkpatrick, Lopes, Lopez, Lujan, McCune Davis, B. Miranda, and Prezelski**. “Green Glove” recognition went to **Representative Tom O’Halleran** for his work to defeat or amend and mitigate bad environmental legislation including his efforts to protect the Arizona Heritage Fund, Arizona’s water supplies, and our forests. **Representative Sinema** and **Senator Giffords** won most valuable player recognition for their consistent and invaluable work to protect our air, water, and land.

The Governor’s vetoes of bad legislation were key to preventing more damage to important programs and for protecting our dark skies — she vetoed two out of three bad billboard bills, the Heritage Fund raid, the original bad forest bill, and the original animal and ecological terrorism bill. It was disappointing to see two of the vetoed bills resurrected and signed, however.

The Sierra Club was founded in 1892 and is the nation’s oldest grassroots environmental organization with more than 13,000 members in the Grand Canyon (Arizona) Chapter. The Sierra Club has been tracking environmental legislation in Arizona for more than twenty years and has been grading legislators on their performance since the early 1990’s. At the end of each legislative session it develops the report card in order to inform Arizonans about how their legislators are voting on environmental issues. This year's grades are based on 13 House votes and 11 Senate votes. The Governor was graded on nine bills on issues ranging from keeping the Arizona Heritage Fund intact to promoting energy efficiency.

Complete copies of the Environmental Report Card will be available at [www.arizona.sierraclub.org](http://www.arizona.sierraclub.org) later today or can be emailed, mailed or faxed. Please call (602) 253-8633 for a copy.

###