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**Sierra Club Announces “Green Energy & Green Livelihoods  
Achievement Award” Winners in India for 2009**  
*Groups receive Rs. 50 lakh total for climate change partnerships*

**SAN FRANCISCO** – Today the Sierra Club announced the organization’s first ever “Green Energy & Green Livelihoods Achievement Award” winners for India. The new award recognizes community initiatives to promote green economic development, adaptation of renewable energy alternatives and organizational leadership in a grassroots environmental campaign. The award represents Sierra Club’s growing interest in building international partnerships to address climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Two organizations share the award this year. **Ecosphere Spiti**, from mountainous Himachal Pradesh, has successfully created sustainable livelihoods linked to conservation and ecotourism. And the **Barefoot College** in Rajasthan, led by social entrepreneur Bunker Roy, has applied practical, traditional knowledge and community-owned sustainable technology to reach the poorest residents of the impoverished desert state. Each award comes with a Rs. 20 lakh gift and a trophy to be presented during a ceremony in Mumbai on July 30<sup>th</sup>.

Praising Ecosphere Spiti, Sierra Club Executive Director Carl Pope said, “We set out on this path more than a century ago by promoting conservation awareness through mountain outings in the United States. We are delighted to recognize Ecosphere Spiti because it so clearly shares our own ideals for protecting a nation’s cultural and natural heritage for future generations.”

The 117-year-old Sierra Club, best known for its dual focus of outdoor adventure and civic engagement, also announced a unique association with the legendary **Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA)** based in Gujarat. Both organizations are democratically structured, serve large grassroots memberships and focus on public education. The groups will explore SEWA’s social and economic development programs as an avenue for informing Americans about the challenges associated with climate change adaptation in India. SEWA will receive a Rs. 10 lakh gift from the Sierra Club for its celebrated service to its network of underprivileged working women.

“It is a great honor for Ecosphere to be the joint recipient of the Sierra Award alongside the likes of Barefoot College,” said Ishita Khanna, President, Ecosphere Spiti. “We are extremely thrilled and pleased since this is the first time the Sierra Club has instituted an award of this nature in

India. It really motivates us to try and attempt to emulate what the Sierra Club has successfully achieved over more than a 100 years. It will indeed be a long journey; however, it is highly inspiring for us to learn that the Sierra Club sees the seeds of their own beginnings in Ecosphere."

Sierra Club International Programs director Stephen Mills had equally effusive praise for the Barefoot College. "As much as we are interested in sharing resources and supporting environmental leadership in India we have also come to listen and learn," Mills said. "We believe that much of the important energy and environmental work happening now in India has exciting applications in the U.S. Bunker Roy's amazing record of teaching a community's most disadvantaged members to become solar engineers is a prime example. We are not the first, and we will not be the last to recognize this astonishingly scalable and replicable model for creating green livelihoods."

"We are delighted, honored and humbled by this award," said Bunker Roy. "The recognition is to Mahatma Gandhi, 'The Last Man' who has shown the simple way of how to respect the Earth."

"It seems fitting that one of the Sierra Club's first steps in India is to recognize a group that reminds us of our own beginnings and coincidentally my birthplace," said Pritpal Singh Kochhar, a long time Sierra Club Outings trip leader from New York, commenting on the award to Ecosphere Spiti. "Though the Himalayas are somewhat taller than the Sierra Nevada, both mountain ranges are threatened by climate change."

The Sierra Club's Carl Pope recognized several Sierra Club supporters as most responsible for leading the organization's outreach in India, a new product of the organization's multifaceted Climate Recovery Agenda.

"Without a doubt, this timely new program would never have come about were it not for the tireless efforts in of Sunil Deshmukh, Sadhana Shenoy, Pritpal Singh Kochhar, Sanjay Ranchod, Dr. Mohan Durve, Anil Deshpande, our friends at the American India Foundation, and my wife Shahnaz, a Mumbaiker herself. Volunteers are the backbone of the Sierra Club," Pope continued. "In this case they were also the brains, the feet, the arms, the legs, and the heart."

"For more than 100 years the members of the Sierra Club have harnessed public demand for conservation and for reducing natural resource consumption in the United States. But neither America nor India can win the battle against climate change alone," said Sadhana Shenoy of Portland, Oregon and a founding member of the Sierra Club's India Advisory Council. "We must share resources and do this together."

"I joined the Sierra Club because they are advocating so vociferously for U.S. emissions reductions, for global agreements that address climate equity or for increased international funding for climate adaptation and mitigation," said Sunil Deshmukh, a Miami, Florida Sierra Club member and a driving force behind the organization's outreach to India. "Our citizens must lead so our governments will follow," he continued.

A ceremony for the award winners will be held at the Ravindra Natya Mandir auditorium in Mumbai on Thursday, July 30<sup>th</sup>. The Chief Guest will be Dr. B.L. Mungekar, a member of the Planning Commission of the Government of India. CNN/IBN Environmental Editor Bahar Dutt will be the guest emcee. The event is open to the public. To attend, please contact FTC Events Ph.: +91 22.2282.5108, email: [events@fravashiworld.com](mailto:events@fravashiworld.com).

For more information about the Sierra Club's India program, please visit [www.sierraclub.org/india](http://www.sierraclub.org/india), or contact [stephen.mills@sierraclub.org](mailto:stephen.mills@sierraclub.org).

For more information on the Green Energy & Green Livelihoods Achievement Award winners please visit:

Ecosphere Spiti, [www.spitiecosphere.com](http://www.spitiecosphere.com)  
Barefoot College, [www.barefootcollege.org](http://www.barefootcollege.org)  
SEWA, [www.sewa.org](http://www.sewa.org)

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR PUBLICATIONS IN INDIA**

“We learned in this process just how strong and vibrant Indian civil society is,” said Mills. “Every single person we contacted gave us valuable advice on what our role as a U.S. based organization should and should not be in India. We are especially grateful though, to our Nominators who took time to submit nominations, and to our Recommendation Board members who volunteered their own time to evaluate the achievements of our nominees. This was not an easy task. Every single one of our nominees is worthy of recognition.”

Mills singled out for praise several prominent Indian leaders who helped with the development of the program including Raj Chengappa, Managing Editor, *India Today*; Darryl D'Monte Chair, Forum of Environmental Journalists; Dr. Anita Deshmukh, Executive Director, PUKAR; Mihir Bhatt, Executive Director, the All India Disaster Mitigation Institute, Kumar Ketkar, Chief Editor, *Loksatta*; Malini Mehra, Director, Center for Social Markets; Mohan Deshmukh, Chair of the Indian Builders Association, Sudhir Moravekar, CEO of Panoramics Group; Mr. M.N. Chaini, President, Indian Merchant's Chamber; and, Dr. Erach Bharucha, Bharati Vidyapeeth Institute of Environment Education and Research. Sierra Club consultants Swayamprabha Das in New Delhi and Karla Bookman in Mumbai have also made invaluable contributions, he said.

Over the past year and a half the Sierra Club sought the assistance of some of India's leading environmental, business, social service and arts communities to form an India-based Nominations Committee and Recommendation Board. In response to the appeal NGOs from all across the country sent nominations for consideration. Of those, some 14 were found to have met the Sierra Club's award criteria. In February of this year, the India Recommendation Board met in Mumbai to evaluate nominated organizations and to send their recommendation of semi-finalists forward to the Sierra Club's India Advisory Council in the U.S. for final decision

The Recommendation Board and Advisory Council members examined recent community-based organizational achievements that have broadened public support for green livelihoods. Grassroots initiatives rather than scientific, academic or governmental activities merited greater consideration. The jury also considered efforts to promote green

economic empowerment, the creation of green jobs, adaptation of renewable energy alternatives and initiatives that have inspired others in the green movement.

Some of the prominent nominating organizations for this year's awards included the Development Alternatives Group, the Ashoka Foundation, Sanctuary Asia, Centre for Environment Education, Central Himalayan Environment Association, ATREE, Yerala Projects Society, Sambandh, Foundation for Ecological Security, Bombay Natural History Society, AID Orissa and the UNDP/GEF Small Grants Program.

### **About The Sierra Club**

Established in 1892 by John Muir – a Scottish-born inventor, writer and conservationist, the Sierra Club is the oldest and largest grassroots environmental, organization in the United States with chapters in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and also in Canada since 1963.

Named “the most influential environmental organization” in Washington D.C. by the Aspen Institute after a survey of every member of the U.S. Congress and key federal officials, the Sierra Club gives the American public the information and the means to make their voices heard. The Club's 1.4 million members and supporters in 65 chapters and over 400 local groups possess the unique ability to empower people and influence public policy through community activism, public education, lobbying, and litigation.

Working with some of the world's top climate scientists, engineers and energy experts, the Sierra Club has developed a Climate Recovery Agenda --a set of initiatives that will help cut carbon emissions 80% by 2050, reduce oil dependence create a clean energy economy and protect natural heritage, communities and the planet from the consequences of global warming.

Sierra Club Executive Director Carl Pope graduated summa cum laude from Harvard College in 1967. He then spent two years as a volunteer with the Peace Corps in Barhi, Bihar, India, where he helped communities and families address the human and environmental impacts of population growth.

Mr. Pope is co-author -- along with Paul Rauber -- of *Strategic Ignorance: Why the Bush Administration Is Recklessly Destroying a Century of Environmental Progress*, which the New York Review of Books called "a splendidly fierce book." Mr. Pope's other books include *Sahib, an American Misadventure in India* (1971) and *Hazardous Waste in America* (1981).

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