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WRI, EIA Form Partnership to Stem Illegal Forest Products Imported Into U.S.

POZNAN, POLAND, December 4, 2008 – The [World Resources Institute](#) and the [Environmental Investigation Agency](#) today launch a partnership to combat illegal logging worldwide and clean up timber supply chains.

The partnership focuses on the 100-year old [Lacey Act](#), which was recently amended to include plant products – including timber and wood.



Photo courtesy of Environmental Investigation Agency

“The Lacey Act, if enforced, has the potential to send a powerful signal around the world that the U.S. is serious about curtailing illegal logging. Increasingly, illegal logging and deforestation contribute to climate change,” said [Jonathan Lash](#), president of WRI.

Signed into law by President William McKinley, the Lacey Act has been a powerful tool used by the U.S. to battle wildlife trafficking by prohibiting the transportation of illegally captured animals or wildlife products across state lines. The new

amendment extends this protection to plants and their derivative products, including items ranging from lumber and wood furniture to paper and sporting goods.

“The bill marks the first time that a major consuming country has made the trade in illegally logged wood a crime. It provides a precedent-setting tool to change the face of a

\$1 trillion industry, reduce deforestation, and improve forestry governance,” said [Alexander von Bismarck](#), executive director at EIA.

Proposed in 2007 by Representative Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) and Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR), with co-sponsorship by President-elect Barack Obama, the bill received widespread backing from a broad coalition of environmental, industry, and labor groups, led by the EIA.

The WRI-EIA partnership will support the coalition by delivering objective and timely information to governments and the private sector to facilitate adherence to Lacey Act requirements. The Lacey Act allows the U.S. Department of Justice to prosecute if a product is produced in violation of the relevant laws of the country of origin and is brought into the United States.

“The WRI-EIA partnership will provide companies and government officials with FAQ sheets, forest information reports, and procurement guides. These will help them ask important questions to ensure their producers and importers trade in legally-sourced products,” said [Dr. Lars Laestadius](#), senior associate at WRI.

“The U.S. is the world’s largest market for forest products,” said [David Bonistall](#), vice president, Environmental, Health & Safety at [NewPage](#). “The Lacey Act is monumental in that it could domino into other countries and increase transparency within the global wood market, ultimately enhancing the reputation of forest products as a sustainable material.”

“The Lacey Act will protect the forest-products industry’s global reputation by helping eliminate illegal logging, which in some places is carried out by organized crime, spreading violence and deforestation in some developing countries,” added Cassie Phillips, vice president, Sustainable Forests and Products at [Weyerhaeuser](#). “It will cost the global industry economically, but we will all gain in the longer term as illegally sourced wood is removed from the marketplace.”

WRI’s partnership with the EIA arrives at the right time. December 6 is the official “forest day” for delegates at the [United Nations climate conference in Poland](#), where WRI and EIA will both be holding [events](#) about the [links between deforestation and climate change](#). Also, the first public comment period on issues relating to implementation of the Lacey Act, which went into effect on May 22, ends December 8.

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The World Resources Institute (www.wri.org) is an environmental think tank that goes beyond research to find practical ways to protect the earth and improve people’s lives.

The Environmental Investigation Agency (www.eia-global.org) was established in 1984 to investigate, expose and campaign against the illegal trade in wildlife and the destruction of our natural environment.