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FOUR LOCAL BUSINESSES TO RECEIVE FIRST ANNUAL POLAR BEAR 'PAW OF APPROVAL' AWARDS

Plaques honoring them for their work in reducing carbon dioxide emissions will be presented during a Metro Parks Tacoma Board of Commissioners meeting on Earth Day, April 22

TACOMA, Wash. – Four local businesses – two private companies and two public entities – are the first annual winners of the Polar Bear Paw of Approval Award.



The award program is presented jointly by Metro Parks Tacoma's Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, the City of Tacoma Sustainability Commission and the Arctic **Action Team** that promotes awareness of the plight of polar bears.

"The annual award recognizes outstanding achievement in the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions that form a large heat-trapping blanket around the earth, resulting in climate change and global warming," said John Garner, conservation and education manager at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium.

The 2013 winners are:

- Unico Properties, LLC, which owns and manages the 386,343-square-foot Wells Fargo Plaza at 1201 Pacific Ave., and has elevated the property to new heights of resource management.
- Weyerhaeuser, a homegrown Fortune 500 company with deep roots in the Pacific Northwest and a longstanding history of environmental stewardship at home and abroad.
- Tacoma Community College, which takes a multifaceted approach to reducing its carbon footprint and involves students in the process.
- Port of Tacoma, a major economic force in Pierce County, which is reducing diesel emissions on one hand and saving millions of kilowatt hours of electricity on another.

They will be honored during a Metro Parks Tacoma Board of Commissioners meeting on Earth Day, April 22. In addition, each has been invited to Earth Days events at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, April 20-21.



"We applaud this year's award recipients," said President Aaron Pointer of the Metro Parks Board of Park Commissioners.

"As an organization dedicated to environmental stewardship, conservation and

education, Metro Parks is proud to join our Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium in recognizing this year's honorees. Working together, we can and will help heal our planet."

Polar Bears International cofounder Carolyn Peery Buchanan, who has studied the bears for decades, will help present the awards.

"We were elated with the depth of the nominees' commitment to the environment and the lengths to which each organization has gone in its work to reduce carbon dioxide emissions which lead to climate change," Garner said.

A team of staff members from the zoo and the City of Tacoma Sustainability Commission judged the nominees and elected to choose four recipients because each demonstrated extraordinary work in different settings.

Unico Properties retrofitted the 41-year-old the Wells Fargo Plaza building with a range of mechanical and energy systems improvements that earned Silver Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) status from the U.S. Green Building Council.

The work included a \$1 million lighting upgrade and retrofit project carried out between 2009 and 2011. The building's electricity consumption dropped by 1.5 million kilowatts annually, and natural gas usage went down by 9,485 therms per year – a 16 percent usage drop, according to the nomination.

In addition, the Wells Fargo Plaza project reduced its carbon footprint by 530 metric tons and improved water efficiency by 45 percent. Unico also purchases renewable energy that keeps millions of pounds of carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere each year. The building holds an 89 score in the Energy Star rating system, meaning its efficiency is higher than 39 percent better than the national median of like buildings.

Weyerhaeuser's leadership in environmental stewardship is long and well documented. The company is well on track to reducing its carbon dioxide emissions by 40 percent by 2020, according to the nomination. The company cut those emissions by 31 percent between 2000 and 2011, by consolidating operations in higher efficiency mills, using fewer fossil fuels and sending less waste to landfills, its nomination materials stated.

The trees that Weyerhaeuser plants and the forests it manages take millions of metric tons of carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere each year.

In addition, Weyerhaeuser is a recognized global leader in addressing climate change with active involvement or support in the U.S. Climate Action Partnership; the Business Environmental Leadership Council for the Center for Climate and Energy Solutions; the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, Energy & Climate; the Forest Climate Working Group; and a number of other organizations.

Tacoma Community College's contributions to reducing carbon dioxide emissions include the purchase and use of electric vehicles for its maintenance, security and operations departments; installation of electric vehicle charging stations; generation of solar power on the roof of the Pamela Transue Center for Science and Engineering; and other initiatives.

In addition, the 13,000-square-foot Annette B. Weyerhaeuser Early Learning Center, completed in 2009, earned LEED Gold certification.

The 69,700-square-foot Harned Center for Health Careers will use 150 geo-thermal wells – drilled 220 feet deep - in its heating and cooling system, as well as a heat-recovery system to further reduce energy

consumption, according to the college's director of facilities. The building was designed to meet LEED Gold certification when completed.

A number of other initiatives, including widespread recycling, also are underway on campus.

Port of Tacoma has saved more than 2 million kilowatt hours of electricity through a variety of initiatives, Tacoma Public Utilities account executive Keil Drescher wrote in a letter of nomination.

The port is preparing projects that will save at least another 2.5 million kilowatt hours annually, he added. "That's enough energy to power 375 homes for a year!" he wrote.

At Totem Ocean Trailer Express, ships no longer burn diesel for power while they're docked. Instead, they use shore power, shifting a two megawatt load to nearly carbon free electricity, Drescher said. That reduces greenhouse gases and cuts down on particulate pollution in Pierce County.

Across the port, other energy-saving initiatives are completed or in the works. They include replacement of high-pressure sodium lighting at terminals and lots with more efficient pulse-start metal halide lighting; and installation of high bay fluorescent lights in warehouses, increasing brightness while using only half the power.

Garner said he's pleased the zoo's very first Paw of Approval winners demonstrate such a breadth of conservation practices.

"The quality of work done by each of these organizations – Unico Properties, Weyerhaeuser, Tacoma Community College and the Port of Tacoma – is exceptional," Garner said. "Pierce County is fortunate to have environmental leaders of this quality in both the private and public sectors.

"They should serve as an inspiration to other businesses that conserving resources is part of a smart business model, and it can be achieved by organizations large and small."

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Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, the Northwest's only combined zoo and aquarium, promotes responsible stewardship of the world's resources through education, conservation, research and recreational opportunities. The zoo, a division of Metro Parks Tacoma, is accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) and the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums (AMMPA).