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Portland Advocates Singled Out for Environmental Leadership Honorees Receive Audubon/Toyota TogetherGreen Fellowships

New York, NY, November 20, 2008—Two Portland, Oregon advocates are the recipients of a new national fellowship designed to advance the work of individuals with outstanding potential to help shape a brighter environmental future.

Marcelo Bonta and Tony DeFalco are two of only 40 people selected from competitors nationwide for the *TogetherGreen* Conservation Leadership Program, part of a new conservation initiative of the National Audubon Society with support from Toyota. Fellows receive specialized training in conservation planning and execution, the chance to work and share best practices with gifted conservation professionals, and assistance with project outreach and evaluation. Each Fellow will also receive \$10,000 towards a community-focused project to engage local residents in conserving land, water and energy, and contributing to greater environmental health.

Bonta and DeFalco both want to better engage everyone in the environmental movement. To achieve that, Bonta will use his fellowship to create a series of dialogues that examine diversity issues in Portland's environmental movement. Entitled, the Diversifying the Environmental Movement Forum, the dialogue series will convene the environmental community and communities of color to discuss and find action-oriented solutions to the problems that have caused the cultural divide that exists in the environmental movement.

DeFalco will focus his efforts on partnering with Verde, a social enterprise organization that trains and employs low-income Latinos to do green landscaping, to create a new enterprise, Verde Energy. Verde Energy will train and employ low-income Latinos and Native Americans in the Portland metro area in the green energy sector – activities such as installing solar panels to decrease usage of greenhouse gases or retrofitting commercial buildings to increase energy efficiency. By engaging Latinos and Native Americans in environmental protection through informative workshops and new job opportunities, Tony will be engaging communities that have been traditionally underrepresented in the mainstream environmental movement to benefit from efforts to protect the environment by working to create green jobs for everyone.

Both of these Fellows will be building connections between community leaders, conservationists, environmental professionals and other partners, creating a movement that is both more inclusive and more effective at protecting our threatened world.

Bonta, who is the founder and executive director of the Center for Diversity & the Environment, has been involved in conservation and social change efforts for a decade. He has proven himself to be a dedicated leader in helping the environmental community to become more inclusive and more representative of the rapidly-diversifying U.S. population. Not only did he establish the Center, but he also started the Young Environmental Professionals of Color network to provide support and opportunities to over forty leaders in Portland's environmental movement.

DeFalco currently serves as a Coordinator of the Young Environmental Professionals of Color group, as well as Sustainability Manager for the Trust for Public Land's Tribal & Native Lands Program, working to conserve land and revitalize Native American communities.

"Marcelo and Tony are the kind of people who can make a real difference in the health of our environment and the quality of our future," said Audubon President John Flicker. "Each of our *TogetherGreen* Fellows demonstrates exceptional environmental understanding and commitment, combined with tremendous potential to inspire and lead others. Together, they represent the talented and diverse leadership the environmental community will need to tackle the huge challenges and opportunities confronting us now and in the years to come."

"Latino and Native American communities have traditions of protecting the environment, yet for the most part, have not been engaged by the mainstream environmental movement," said DeFalco. "The generosity of Toyota and vision of Audubon will help us build on the success of Verde in connecting people of color with the economic benefits of environmental protection – green jobs."

"I am honored to be a part of the inaugural class of *TogetherGreen* Fellows," said Bonta. "I was attracted to the program because of its commitment to innovation and diversity, which is exactly what is needed for the conservation movement to be successful in the 21st century. Through Audubon and Toyota's support of the Diversifying the Environmental Movement Forum, I look forward to building a more diverse, relevant, effective, and truly sustainable environmental movement for all."

Bonta has been affiliated with the Center for Diversity & the Environment since 2005, and DeFalco has been affiliated with the Young Environmental Professionals of Color (a group Bonta founded) since 2005. Half of the *TogetherGreen* fellows come from within Audubon's far-reaching national network; half channel their environmental efforts through other organizations.

Bonta received a joint Masters degree in biology and urban and environmental policy and planning from Tufts University and a Bachelors degree in psychology from Yale University. He has been honored as a senior fellow in the Environmental Leadership Program, a Portland/Multnomah Sustainable Development Commission member, and an Orion Grassroots Network advisor. Bonta's articles on the need to diversify the environmental movement have been published by Grist Magazine, Yale University Press and the Land Trust Alliance.

DeFalco received a Masters degree in natural resource planning and interpretation from Humboldt State University and a Bachelors degree in ethnic studies from the University of California at Berkeley. He serves as an advisory council member for the Center for Diversity & the Environment, and in the past has worked for the Marine Fish Conservation Network and National Wildlife Federation to restore and protect unique environmental resources.

"Toyota believes in the power of grassroots efforts to develop the environmental leaders of tomorrow," said Patricia Salas Pineda, Group Vice President, Toyota Motor North America. "These 40 *TogetherGreen* Fellows will receive invaluable training for the future while immediately making a difference today with on-the-ground community projects."

A complete list of the 2008 *TogetherGreen* fellows can be found at www.TogetherGreen.org/fellows.

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About *TogetherGreen*

Audubon and Toyota launched the five-year *TogetherGreen* initiative in spring, 2008 to fund conservation projects, train environmental leaders, and offer volunteer and individual action opportunities that significantly benefit the environment. As of October, volunteer days have begun in 40, tallying in excess of 11,000 volunteer hours. Funding totaling \$1.4 million was recently awarded to innovative conservation projects nationwide, while www.TogetherGreen.org helps users take individual conservation action and share and celebrate success stories. The *TogetherGreen* initiative and grants programs are funded by a \$20 million Toyota gift to Audubon, the largest in the conservation group's long history.

About Audubon

Now in its second century, Audubon connects people with birds, nature and the environment that supports us all. Our national network of community-based nature centers, chapters, scientific, education, and advocacy programs engages millions of people from all walks of life in conservation action to protect and restore the natural world. Visit Audubon online at www.audubon.org.

About Toyota

Toyota (NYSE: TM) established operations in the United States in 1957 and currently operates 10 manufacturing plants, with another under construction in Mississippi. Toyota is committed to being a good corporate citizen in the communities where it does business and believes in supporting programs with long-term sustainable results. Through its corporate initiatives, manufacturing operations and philanthropy, Toyota supports numerous organizations across the country, focusing on education, the environment and safety. In 2007, Toyota contributed more than \$56 million to philanthropic programs in the U.S. For more information on Toyota's commitment to improving communities nationwide, visit <http://www.toyota.com/community>.