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HEINZ CENTER ENVIRONMENTAL STUDY BACKS  
'URGENT ACTION' TO FILL KEY DATA GAPS

WASHINGTON, D.C., JUNE 13, 2006 – A new report, "Filling the Gaps\*," released today by The Heinz Center recommends "urgent action" to fill 10 key environmental information data gaps that are preventing better environmental decision-making.

The 10 data gaps deserving "special attention" were selected from among 103 national indicators identified in The Heinz Center's landmark 2002 report on the condition of the lands, waters, and living resources of the U.S. In that report, the Heinz Center concluded that adequate monitoring data existed for reporting on only 58 of those 103 national indicators, with inadequate data preventing reporting on another 45 indicators.

"This clearly is one of those cases of 'What we don't know *can* hurt us', and it already is hurting our society in numerous ways," said **William C. Clark, chair of the Heinz study group and Professor at the Harvard University Kennedy School of Government.**

"No major corporation would manage its assets without feedback to judge both its own performance and external conditions. We are paying a steep price for being unable to provide reliable national monitoring data across our nation's ecosystems," Clark said. "This is a need we neglect at our own peril and at risk of continued inefficiencies and risk to invaluable natural resources."

Addressing the 10 priority data gaps would more than double the number of ecosystem condition indicators that can be reported nationally in future reports.

"Filling these data gaps will have a profound effect on the nation's ability to report on ecosystem use and condition, with important implications for policy and management," the report says. Once those gaps are addressed, improved reporting capabilities "extend across all major ecosystem types."

The report cautions against making tradeoffs between funding these key gaps and continuing existing monitoring programs. "We recognize and appreciate the difficulty of funding these important initiatives at a time of tight budgets, but caution that these needs cannot be met by cutting other ongoing monitoring efforts," **Heinz Center President Thomas E. Lovejoy** said

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\* The full name of the new report is *Filling the Gaps: Priority Data Needs and Key Management Challenges for National Reporting on Ecosystem Condition*, available online at [www.heinzctr.org/ecosystems](http://www.heinzctr.org/ecosystems).

in releasing the new report. “These programs serve vital needs: the timber industry needs to understand overall supply, fishing interests need to understand the condition of fish stocks, housing developers rely on state natural Heritage data for their site designs, and transportation planners use environmental information to plan roads and reduce their impacts. We cannot simply trade these benefits away,” Lovejoy said.

In addition, the new *Filling Data Gaps* report notes that merely filling the 10 priority information gaps “would miss the larger picture” – the overall system that provides the nation’s environmental monitoring information also merits attention. The report highlights key stresses on this system, and key concerns – such as the lack of any means to compare priorities across different reporting programs.

The 2006 *Filling Data Gaps* report is one of three major environmental indicator reports The Heinz Center expects to release this year. Upcoming reports due out this year will report on non-native species and on landscape pattern, and the Center is scheduled in 2007 to release its next major report on managing the nation’s ecosystems.

The full report, plus additional background material, is available on the web at <http://www.heinzctr.org/ecosystems>.

Established in memory of Senator Heinz, the H. John Heinz III Center for Science, Economics and the Environment is a nonprofit, nonpartisan institution dedicated to improving the scientific and economic foundation for environmental policy through multisectoral collaboration. (<http://www.heinzctr.org>)

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