It is no small thing to stand up when so many others are still sitting down—especially when you could be personally risking arrest. On March 2, many of you were among the more than 2500 people who took that stand at the Capitol Power Plant in Washington, DC.

Backed by more than 90 environmental, public health, labor, social justice, and faith-based groups as well as leading climate advocates like James Hansen, Bill McKibben and Wendell Berry, more than 2500 people joined RAN in a multi-generational act of peaceful civil disobedience at the coal power plant that literally powers congressional buildings in Washington, DC.

It is safe to say our action was a resounding success. Not only did we amplify our message—bold, just climate and energy policy for 2009—through tremendous media coverage; we also pushed House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev, to move the power plant almost entirely off of coal power—a clear step in the right direction.

The Capitol Power Plant, which was a national symbol of the stranglehold that dirty energy sources have over our communities, our climate and our economy, now symbolizes the power of organizing and activism to make change. In the past, calls to reduce the U.S. Capitol’s use of coal have met with resistance from pro-coal lawmakers and lobbyists. Our action turned the tide.

But our action in DC was just the beginning. Now more than ever, with climate legislation and international climate negotiations nearing, we must escalate our actions to meet the immediacy of our message. It is time to seize the opportunity to be a country where actions speak louder than words—we can and we must!
WHOLE FOODS JOINS RAN CAMPAIGN, ANNOUNCES NEW COMMITMENT ON PALM OIL

On February 24, Austin, TX-based natural foods retailer Whole Foods Market went public in voicing its commitment to sourcing palm oil that does not contribute to global warming, to the destruction of the world’s remaining tropical rainforests or to the displacement of communities. Whole Foods joins a growing list of more than 40 other food, cosmetic and consumer goods companies who have signed RAN’s pledge to seek more sustainable ways of sourcing palm oil.

Since 2008, RAN has been targeting U.S. agribusinesses Archer Daniels Midland (ADM), Bunge and Cargill in an effort to stop the expansion of oil palm plantations in the planet’s most threatened tropical rainforests. RAN Supporters have entered stores such as Safeway and Walgreen’s to sticker products known to contain palm oil from companies such as Cadbury, General Mills, Hershey’s, Kellogg’s, Nestle, Proctor and Gamble, Dial, and Unilever with labels reading, “Warning! Product May Contain Rainforest Destruction.”

As one of the most popular ingredients in many cosmetic and consumer goods, palm oil has become the leading driver of deforestation in Southeast Asia. Increasingly, the Amazon rainforest is also under threat as Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea and Brazil raze their unique forestlands to plant the crop.

RAN TAKES AIM AT AGROFUELS IN CALIFORNIA’S LOW CARBON FUEL STANDARD

Growing government mandates to replace fossil fuels with agrofuels are an increasingly worrisome driver of deforestation in Latin America, Asia and Indonesia. RAN has been working with communities in Paraguay, Brazil and Indonesia to document the destruction caused by agrofuel cultivation. On April 22, 2009, RAN took our first big step to demonstrate against agrofuels in government with an online action, a rally and a banner drop at the California Air Resource’s Board hearing to demonstrate against agrofuels in government with an online action.

By importing palm oil to sell to U.S. retailers that use palm oil in soaps, lotions and packaged foods. As the largest privately held company in the U.S., Cargill needs to clean up its act.

Tell Cargill CEO Gregory Page to respect the rights of Indigenous communities and stop destroying tropical rainforests!

Taking Action! Go to www.RAN.org/Cargill to send an email or write to:
Gregory R. Page
CEO, Cargill
15407 McGinty Rd.
West Onaico, MN 55398

You can help too! Visit our website and take action. We need your help!

FROM THE CANOPY

By Michael Brune, RAN Executive Director

Dear friends,

Quick – try to picture the top causes of climate change. If you’re like most people, you probably conjured up an image of a giant smokestack, traffic-choked highway or perhaps an oil tanker or refinery. What many forget is that tropical deforestation – burning and clearing rainforests – is one of the biggest drivers of climate change. It’s the reason why Indonesia is the third-largest greenhouse gas emitter after the U.S. and China, and why Brazil is fourth. The good news, however, is that the connections between forests and climate are becoming clearer to scientists and policymakers every day. And in the next six months, we’ll have one of our best opportunities for a breakthrough solution.

Twenty percent of global greenhouse gas emissions are caused by forest destruction each year through a dangerous feedback loop. Deforestation accelerates global warming as the carbon found in trees, plants and soils is released into the atmosphere. Rising temperatures, in turn, are causing forests to die off, as they are increasingly unable to adapt to a changing climate. Dying forests release even more carbon dioxide, which creates even higher temperatures. That’s the cycle.

Just as we can’t fight climate change without protecting forests, we can’t protect forests without fighting climate change. This doesn’t mean we must protect forests instead of reducing our dependence on dirty energy. We have to do both.

At the United Nations climate convention in Bali, Indonesia in December 2007, an agreement was reached to negotiate a legally-binding international agreement to slow tropical deforestation. In technical language, this was an historic commitment to address “Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD).” The agreement is scheduled to be completed at the UN climate negotiations in Copenhagen, Denmark this December.

The details matter greatly. Logging, agrobusiness and other extractive industries – joined by Indonesia and other countries – are lobbying strongly for perverse regulations that actually create more incentives to convert rainforests into feedlots for pulp mills or palm oil processing plants.

We have a better idea. Over the next six months, RAN will be working with leading businesses and progressive governments to secure an equitable and durable climate treaty in Copenhagen that makes substantial progress in protecting forests worldwide. A particular focus of ours will be to strengthen the land rights of local communities and Indigenous Peoples. Deforestation patterns in Brazil and elsewhere show that the best way to protect forests is to empower the people living within them to refuse logging, mining, drilling or any project that would clear or degrade their surrounding forest.

Another important provision is to establish a global forest conservation fund to compensate forest communities to keep forests standing; providing a counter-incentive to liquidate the forests for a short-term profit. Investments from the fund would go to verifiable performance – actual protection of forests – instead of, say, payments to corrupt governments or for outdated industrial operations with little social or environmental benefit.

In the meantime, we’ll be doing our best work to help consumers be part of the solution. Later this summer, look for an agreement between RAN and leading businesses to phase out the use of destructive palm oil in their food and cosmetics. We’ll also be launching a new initiative to focus on the largest importers of tropical paper from Indonesia. Visit us at ran.org, Facebook and yes, Twitter, and take action. We need your help!

For a better world,

Michael Brune
Executive Director

The details matter greatly. Logging, agrobusiness and other extractive industries – joined by Indonesia and other countries – are lobbying strongly for perverse regulations that actually create more incentives to convert rainforests into feedlots for pulp mills or palm oil processing plants.

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PHOTO: TOBIEN DILWORTH

PHOTO: DANIEL BRENNER

PHOTO: FAYE OSMAN

PHOTO: JOSH LLOYD-WARD

PHOTO: THE PANTHER
RAN is excited to announce a new partnership with Earth Friends Wildlife Foundation. Since 1994, Earth Friends Wildlife Foundation has helped support the work of more than 100 conservation and wildlife protection groups. Your contribution today will help RAN unleash a new Challenge Grant supporting our critical work.

We need to raise $50,000 by the end of July. With your help, we can do it! Please make a donation in support of RAN to make this grant a reality.

Contact RAN's development department at (415) 659-0542 or visit www.RAN.org/give.

Are you suspicious about carbon offsets?

Emitting dangerous levels of CO₂ from fossil fuels into the atmosphere and making up for it later is not the solution to climate change. Fossil fuels should stay where they belong—in the ground!

Traditional carbon offset programs make no attempt at stopping the root causes of climate change. With this in mind, RAN has launched the Climate Action Fund, a program for progressive organizations and businesses who want to be part of the solution. The Climate Action Fund provides grants to frontline activist groups directly tackling the root causes of climate change: extraction and combustion of fossil fuels.

Your contribution to the Climate Action Fund will directly support these communities and provide tactical leverage to stop climate change where it starts.

If you are interested in becoming a partner, please contact Ky Ngo at (415) 659-0546 or visit www.RAN.org/caf.