

2008 Newsletter

Two thousand and eight was another exciting and frenetic year for us. Since our one year stint in China in 2007, it has been virtually non-stop with meetings, conferences, workshops and speaking engagements from Beijing to Brussels (see “events” page). Since the election of Barrack Obama in November, expectations have grown significantly that the U.S will not only re-engage in the international climate negotiations, but take the lead in hammering-out a successor to the Kyoto Protocol. Whilst in Poland as part of the California delegation to the UN Climate Conference, the excitement was palpable with the general acknowledgement that California has played a pivotal role in pushing the envelope and keeping the hope alive that the U.S will ultimately live up to the world’s expectations on climate change. We have to make sure however that the financial meltdown that we are currently experiencing, is not used as an excuse to water-down future commitments to hard emissions caps in both the developed and developing world. When the U.S steps up to the plate, large developing countries like China and India will no longer have us to hide behind, especially now that China has become the world’s new climate super-power. Of course historic emissions will have to be taken into account as per the concept of “common but differentiated responsibilities”, together with the fact that upwards of 30% of China’s greenhouse gas emissions come from the manufacture of goods to feed our voracious appetites for “stuff” in the West. Without a doubt this will be used by Chinese negotiators at the up-coming UN Climate deliberations in Copenhagen this December- “consumption-based carbon accounting”. And who can really blame them? Whilst international pressure continues to build for China in particular to accept a hard cap, expectations are already being “watered-down”, as we witnessed during an off-the-record speech given by a leading light (who shall remain anonymous) from the UNFCCC to an informal dinner group in Poznan. Regardless of what China does or does not do, the Obama Administration must step up to the plate to show the leadership that is so critical to ultimately getting the developing world on board. The U.S must once again lead by example and we should use the next few months before COP 15 in Copenhagen to initiate an informal dialog between the world’s two largest GHG emitters, the U.S and China. As for the EcoLinx Foundation, we will continue with our environmental governance training in China, and will work with our Chinese partners to help establish a China Energy and Carbon Registry; a sustainable forest management pilot in South-Central China based on our own California Forestry Protocols and the development of much needed rural energy.