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Swedish American Green Alliance

Newsletter

Secretary Kerry Visit to Kiruna Highlights the Arctic, Environment

On May 15, diplomats from eight nations - including U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry - met in Kiruna, Sweden to discuss the future of the Arctic and sign an agreement on how to respond to and handle oil spills.

The meeting comes at a critical time for the Arctic, which is warming twice as fast as almost any other region on earth. As it warms, melting sea ice will give people more access to use the Arctic Ocean as a shipping route. It could also mean "greater exploitation of natural resources, such as oil and gas, minerals, and fisheries; and increased tourism" - all of which will present significant challenges for a once remote area, according to a report by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP).

During his visit, Secretary Kerry met with U.S. permanent participants to learn more about how Native American cultures are enriching the Arctic but also to emphasize the challenges they are facing. Read more.

Photo: Top - Secretary of State John Kerry is greeted by Carl Bildt, Sweden's Minister for Foreign Affairs in Kiruna. U.S. State Department. Below - Kerry meets with Alaskan permanent participants to the Arctic Council. U.S. Embassy Sweden.

The most compelling stories from SwedishAmericanGreenAlliance.org are compiled quarterly into a newsletter and sent to government officials and the SAGA network. To submit your story or to subscribe/unsubscribe - email saga@state.gov

Ambassador Brzezinski in Abisko to Bear Witness to the Impact of Climate Change

Photo: U.S. Embassy Sweden

On April 8, U.S. Ambassador to Sweden Mark Brzezinski visited Abisko in the northernmost part of Sweden to view first-hand the impact that climate change has on a sub-Arctic environment. The Abisko Scientific Research Station is located approximately 90 kilometers (60 miles) northwest of Kiruna in northern Sweden right by the Stordalen Mire where most of the research is being conducted.

Ambassador Brzezinski met with Station Manager Christer Jonasson and visiting scientists. According to Mr. Jonasson, the research clearly indicates that there have been drastic changes over the years. For example, reindeers in the area are finding it harder to access food as thick ice caps are being formed on top of the snow and plants that were earlier plentiful are disappearing while new plants are emerging. The researchers at the Abisko Station are working closely with the indigenous Sami to address these changes. Read more.

American Students Are Invited to Apply to the 2013 SAGA Trainee Program

Swedish American Chambers of Commerce (SACC-USA), the Embassy of Sweden in Washington D.C. and the U.S. Embassy in Stockholm have unveiled a trainee program for U.S. students and young professionals. The SAGA Trainee Program is launched under the auspices of the Swedish American Green Alliance (SAGA).

The SAGA Trainee Program offers three traineeships to U.S. students and young professionals at organizations in the Municipality of Sundsvall in partnership with CleanTech Region. The companies – Standard Solutions Group, Svenska Cellulosa Aktiebolaget and Åkroken Science Park – will offer the succesful candidates an opportunity to work on issues related to corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainability in particular. The traineeships will take place between early September and the end of December. Air fare and accommodation will be covered by the Swedish American Green Alliance. The traineeships are unpaid. Read more.

Five Swedish Students Selected for the 2013 REACT U.S. Program

Photo: U.S. Embassy Sweden

Five Swedish university students have been selected to study urban sustainability practices in five different cities in the United States. The program, Research on Environmental Action and Clean Tech in U.S. Cities (REACT U.S.), was launched last year in collaboration with Sustainable Sweden.

The students will conduct three weeks of research on urban sustainability in the United States in August. This year the cities of Cleveland, Ohio; Madison, Wisconsin; Portland, Oregon; Portsmouth, New Hampshire; and Tallahassee, Florida are hosting the Swedish students. Read more.

Over Half of Sweden's Energy Production Comes from Renewables

In 2012, renewable energy made up 51 percent of Sweden's overall energy production. The target that the European Union has set for Sweden is 49 percent by 2020. Sweden thereby reached its EU goal eight years early. The largest renewable energy source in Sweden is bioenergy, followed by hydro power. Wind power and energy from heat pumps each represent about five percent of Sweden's renewable energy production. Solar power makes up less than one percent. Read more.

ABB Buys U.S. Solar Energy Company Power-One

Photo: ABB

Swedish-Swiss ABB is acquiring California-based solar company Power-One, Nasdaq reports. According to Nasdaq, ABB said it will pay around $1.03 billion to acquire Power-One to expand its solar business. ABB Chief Executive Joe Hogan said that solar photovoltaics is becoming a major force reshaping the future energy mix because it is rapidly closing in on grid parity.

Power-One makes solar inverters, ranging from residential to utility applications, has a broad global manufacturing footprint, and also has a power solutions portfolio that is adjacent to ABB's power conversion business, ABB said in a statement. Power-One employs almost 3,300 people, mainly in China, Italy, the U.S and Slovakia. Read more.

OECD Applauds Stockholm for Sustainable Growth

Stockholm is one of the world's leading sustainable cities. This is the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) conclusion after having examined the city's model for sustainable growth as part of a comprehensive international study.

Stockholm's strengths are identified and 11 measures are presented with the aim of promoting green growth even further. OECD singled out four cities, including Stockholm, that were subjected to special examination with the aim of disseminating good examples and promoting sustainable development. Read more.

Renewables Made Up 82% of New U.S. Electrical Generating Capacity in Q1

Photo: eere.energy.gov

Wind, solar, biomass, geothermal and hydro power accounted for 82 percent of all new electrical generating capacity installed in the United States in the first quarter of this year for a total of 1,546 MW. The numbers were recently presented by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

The balance of new generating capacity, comprising 340 MW, came from natural gas. Coal, nuclear power and oil have provided no new generating capacity this year. Read more.

IKEA Completes Maryland's Largest Rooftop Solar Array Atop Distribution Center

IKEA has plugged in a solar energy system at its distribution center in Perryville, Maryland. The installation consists of 18,576 panels and is, according to IKEA, the state's largest rooftop array. The IKEA distribution center will produce approximately 3,397,178 kWh of clean electricity annually, the equivalent of reducing 2,397 tons of carbon dioxide (CO2), eliminating the emissions of 499 cars or powering 359 homes yearly.

Photo: IKEA

This installation represents the 36th completed solar project for IKEA in the U.S., making the eventual U.S. solar presence of IKEA nearly 90 percent of its U.S. locations. Read more.

City of Cambridge, MIT and Harvard Sign Compact for a Sustainable Future

The City of Cambridge, Harvard University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology have signed a historic "Community Compact for a Sustainable Future" aimed at leveraging the intellectual and entrepreneurial capacity of the business, non-profit, education and municipal sectors in Cambridge, MA to contribute to a healthy, livable and sustainable future.

The Compact lays out a framework for how the group can address climate change at the local level and improve the quality of life and well-being of the Cambridge community by considering nine key areas of collaboration such as energy efficiency, renewable energy and climate mitigation. It aims to harness the signatories' collective capacities in research, teaching, social best practices and governance to generate new solutions to the challenges of climate change. Read more.

NIKE, NASA, State Department and USAID Aim to Revolutionize Sustainable Materials

NIKE, NASA, the U.S. Agency for International Development and the U.S. Department of State recently convened 150 materials specialists, designers, academics, manufacturers, entrepreneurs and NGOs to catalyze action around the sustainability of materials and how they are made.

Through a multi-year incubation process, LAUNCH will uncover innovations in sustainable materials that can have an impact on people and the planet. It is estimated that around 150 billion garments were produced around the world in 2010, and by 2015, the global apparel industry is expected to produce more than 400 billion square meters of fabric a year – enough to cover the state of California. Read more.

Volvo Uses Racing Car Technology to Reduce Fuel Consumption by 25%

Volvo Car Group has completed extensive testing of new so-called kinetic flywheel technology on public roads - and the results confirm that it has the potential to reduce fuel consumption by 25 percent. Ferrari, Renault, BMW, and McLaren have all used kinetic energy recovery systems (KERS) in F1 racing. The experimental system, known as Flywheel KERS (Kinetic Energy Recovery System), is fitted to the rear axle. During retardation, the braking energy causes the flywheel to spin. When the car starts moving off again, the flywheel's rotation is transferred to the rear wheels via a specially designed transmission.

The combustion engine that drives the front wheels is switched off as soon as braking begins. The energy in the flywheel can then be used to accelerate the vehicle when it is time to move again or to power the vehicle once it reaches cruising speed. Read more.