

TRANSITION TO A LOW CARBON ECONOMY

A Project for Vietnam

October 4 - 12, 2010

Arranged by: **The Voluntary Visitors Division of
The U.S. Department of State**

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1. Perceptual Changes

This project especially touched on new technology for renewable energy and the farmer's role in reducing their carbon footprint. The visitors were exposed to new financing available in carbon markets.

The visitors were very impressed by the meetings in Austin, Texas centering around what nonprofit organizations like the Environment Defense Fund were doing to promote renewable energy, climate and air.

The group was introduced to Mr. Robert Schiffer, Executive Director & CEO of the U.S. – Vietnam Trade Council while in New Orleans. The Council selected each visitor and paid for their international travel.

2. City Summaries

Sacramento, CA October 4 - 5, 2010, World Trade Center; Ms. Jennifer Bailey

Overall Impressions:

The Sacramento area program had its ups and downs. Most of the visitors without credit cards could not check-in due to lack of US dollars to guarantee rooms. A call to Jennifer and she sorted out the problem. The visitors were impressed by most of the program.

Highlights:

In my opinion, the visitors benefited the most by the appointments at;

- **California State Capitol** (met with Mr. Randy Pestor, Principle Consultant, Senate Environmental Quality Committee, who gave a briefing on the Senate's work in reducing carbon emissions and the backing of new technological companies working on renewable energy and other environmental issues.)

- **Full Belly Farms** (met with co-owner Paul Muller, who gave the group an excellent "hands-on" presentation and tour of the farm, which has been growing certified organic vegetables, fruits, flowers, herbs, sheep and nuts on 250 acres located in the Capay Valley since 1985.)

The group was given a tour of Old Town Sacramento and a VIP tour of the State Capitol.

New Orleans and Baton Rouge, Louisiana, October 7 – 8, 2010, New Orleans Citizen Council; Ms. Susannah Coolidge

Most Impressive:

- **Mary Queen of Vietnam Community Development Corporation** (met with Mr. Daniel Nguyen, Viet Village Urban Farm Project Manager, who briefed the visitors on the project and measures taken in the meantime for those in the community suffering from the BP oil spill. The group was given an extensive tour of the community, especially the rebuilding after Katrina.)

- **Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry** (met with Dr. Carrie Castille, Deputy Assistant Commissioner, at the State Capitol in Baton Rouge, who gave an overview of the Louisiana Master Farm Program and how it helps promote environmental stewardship and conservation-based production.)

- **Loyola University** (met with Dr. Robert Thomas, Professor & Loyola Chair in Environmental Communication & Director, Center for Environmental Communication, who discussed how the media works with government to disseminate information on new rules and regulations pertaining to low carbon emissions.)

Austin, Texas, October 9 – 12, 2010, International Hospitality Council of Austin; Mrs. Pam Mohamed

Most Impressive:

- **Environmental Defense Fund** (met with Mr. Colin Meehan, Renewable Energy Specialist, who showed an excellent example of a master planned community-Mueller Central- now with 600 homes and 400 apartments (projected 10,000 homes) that have started using home area network software to manage air conditioning, heating, appliances and water. Many are already using solar energy and the community recycled water for irrigation and commercial use. Mr. Meehan said that they have already set up a small office in Hanoi thanks to an earlier visit by a group from Vietnam.)

- **Austin City Hall** (met with Ms. Melodye Foust, Office of Economic Growth and Redevelopment Services Office, who gave the visitors background on the “Green” building featuring the latest technology in building materials, natural lighting and energy efficiency. The U.S. Department of Energy named Austin the top city in the USA for work in moving to a low carbon economy.)

- **Austin Energy-City owned Utility** (met with Ms. Ester Mathews, Director, Austin Climate Protection Program, who briefed on their efforts to make Austin the leading city in the nation in the fight against climate change. Highlight of the discussion was the “Go Neutal” Plan to provide tools and resources for citizens, businesses, organizations, and visitors to measure and reduce their carbon footprint.)

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The group was able to tour the Alamo in San Antonio and enjoy leisure time on Sunday.

2. Logistics

There was a mixup on arrival at the Hyatt Regency Sacramento due to no funds being available to some of the visitors, who did not carry a credit card, to pay in advance for their rooms. The group did get their funds the next day. The group really enjoyed cooking their breakfast and dinner at the ‘no frills’ low cost Extended Stay America – Aboretum in Austin that came complete with appliances, plates and cutlery.

3. Diversity Goals

Many of the interlocutors worked for or with government and were versed in renewable energy and technologies to reduce carbon footprints. The group commented on the friendliness of the people they met during and after meetings.

4. Thank You Letters

None

5. Optional Comments

None