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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SOUTHEASTERN ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION ALLIANCE LAUNCHES REGION-WIDE ENERGY EFFICIENCY CAMPAIGN

New Bedford – **Take the Challenge!** That was the mantra today as the Southeastern Environmental Education Alliance (SEEAL) launched its most ambitious effort to date, the SouthCoast Energy Challenge.

The Challenge is a region-wide energy efficiency campaign to mobilize 35,000 SouthCoast households over the next three years. The goal is to help residents take action in their daily lives that will save money, promote our local economy, and limit harmful CO₂ emissions. The campaign website is www.SouthCoastEnergyChallenge.org.

SEEAL is a coalition of 25 of the region's core environmental organizations. In her opening comments, Jennifer Marshall, SEEAL Director stated, "SEEAL has launched the SouthCoast Energy Challenge because the time is now for us each to make energy efficiency a top priority in our every-day lives."

Abbey Spargo, a SEEAL Board Member and Education Director at New Bedford's Ocean Explorium added, "We've set an ambitious, but achievable goal to engage households in reducing their fossil fuel-based energy consumption by 15%--that's a community-wide savings of more than 120 million pounds of CO₂--the same as taking 10,000 cars off of our roads, annually!"

"SEEAL, which was established by the Community Foundation of Southeastern Massachusetts in 1997, is the Foundation's longest-running program fund," said President Craig J. Dutra. "We're pleased to support and participate in their efforts to encourage residents to save energy and limit CO₂ emissions. This challenge is certainly aligned with our mission of improving the quality of life in Southeastern Massachusetts."

Anyone living in SouthCoast Massachusetts can take the challenge by going to www.SouthCoastEnergyChallenge.org. The campaign provides an easy pathway to efficiency—with specific actions to complete. Once a resident pledges to take the challenge online, they can select the actions they will take and track their savings over time, earn incentives and rewards, and even join or create a team. Teams can represent a church, a school, an organization or a business, or even just be a group of friends that support each other in changing how they use energy.

Spargo highlighted the impact the Challenge will have on the environment if successful: "In the SouthCoast, we emit more than 5.5 billion tons of CO₂ annually. As a state we rank nationally among

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the top 5 carbon emitters per capita because of our over-reliance on coal and oil. The CO₂ we burn creates pollution in our atmosphere and environment, which damages our local economy, our health, and our wildlife." She continued, "The truth is, that when it comes to energy efficiency, every action counts. For example, just by maintaining your car's proper tire pressure you'll cut CO₂ emissions by 332 lbs. a year and will save an average of 11 cents a gallon on gasoline!"

The program organizers estimate that if the Energy Challenge goals are met, the region-wide savings could be more than \$26 million dollars; dollars currently spent on mostly foreign oil, that can be kept in the local economy to support the environment, education, and jobs.

SouthCoast resident Ann Richard has taken the challenge because, she says, "I believe that if we all make small changes in how we use energy and do what we can to weatherize our homes, together we'll make a real difference." She noted, "The best way to start is to schedule a no-cost home energy assessment online at www.SouthCoastEnergyChallenge.org." The Mass Save assessment includes energy efficient light bulbs, a programmable thermostat, and even energy and water efficient shower heads at no cost. The Mass Save home performance contractor Next Step Living is a partner in the Energy Challenge and will perform the assessment for Challenge participants.

Derek Christianson owner of Brix Bounty Farm called on local business owners to support the Energy Challenge, noting, "Businesses can take the challenge, and can also sign up as a rewards partner by offering an incentive for households that achieve real savings on their utilities." Besides Brix Bounty Farm, other local rewards partners include the popular Celtic Coffeehouse in New Bedford, and Fall River based Modern Printing Company. Businesses can get more information at www.SouthCoastEnergyChallenge.org.

New Bedford Mayor Scott Lang took the Challenge live at the event, stating: "Now more than ever, it is critical that individuals, businesses, and government assess their levels of energy consumption. In New Bedford, city government has already begun to implement various measures to reduce energy consumption and has established a goal to continue this trend which will result in significant cost savings. I encourage New Bedford residents to participate in the SouthCoast Energy Challenge and take steps to improve their household energy efficiency."

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SEEAL is a program fund of the Community Foundation of Southeastern Massachusetts. SEEAL partner organizations leading the SouthCoast Energy Challenge include the Marion Institute, Southeastern Massachusetts Agricultural Partnership (SEMAP), Southeastern Regional Planning & Economic Development District (SRPEDD), UMass Dartmouth, Bristol Community College, and the Ocean Explorium.