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Michigan buckeyes?

By Andy Buchsbaum and Tom Bullock

We often think of global warming as something far away, a problem for polar bears and ice caps at the North Pole. But take note, fellow residents of the Wolverine and Buckeye States: Global warming could hit very, very close to home, reaching down even into the ranks of ... college football fans.

According to recent studies, Ohio's buckeye tree could be on the march north due to global warming.

Projections in a scientific study published last year in *BioScience* magazine indicate that the growing ranges for many plants, including the Ohio buckeye, could shift. Suitable habitat will likely be reduced in the buckeye's home range -- while more will be created in northern regions -- due to global warming. In plain English, this means growing conditions for the buckeye could not only get worse in Ohio but become more favorable in northern states such as ... Michigan!

Global climate change, of course, poses a serious threat to many parts of the world and many people, but the plight of the buckeye only drives home what could happen if we don't reduce our global warming pollution.

The buckeye's fate -- and that of other plants, animals and people connected in our ecological web -- is not yet sealed: There's still time to act. To make a difference, however, Congress has to get into the game now.

To avoid the worst economic and environmental effects policymakers must ensure global warming emission reductions of 80% by 2050, as recommended by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The best way to meet this goal is to establish mandatory federal policies to steadily reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Such policies will boost entrepreneurial development of cleaner, energy-efficient technologies and industries. In fact, venture capitalists have already recognized this new market potential, investing \$2.7 billion in green technologies in 2007, a 450% growth from 2000.

We've got the ingenuity and the technology in place to tackle global warming -- efforts in which both Michigan and Ohio are poised to be leaders.

Michigan, according to a report by the Anderson Economic Group, has the potential to generate nearly 60% of its total electricity output from renewable resources such as wind, dams and ethanol. Additionally, Gov. Jennifer Granholm recently kicked off a new green jobs initiative to help state residents get job training in growing alternative energy industries.

And to the South, Ohio is already leading in the production of green technologies. Toledo is a hub for solar manufacturing, and the state is poised to gain new jobs making wind turbines.

But we need to make a more concerted effort to invest in clean technologies and reduce global warming pollution. Without a national policy to address the threat of global warming, it just won't happen.

In January when the 111th Congress kicks off, bold action is needed not only to save the Ohio buckeye from a lonely exile to the Wolverine State, but to grow new jobs and speed economic

recovery across the Midwest as well.

So while the stakes of Saturday's gridiron clash in Columbus are high, the stakes next year in Congress are even higher. We can't afford to punt the problem of global warming to our children and grandchildren. That is, not unless you want your kids to root for the Michigan Buckeyes.

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