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Source: ILRF, Trillium Asset Management Corp. and International Rivers Press Release

Cites Recommendation from Leading Proxy Advisory Firm, Effects of Environmental, Labor, Human Rights Problems on Investments in PacifiCorp, Russell, PetroChina

Leading socially responsible investment firm Trillium Asset Management Corporation (“Trillium”), a shareholder in Warren’s Buffet’s **Berkshire Hathaway Corporation**, is joining two nonprofit advocacy organizations, the International Labor Rights Forum (“ILRF”) and International Rivers (“IR”), in calling on fellow Berkshire Hathaway investors to back a proposal on the agenda for the company’s upcoming May 2, 2009 annual meeting which requests that Berkshire prepare a “Sustainability Report” on its performance on environmental and social issues.

Boston-based Trillium today released a letter filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission and sent to Berkshire’s nearly 2,000 institutional shareholders -- who own more than \$26 billion in its preferred and common stock -- urging a “yes” vote on the proposal, which was submitted by Berkshire shareholder Joseph G. Petrofsky. The letter comes in the wake of a report recently issued by leading shareholder advisory firm PROXY Governance that recommends a vote in favor of the resolution, calling Berkshire’s disclosure of environmental and social issues affecting its portfolio “relatively poor,” and concluding that “additional disclosure in this area would help shareholders.”

Along with the letter, Trillium forwarded to fellow shareholders a memorandum already sent to PROXY Governance and other top shareholder advisory firms by ILRF and IR which detail the risk Berkshire faces in this arena: environmental problems at its PacifiCorp subsidiary; labor rights violations in its Russell Athletic division; and human rights abuses associated with its now-divested holdings in PetroChina. In its letter to fellow Berkshire shareholders, Trillium called the company “out of step” with other leading firms in failing to report to its shareholders on environmental and social issues, noting that over 80% of Fortune 250 companies now provide such sustainability reports.

Said Trillium Director of Social Research and Advocacy Shelley Alpern, “Whether it’s the need to pay for the removal of dams because of water pollution in the Northwest, loss of business relationships because of labor violations in Honduras, or simply having to defend its investment in a company linked to human rights abuses in Darfur, the evidence is clear: Berkshire Hathaway owes it to shareholders to disclose the risk from its companies’ environmental and social practices.”

Added Bama Athreya, Executive Director of the ILRF, “Reports of labor rights violations in factories

operated by Berkshire's Russell Athletic division in Honduras have led nearly thirty major U.S. universities – from leading state schools like the Universities of Michigan and North Carolina, to top private institutions like Harvard and Stanford – to take away Russell's license to sell sweatshirts and t-shirts with their names and logos. What more direct proof could there be that a company's record on worker rights is something investors deserve to hear about from management?"

IR Executive Director Patrick McCully stated, "Klamath River dams now operated by Berkshire Hathaway's PacifiCorp subsidiary have been linked to toxic water conditions that produced the largest single salmon die-off in U.S. history. Now PacifiCorp has promised to pay up to \$200 million for the dams' removal, because government studies show this would be cheaper than making the dams compliant with environmental laws. When your company has dams that are so harmful that it's cheaper to dismantle them than get them re-licensed, shouldn't shareholders know that?"

Trillium's Alpern observed, "In May 2007 Warren Buffett commented that he didn't think it was worthwhile to evaluate companies' environmental and social practices when making investments. Less than a week later, he was on the Charlie Rose show having to defend Berkshire's investments in PetroChina, because of that company's links to genocide in Darfur. If the risk to Berkshire's reputation from PetroChina was so great that Mr. Buffett had to justify the investment on national television, then this was a risk that the company should have disclosed to shareholders. Fortunately, Berkshire has since divested from PetroChina -- this proposal simply asks that the company consider and inform shareholders of similar risks in the future."

Established in 1982, Trillium Asset Management Corporation is the oldest and largest independent investment management firm in the U.S. exclusively devoted to socially responsible investing. The International Labor Rights Forum (ILRF) is a leading nonprofit advocacy organization that promotes respect for worker rights in the global economy. International Rivers (IR) is a nonprofit research, education and advocacy organization that seeks water and energy solutions for a just and sustainable world.

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS:

Trillium Asset Management Corporation, "Vote 'FOR' on Berkshire Hathaway Sustainability Report Resolution" (Letter to Berkshire Hathaway Shareholders, Apr. 22, 2009), available at:

<http://www.sec.gov/Archives/edgar/data/884541/000121465909000966/c42091p...> [1]

International Labor Rights Forum, International Rivers, "Grounds for a 'Yes' Vote on Berkshire Hathaway Shareholder Resolution Requesting a Sustainability Report" (Memorandum to Proxy Advisory Services, Apr. 13, 2009), available at:

http://laborrights.org/files/BerkshireHathaway_Memo_041309.pdf [2].

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Source URL: <http://www.laborrights.org/creating-a-sweatfree-world/news/11863>

Links:

[1] <http://www.sec.gov/Archives/edgar/data/884541/000121465909000966/c42091px14a6g.htm>

[2] http://laborrights.org/files/BerkshireHathaway_Memo_041309.pdf