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## NEWS RELEASE

### **IMAGINE H2O ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF PRIZE FOR ENERGY-SAVING WATER START-UPS**

*Winning Entrepreneurs Receive Cash and Enter Business Accelerator*

SAN FRANCISCO, March 17, 2011 –[Imagine H2O](http://www.imagineh2o.org) launched its global Water-Energy Nexus Prize to attract and accelerate new water businesses with energy-saving innovations. “To our surprise, the winners don’t just save energy, they also make use of the valuable energy stored in water and wastewater,” says Scott Bryan, Director of Operations. The First Place winner, [Hydrovolts](#), uses floating hydro-kinetic turbines to convert the flow of a canal into a distributed energy source. The two runners-up, [Blackgold Biofuels](#) and [Fogbusters](#), are unlocking the energy resources found in fat, oil and grease (FOG), which are some of the most energy-intensive wastestreams in the water grid. “Remarkably, these companies are turning cost-centers into profit-centers and unlocking important energy potential to make our water infrastructure more efficient and robust,” says Kate Gasner, Imagine H2O’s Prize Manager.

Attracting more than fifty teams from around the world including the United States, Canada, Australia, Sweden, the Netherlands, Singapore and Israel, Imagine H2O’s 2010 Water-Energy Nexus Prize challenged entrepreneurs to create businesses that reduce the energy needed to move and treat water and wastewater. “The water-energy nexus is of tremendous technical and social importance because you can’t generate energy without water and you can’t supply clean water without energy,” says Steve Kloos, Advanced Technology Leader at GE Power & Water, and a judge for this year’s prize.

Created to help find sustainable, entrepreneurial solutions to global water problems, the Imagine H2O Prize offers over \$100,000 in cash, business and legal support, and access to a network of partners, customers, and financiers to accelerate the process of bringing these ideas to market. Imagine H2O is the leading ecosystem for water entrepreneurship and innovation.

One of Imagine H2O’s goals for its 2010 prize is to increase awareness of the connection between water and energy, a relationship often underappreciated by the public. The EPA estimates that retrofitting one out of every 100 homes with water-efficient technologies could save 100 million kilowatt-hours of electricity per year and prevent the release of 80,000 tons of greenhouse gas to the atmosphere. In some parts of the country, you can save more energy by

turning off the tap than by turning off the lights. For example, in California, as much as 19% of the state's energy use is dedicated to moving, treating, and heating water.

### **WINNER: HYDROVOLTS**

Seattle-based Hydrovolts, which took the top prize, provides power to irrigation districts, water treatment facilities, canal operators and nearby consumers. Featuring a floating “flip-wing” turbine that is portable and easily installed, Hydrovolts brings a new clean energy solution to existing water infrastructure. “We're very optimistic about the global market opportunity,” says Hydrovolts CEO Burt Hammer. “Canals are an untapped energy resource, and they are essentially the same around the world so we expect to expand our impact rapidly. Participating in the Imagine H<sub>2</sub>O contest helped us refine our business plan, recruit investors, and initiate new partnerships. We're thrilled about continuing to work with Imagine H<sub>2</sub>O's ecosystem for water entrepreneurs.”

### **RUNNERS UP: BLACKGOLD BIOFUELS & FOGBUSTERS**

Runner-up Philadelphia-based Blackgold Biofuels is operating a pilot program at San Francisco's Wastewater Treatment facility, turning fat, oil and grease (FOG) into biodiesel. According to, CEO & Co-founder Emily Bockian Landsburg, BlackGold's technology “results not only in a reduction in the amount of energy required to treat the FOG, but in an environmentally friendly fuel that can be used onsite or be sold for a profit.”

Runner-up Fogbusters' patented technology works in conjunction with existing treatment systems to recover FOG from wastewater without the use of chemicals. Currently used at major food processing plants, Oakland, CA-based FogBusters is also gaining traction with potential users in the oil and gas sector. According to CEO Bradley Mart, the FogBusters technology is “the first big breakthrough in oil/water separation in 25 years.”

### **JUDGING**

[Imagine H<sub>2</sub>O's judging panel](#), which features many of the water sector's leading experts, selected the top ten finalists, rewarding them entry to Imagine H<sub>2</sub>O's Accelerator Program where they are provided industry expert mentors and professional services. The judges evaluated all business plan entries based on commercial viability. “Only a small number of water start-ups receive funding each year because while there are many existing technologies that hold promising solutions, few can offer the business model to effectively enter the market,” says Tamin Pechet, Co-founder and Chairman of Imagine H<sub>2</sub>O. “We're looking for great ideas with great business models to enter our Accelerator Program.”

The three winners were honored at [Imagine H<sub>2</sub>O Water Innovator's Showcase](#) in San Francisco. Hundreds of clean-tech leaders, including water entrepreneurs, investors, water utility executives, government officials and industry experts, gathered to discuss where and how innovation is taking root in the water sector. The event included a special address from Timothy Brick, the former Chairman of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California.

Since launching the inaugural prize last year, Imagine H<sub>2</sub>O has seen an overall improvement in the technical sophistication and entrepreneurial backgrounds of submissions in this year's competition. "Several were based on National Science Foundation-funded research and developed from PhD engineering programs," Bryan says.

"Imagine H<sub>2</sub>O leverages entrepreneurship to tackle water challenges and inspires people with ideas to launch new businesses," explained John Taft, CEO of RBC U.S. Wealth Management, who represented Founding Sponsor RBC at the event. "We are especially pleased to see the quality of this year's finalists and their commitment to turning water challenges into opportunities."

"Imagine H<sub>2</sub>O has successfully developed a model to catalyze water entrepreneurship and to help bring promising businesses to the marketplace," says Debra Coy of Svanda & Coy Consulting, and a returning judge to this year's competition. Last year's inaugural Imagine H<sub>2</sub>O prize focused on end-use water efficiency in agriculture, commercial, industrial or residential applications. [Fruition Sciences received first place](#) for their innovative way to give the vineyard farmer real-time status of key variables necessary for growing wine grapes. Several 2009 Finalists have increased their customer base and attracted investments from angel and venture capital investors. This year, Imagine H<sub>2</sub>O expects even greater outcomes for its Water-Energy Nexus Prize winners and finalists as a result of its expanded Accelerator Program.

Imagine H<sub>2</sub>O is joined by its founding sponsor [RBC\\*](#), and sponsors [Cooley LLP](#), [PwC](#), [Full Circle Fund](#), Early Growth Financial Services and a number of private foundations focused on sustainability and entrepreneurship.

*For more information, please visit [www.imagineh2o.org](http://www.imagineh2o.org).*

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