

Apple CEO Unveils Set of Green Initiatives

By JIM CARLTON

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SAN FRANCISCO -- **Apple** Inc.'s Steve Jobs, responding to sharp criticism from environmentalists that his company isn't green enough, has unveiled a set of initiatives that he said would put the company ahead of rivals on recycling and other environmental issues.

The Apple chief executive officer posted an open letter on the Apple Web site entitled "A Greener Apple," laying out for the first time publicly the Cupertino, Calif. company's plans to make its products as environmentally friendly as possible. "We apologize for leaving you in the dark for this long," Mr. Jobs said in his letter.

Two of the biggest commitments address some of the main concerns of Greenpeace and other environmental groups: that Apple phase out the use of two toxic chemicals -- polyvinyl chloride and brominated flame retardants --and ramp up its recycling of computers and other products.

Mr. Jobs said those chemicals would be eliminated from Apple's products by the end of 2008, and that the company would expand world-wide an existing program in the U.S. of customers being able to drop off their old iPods at Apple retail stores and disposed of for free.

Two shareholder resolutions for vote at Apple's board meeting next week seeking those kinds of actions were filed by a corporate-accountability group called As You Sow and Trillium Asset Management, an investment firm. Trillium officials said they were withdrawing their resolution, while a spokeswoman for As You Sow said the group said it has not decided whether to withdraw its resolution.

Critics, who have hounded Apple for the past several years to do more on the environmental front, credited their public pressure for Apple's turnabout. "You're the consumers of Apple's product, and you've proven you make a real difference," the environmental group Greenpeace said in a statement posted on its U.S. Web site Wednesday.

Environmentalists have been asking Apple and other personal-computer makers for years to clean up their act. They say millions of computers with toxic ingredients end up being thrown in landfills without proper recycling, and have been urging the manufacturers to do more to help. After **Hewlett-Packard** Co. and **Dell** Inc. made commitments to be greener, activists about a year ago began picketing Apple and engaging in other protests to get the computer maker to follow suit.

In his letter, Mr. Jobs acknowledged the criticism, but said much of it was unfair because Apple has already done a lot to meet environmental goals.

"Upon investigating Apple's current practices and progress towards these goals, I was surprised to learn that in many cases Apple is ahead of, or will soon be ahead of, most of its competitors in these areas," he wrote. "Whatever other improvements we need to make, it is certainly clear that we have failed to communicate the things that we are doing well."

Mr. Jobs added that Apple plans to provide updates at least annually on its progress on the environment.