

For Immediate Release

**February 3, 2010 –“Healthy Watersheds through Healthy Forests Initiative”
Partners Announced**

Today the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities (the Endowment) announced the three partners selected to participate in the “Healthy Watersheds through Healthy Forests Initiative (HWHF).” The multi-million dollar initiative seeks to advance the connection between forest management and water quality and quantity.

Partnering organizations selected are: **Conservation Trust for North Carolina** and partner land trusts, working in the Upper Neuse River Basin located in central North Carolina (Raleigh, NC watershed); **Pinchot Institute for Conservation**, working in the Upper Delaware River Basin located in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York (Greater Philadelphia, PA watershed); and **Virginia Department of Forestry**, working in the South Fork Rivanna Reservoir Watershed located in Albemarle County, Virginia (Charlottesville, VA watershed).

“We are seeking to link urban water consumers with rural forestland owners to reinforce the connection between upstream environmental benefits of healthy forests with the needs of downstream water users,” said Endowment President Carlton Owen. “This project comes at a crucial time when people everywhere must begin to work more directly with their governments and water suppliers at all levels to meet growing water needs during extended periods of drought likely to be exacerbated by climate change,” Owen continued.

Under the HWHF Initiative, at least \$6 million will be invested in the three watersheds. A combination of funding supports the work, including \$2 million from the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Conservation Innovation Grants program; a \$2 million Endowment investment and at least \$2 million in on-the-ground match from project partners.

Healthy, resilient watersheds are the best insurance for changing and uncertain ecosystem patterns. To address these challenges, it is vital that the ecosystem services value of forests be recognized as a vital part of the nation’s critical natural resources infrastructure.

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U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities

The Endowment is a not-for-profit public charity working collaboratively with partners in the public and private sectors to advance systemic, transformative and sustainable change for the health and vitality of the nation's working forests and forest-reliant communities. www.usendowment.org

Conservation Trust for North Carolina (CTNC)

CTNC works with landowners, local land trusts and government agencies to save the places people love in North Carolina. CTNC represents, assists, and promotes North Carolina's 24 local land trusts so they can protect more land and helps willing landowners conserve their property along the Blue Ridge Parkway. <http://www.ctnc.org>

Pinchot Institute

The mission of the Pinchot Institute is to advance conservation and sustainable natural resource management by developing innovative, practical, and broadly-supported solutions to conservation challenges and opportunities. This is accomplished through nonpartisan research, education and technical assistance on key issues influencing the future of conservation and sustainable natural resource management. <http://www.pinchot.org>

Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF)

The mission of the Department of Forestry is to protect and develop healthy, sustainable forest resources for Virginians. The VDOF was established in 1914 to prevent and suppress forest fires and reforest bare lands. Since our inception, we have grown and evolved to encompass other protection and management duties: protecting Virginia's forests from wildfire; managing forest resources; protecting Virginia's waters; conservation of Virginia's forests; manage the state lands and nurseries; and regulate incentive programs for forest landowners. <http://www.dof.virginia.gov>

About Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Conservation Innovation Grants

The Conservation Innovation Grant program is designed to speed the transfer and enhance use of technologies and methods that show promise in solving the nation's top natural resource problems by targeting innovative, on-the-ground conservation. Approved projects address issues such as water quantity and quality, grazing lands, soil and forest health, and air quality. "The Conservation Innovation Grant program enables USDA to review, field test, and demonstrate practices and ideas that have yet to be successfully mainstreamed into our portfolio of practice options," said Dave White, Chief of the NRCS, which administers the program and provides technical oversight for each project.