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Contact: Genie Lester, The Nature Conservancy
Linda S. Fairbanks, Caterpillar Inc.,

(312) 759-8017 ext. 23, glester@tnc.org
(309) 675-6892, fairbanks_linda_s@cat.com

\$12 million from Caterpillar Inc. to The Nature Conservancy launches ambitious global freshwater river project and establishes a Great Rivers Center

Chicago IL—The Nature Conservancy, with a generous \$12 million gift from the Caterpillar Foundation of Caterpillar Inc., is undertaking an ambitious project that will guide protection of the world's vanishing freshwater supply and transform the way large working river systems are preserved and protected. The Great Rivers Partnership will create integrated models for sustaining great river systems of the world.

Freshwater is a critical global concern and is likely to be one of the most important issues of this century. Together, the Conservancy and Caterpillar are setting a new standard through the Great Rivers Partnership, one that will influence worldwide conservation of this critical resource. This partnership will initiate changes that will result in sustainable management of large rivers worldwide.

“Freshwater systems in the 21st century will be one of the most important issues for conservation organizations and governments to address. As the world's population grows, people will need continued access to freshwater to thrive,” said Steve McCormick, the Conservancy's president and chief executive officer. “In the end, future generations will regard freshwater conservation work as one of the most important things we did for the benefit of mankind.”

“Each of us shares a duty to protect these rivers, which sustain so much life. Business leaders must work together to achieve lasting results that allow commerce and natural places to thrive side-by-side,” said Caterpillar Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Jim Owens. “It's exciting to imagine the tremendous impact this Great Rivers Partnership will have throughout the world.”

A central component of this new project, the Great Rivers Center for Conservation and Learning, will be at the heart of transforming how these magnificent and critical systems are protected. As the intellectual cornerstone for the Great Rivers Partnership the center will identify cross-cutting issues and activities that threaten large rivers globally; it will develop and support project work that will inform and demonstrate ways to effectively conserve these large rivers; and it will seek ways to engage and influence the business, political and community leaders who shape the future of these great rivers. The Center will function as a learning and sharing clearinghouse, helping to provide access to some of the best scientific, large river information available worldwide.

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“Our quality of life is inextricably connected to freshwater systems, which is why the creation of a center dedicated to thinking about and working on large river conservation is long overdue,” said Dr. Ken Lubinski, the river ecologist who will head the new conservation center. “Through it, the Conservancy and Caterpillar will change the way we view and conserve rivers around the world.”

This is one of the largest gifts made by a corporation to freshwater conservation and is the largest outright corporate gift ever made to the Conservancy. The gift will support conservation of large river systems on three continents: the Upper Mississippi River Basin in the United States, home to about 30 million people; the Upper Paraguay-Parana River system in Brazil, supporting nearly 17 million people as it flows through five countries; and the Upper Yangtze River in China, with the Yangtze River being one of four great Asian rivers that provide freshwater to 500 million people. This partnership is testimony to the leadership the corporate community can provide for the conservation of working rivers that are vital to human life and nature.

The Conservancy and Caterpillar Inc. of Peoria, Illinois, have a 25-year relationship, during which time the relationship has strengthened based on common values and perspectives. During the year 2000, the foundation gave a grant to the Conservancy in support of the Illinois Emiquon Project, located along the Illinois River, one of the largest wetland restoration projects in the country. The Illinois River lies within the Upper Mississippi River basin. Caterpillar leaders serve on boards of the Conservancy in Illinois and Brazil. Both organizations are committed to integrity, social responsibility and sustaining natural resources for future generations.

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Note to Media: A b-roll package and still photos are available. Contact Andrew Simpson 312-759-8017 ext. 22 asimpson@tnc.org.

The Nature Conservancy is a leading international, non-profit organization that preserves the plants, animals and natural communities representing the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive. To date, the Conservancy and its more than one million members have been responsible for the protection of more than 15 million acres in the United States and have helped to preserve more than 102 million acres in Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific. Visit us on the Web at nature.org.

For more than 75 years, **Caterpillar Inc.** has been building the world's infrastructure and, in partnership with Caterpillar dealers, is driving positive and sustainable change on every continent. A Fortune 100 company, Caterpillar is the world's leading manufacturer of construction and mining equipment, diesel and natural gas engines and industrial gas turbines. The company is a technology leader in construction, transportation, mining, forestry, energy, logistics, electronics, financing and electric power generation.