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For Immediate Release

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Nature Conservancy Announces \$1 Million Donation from Nestle Waters to Preserve Threatened Waters

The Nature Conservancy Will Use Funds for Pilot Freshwater Protection Projects in Virginia, Texas

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA — With a donation from Nestle Waters, The Nature Conservancy announced a project to protect two important freshwater ecosystems across the United States. Nestle Waters, the world's largest distributor of bottled water, is donating \$1 million over the next five years to support the Conservancy's efforts to advance sustainable water management practices.

The donation will support the Conservancy's Sustainable Waters Program and finance two pilot projects – one on the Rivanna River in the Charlottesville area and the other on Caddo Lake in Texas – to find new approaches for storing and diverting water to serve human needs, including drinking water and electricity, without degrading the health of the freshwater systems.

“We are thrilled to have this generous donation from Nestle Waters to help us work toward protecting the ecological health of such freshwater systems as the Rivanna River,” said Brian Richter, director of The Nature Conservancy's Sustainable Waters Program, who is based in the Conservancy's Charlottesville office. “The lessons we learn from this project can be implemented across the country where a balance of human and environmental water needs is crucial.”

The Conservancy has been working with the Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority for the past two years to develop ideas about how to store and withdraw water in ways that have the least impact on the Rivanna. The Nature Conservancy has assembled a team of more than two dozen local and state scientists to develop recommendations on the amount of water needed in the Rivanna river system to keep it healthy.

The Rivanna River remains both a vital resource and an ecological treasure for the people of central Virginia. The river begins in the Blue Ridge mountains of Albemarle County and meanders through Charlottesville and Albemarle connecting with the James River after flowing through Fluvanna County. Though it surrounds the rapidly-expanding Charlottesville urban area, the watershed remains healthy.

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The Conservancy has identified the Rivanna watershed as one of the finest remaining freshwater river and stream systems in the Piedmont. Its swift streams harbor abundant life, including the federally endangered James spinymussel. And its safe drinking water sustains a growing population. The river also serves as an important recreational asset, which local residents and tourists use for fishing, canoeing and wildlife watching. While the Rivanna River and its tributaries have so far proven resilient to development that has overwhelmed similar waterways, it now faces unprecedented peril.

“As the region’s population continues to grow, inappropriate residential development and excessive water withdrawals pose the most imminent threat in the Rivanna River watershed,” said Ridge Schuyler, director of the Conservancy’s Piedmont Program in Virginia. “Sediment runoff is suffocating the river system and reducing the capacity for the region’s water supply, while water withdrawals have the potential to suck life out of critical rivers and streams. We believe that with good science-based information, we can help to protect the river as the region’s water demands increase.”

The Conservancy believes that human needs for water can be met while sustaining healthy freshwater ecosystems. The Conservancy’s response to this challenge is to advocate Ecologically Sustainable Water Management – the compatible integration of human and natural ecosystem needs. For more information, visit www.freshwaters.org.

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The Nature Conservancy is a leading international, nonprofit organization that preserves 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 nearly one million members have been responsible for the protection of more than 15 million acres in the United States – more than 270,000 acres in Virginia – and have helped preserve more than 102 million acres in Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific. Visit us on the Web at nature.org.