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ORGANIZATIONS UNITE TO CALL FOR RENEWED CONSERVATION COMMITMENT

*National Conservation Learning Summit Calls for Action
To Address Massive Retirements and Demographic Changes*

Washington, D.C. November 7, 2005 — One hundred people representing the private sector, voluntary organizations, education, federal and state government convened to participate in an invitational national Conservation Learning Summit held November 4 – 6, 2005 at the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. They were drawn together by a shared concern about an imminent loss of expertise to ensure the future health of the environment, including the nation's heritage of abundant natural resources. Among the many national leaders who participated was Richard Louv, author of the current best-selling book, *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder* (Algonquin, 2005); Lynn Scarlett, Deputy Secretary, U.S. Department of Interior; and Congressman Tom Udall of New Mexico.

Debate was lively at the national Conservation Learning Summit. Recommendations for specific programs of action to follow the Summit are in development. The agenda for action will be announced publicly at a major event in Washington D.C. in the spring of 2006.

Stewart L. Udall, Honorary Chairman of the Summit and former Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior, said, "Nothing is more important than the legacy we leave future generations. It will take whole communities, working together, to solve the problems of the present and the future—leaving the lifeblood of informed stewardship to care for the environment, and one another, in the generations to come. The country is better off when the community is more important than the individual—when people are judged by how much they contribute to the community, and take it to the national level. That is why we created this national Conservation Learning Summit, and its important agenda for action."

One of the major drivers for the Summit is the projected 60% of the nation's senior leadership in the government work force being eligible to retire in 2007. Many of those are natural resource scientists and conservation workers.

While retirements are massive, total enrollments in traditional natural resource programs at universities nationwide have declined. At the same time, newer multidisciplinary environmental programs have grown. Even where there is interest, however, many are missing hands-on experience and a grounded understanding of natural history. Youth today often have an abstract understanding about loss of rain forests and global warming without direct experience with the wonders of nature in their own neighborhoods.

Issues addressed by Summit participants included:

- How to re-invigorate the flow of people into the conservation professions with skills, substance, diversity and capacity;
- How institutions throughout the society—from media to schools to voluntary organizations—can inspire and prepare youth for careers in conservation and environment sciences; and
- How to re-connect youth and young adults with the natural living world in an increasingly high-tech and information-oriented society.

Goals of the Summit and the next steps it will implement are to:

- Reinvigorate the conservation science work force in the next decade;
- Reconnect young people with direct experience in learning how Earth's systems work; and
- Inspire learners of all ages to take informed action and make responsible decisions to safeguard the nation's and planet's living natural resources.

Drawing upon its history and national long-term commitment to conservation education, the Paul F-Brandwein Institute committed to host the national Conservation Learning Summit as part of the Partnership for Conservation Education. The Institute's commitment stems from its concerns about the national need to increase the conservation work force, improve education about natural resources and the environment, and to strengthen the United State's leadership.

Mary Brandwein, widow of visionary educator and author, Paul F-Brandwein, said, "Paul and I spent our life together demonstrating our commitment to informed and responsible conservation ethics.

He would be pleased we gathered such talent together to continue this important work. Because of our belief in the seriousness of the challenges, the Paul F-Brandwein Institute has pledged to commit the next five years of our Board's work with this as our highest priority.”

About the Paul F-Brandwein Institute

The Paul F-Brandwein Institute is a non-profit organization dedicated to the education of future learners and awareness of human interdependence with nature. Programs of the Institute foster the skills, concepts, habits of mind and values of the sciences and humanities that form the basis for environmental decision-making in the context of global citizenship. The Paul F. Brandwein Institute advances Paul Brandwein's intention for the land he and his wife Mary established as the Rutgers Creek Wildlife Conservancy. The Conservancy is a place of learning and discovery for students, teachers, scientists and those interested in natural systems and the environment.

List of Supporting Organizations for the National Conservation Learning Summit

Foundation for Our Future

National Park Foundation

USDA Forest Service

USDA National Resource Conservation Service

USDA Cooperative State Research Education and Extension Service

National Park Service

US Fish and Wildlife Service

Hawksong Associates

National Council for Science and the Environment

National Science Teachers Association

NatureServe

Council of Environmental Deans and Directors

The World Conservation Union (IUCN)

Morris K. Udall Foundation

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