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For Immediate Release
November 10, 2005

Nearly Extinct American Chestnut Trees Brought to Life at Grey Towers National Historical Site

Milford, PA – It once graced eastern forests from Maine to Georgia and its beauty and strength were legendary. Its nuts fed forest wildlife and became a cash crop for many of the families living in the Appalachian Mountains. But that was before the blight – a blight that wiped out billions of trees nationwide. Today, the American chestnut, once on the brink of extinction is making a comeback with the help of Grey Towers National Historical Site and The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF).

On Wednesday, November 16, four American chestnut trees donated by TACF will be planted on the grounds of Grey Towers, ancestral home of the founder and first U.S. Forest Service chief Gifford Pinchot. The trees are products of the Foundation's national breeding program that eventually expects to produce a blight-resistant American chestnut. The largest of the trees is over five feet tall and was produced via open pollination from growers in Somerset County, PA. The planting ceremony is part of the yearlong celebration of the U.S. Forest Service's Centennial year.

TACF President and CEO Marshal Case said, "TACF is proud to be providing early blight resistant material for this special place where sound forest practices began due to Gifford Pinchot. The chestnut story is one that brings back memories for the elderly and inspires hope in the young and we're looking forward to a long term partnership as we explore new science together seeking to restore blight resistant American chestnut to eastern forests."

"We are so pleased to be receiving these American chestnut trees, especially during the agency's centennial year," said Richard Paterson, Grey Towers Director. "It stands not only as a symbol of the scientific research and efforts that have gone into re-introducing this specimen to the American landscape, but also as an icon of hope for the future of the recovery of this tree."

Students visiting Grey Towers from East Stroudsburg High School will assist with the planting as part of a conservation education program called “A Day in the Life of a Forester.”

Grey Towers is administered by the U.S. Forest Service as an education and conference facility for natural resource conservation as well as a museum. For more information please visit www.fs.fed.us/gt

The American Chestnut Foundation is a nonprofit 501-c-3 organization with more than 5,300 members in 13 states. For more information, please visit www.acf.org.

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