

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **WSSC SIGNS AGREEMENT FOR RESTORATION OF AMERICAN CHESTNUTS**

**LAUREL, MD (May 5, 2006)** – The Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) has signed an agreement with the American Chestnut Foundation (TACF) to make 4,200 acres of buffer zone around its Rocky Gorge and Triadelphia Reservoirs on the Patuxent River available for American chestnut restoration efforts.

The benefit is that a major component of the original hardwood canopy will someday be restored with a blight-resistant strain.

A blight accidentally imported to the US in the early 1900s killed millions of American chestnut trees in the Appalachian region. For the past 20 years, TACF has been pursuing an aggressive breeding program to introduce blight-resistance to native survivors.

“We fully support the American Chestnut Foundation and the restoration program,” said WSSC General Manager Andy Brunhart.

TACF officials say WSSC is the only utility participating in this program.

The provisions of the TACF Germplasm Agreement permit use of pollen from TACF’s research farms in Meadowview, Virginia to be used to pollinate American chestnut survivors on WSSC property.

According to WSSC Environmental Supervisor Jim Benton, chestnut sprouts “are coming up everywhere.” A few mature trees have been found by volunteers along the banks of the Rocky Gorge Reservoir, and these now may become “mother” trees in the TACF breeding program.

The restoration efforts – cross-breeding – are scheduled to begin in May or June this year.

Chestnut restoration got a big boost on Arbor Day when President Bush planted a hybrid American chestnut on the north lawn of the White House, assisted by Marshal Case, President of TACF.

Case said “the partnership between WSSC and TACF could be very significant in restoring American chestnuts to the mid-Atlantic region where they once flourished.

The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF) is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization funded primarily by more than 5,600 American and international members. TACF's goal is to restore the American chestnut tree to its native forests through a scientific research and breeding program developed by organization's founders.

WSSC is among the 10 largest water and wastewater utilities in the nation, serving 1.6 million customers in Prince George's and Montgomery counties.

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