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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 5, 2011

The American Chestnut Foundation's Annual Meeting in Java Center, New York Will Honor New York's Contributions to Chestnut Restoration

Top scientists, conservationists and tree experts from around the country will gather at Java Center, NY from October 21 - 23, 2011, to share the latest advances in restoring the American chestnut to our eastern forests.

This year's Annual Meeting of The American Chestnut Foundation will showcase advances made in chestnut breeding and genetic engineering research by scientists from the State University of New York, College of Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY-ESF). Along with TACF's backcross breeding programs, this science has helped to bring the first generation of potentially blight-resistant American chestnuts to the field-trial stage.

Participants will have the opportunity to visit a planting of nearly 100 transgenic American chestnut trees developed at SUNY-ESF. The second tour stop will be to visit one of New York State's Germplasm Conservation Orchards. This orchard contains trees from more that 30 chestnut families from all over New York which have produced over 50,000 nuts that have been planted in more than 20 other conservation orchards. Both of these exciting plantings are located in the Zoar Valley Multiple Use Area, about an hour's drive from the meeting.

The event's keynote speaker is Dr. Donald Leopold, Distinguished Teaching Professor and Chair of the Department of Environmental and Forest Biology at SUNY-ESF. Dr. Leopold teaches Dendrology and has been carrying out research in the ecology and restoration of damaged ecosystems for nearly 30 years. One of his current projects

involves the restoration of degraded industrial waste sites near Syracuse. His presentation will be on using natural plant communities to guide sustainable landscapes, including the restoration of chestnut-dominated forests. **Members of the public wanting to attend must pre-register by calling (828) 281-0047 or register online at** www.acf.org. Day passes are available.

The meeting is open to the public and will offer programs that appeal to anyone with a love of trees, including workshops on chestnut growing techniques, treating pests and diseases, and chestnut identification. The event will also offer scientific presentations that focus on the state of chestnut restoration, disease and research, as well as a presentation on the progress of the chestnut biotechnology program at SUNY-ESF.

Once the mighty giants of the eastern forests, American chestnuts stood up to 100-feet tall, and numbered in the billions. They were a vital part of the forest environment, a key food source for wildlife and an essential component of the human economy. Discovered in 1904, a blight, accidentally imported from Asia, spread rapidly through the American chestnut population. By 1950 the chestnut blight had removed virtually all the mature trees from Maine to Georgia.

In 1983, a dedicated group of scientists formed The American Chestnut Foundation and began a special breeding process, which, in 2005, produced the first potentially blight-resistant American chestnut called a "Restoration Chestnut." Now assisted by almost 6,000 members and volunteers in 20 states, TACF has developed a sophisticated chestnut breeding program within over 300 breeding orchards located throughout the eastern US.

About The American Chestnut Foundation
The mission of The American Chestnut Foundation is to restore the American chestnut tree to its native range within the woodlands of the eastern United States, using a scientific research and breeding program developed by its founders. For more information on TACF and its national breeding program, visit www.acf.org.

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