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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Field & Stream Magazine Honors Maryland Volunteer for His Work to Bring Back the American Chestnut Tree

Kensington, MD

Field & Stream magazine, a leading voice of the outdoors and conservation, recently selected Kensington, Maryland resident Ron Kuipers as one of six 2011 “Heroes of Conservation.” Ron was chosen for his work with The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF®) to bring the once dominant American chestnut tree back to the forests of Maryland and the eastern US.

“Without Ron we could not carry out our chestnut breeding program with this degree of success.” says TACF Maryland Chapter President, Dr. Gary Carver. “Ron is our orchard manager, and is responsible for the state’s 15 orchards and over 6,000 chestnut trees.” Retired from the National Security Agency, Ron spends thousands of hours of volunteer time planting trees, measuring their growth, collecting pollen, harvesting nuts and caring for the orchards. “The American chestnut was one tree in four in the eastern forests when the colonists arrived,” says Ron Kuipers. “Its loss had a devastating effect on wildlife and forest ecology.”

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. In 1904 a blight, accidentally imported from Asia, spread rapidly through the American chestnut population. By 1950 it 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 with over 300 breeding orchards located throughout the eastern US.

"I can't think of a tree that has a purer heritage as an American tree than the American chestnut," says T. Eddie Nickens, Editor at Large for *Field & Stream*. Boasting a circulation of over nine million readers, *Field & Stream* magazine's "Heroes of Conservation" program began in 2006. The six Heroes chosen for 2011 have each been awarded a \$5,000 cash prize from program co-sponsor Toyota, and in October, 2011, one will be chosen as *Field & Stream's* "Conservation Hero of the Year." The finalist will win a new Toyota Tundra truck. A *Field & Stream* video featuring Ron Kuiper and editor Eddie Nickens is available at <http://www.acf.org/video.php>

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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