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For Immediate Release

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The Nature Conservancy

Largest In-Holding of Great Dismal Swamp NWR Protected

Wetlands will be restored on 966 acres next to Great Dismal Swamp

CITY OF CHESAPEAKE, VIRGINIA — The Nature Conservancy of Virginia and Ecosystem Investment Partners announced today the conservation of 966 acres adjacent to Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, once the Refuge's largest unprotected in-holding.

The property currently consists of 283 acres of forest and 683 acres of drained agricultural field. Restoration of the agricultural field will involve filling existing drainage ditches with earthen plugs to restore water flows, and planting tree seedlings. Besides providing wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities, the project will capture runoff and serve as a groundwater recharge area for local aquifers in the Chowan Basin.

“The Dismal Swamp, one of the largest forest blocks in the coastal plain of Virginia, is an ecological treasure. The wetlands here support over 200 bird species and contain one of the last remaining stands of Atlantic white cedar,” said **Brian Van Eerden, Southern Rivers Program Director for The Nature Conservancy of Virginia**. “We are thrilled to see another piece of this world-famous swamp restored and protected for future generations.”

Ecosystem Investment Partners acquired the property in June 2007, which is located within the acquisition boundary of the Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge. One of Ecosystem Investment Partner's primary activities on the property was the establishment of a large, wetland mitigation bank that will fund the property's protection, restoration, and long-term management. The agreement announced today assigns The Nature Conservancy the conservation easement for the entire property. The Nature Conservancy and Ecosystem Investment Partners are currently working together on a second, similar project to protect and restore a large wetland complex in Louisiana.

“This important project is a great example of how private investors and conservationists can partner to achieve significant conservation outcomes on the ground,” said **Nick Dilks, of Ecosystem Investment Partners**. “Working with our partners at The Nature Conservancy, we look forward to achieving many more conservation victories such as this together.”

This is the second property in as many weeks The Nature Conservancy of Virginia has announced will be protected in southeastern Virginia. In March The Nature Conservancy

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protected three miles of Blackwater River frontage south of Franklin, for a combined total of nearly 1,400 conserved acres.

This latest conservation deal was welcomed by the property's neighbor, Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge.

"The easement will ensure the long term protection and conservation of this adjacent parcel," said **Chris Lowie, Manager of Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge**. "We look forward to working with The Nature Conservancy and Ecosystem Investment Partners for the benefit of wildlife and their habitats, which will be restored at this site."

The Nature Conservancy has been involved in conserving the Great Dismal since the early 1970's, assisting with the transfer of 57,000 acres from then-owner Union Camp Corporation to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This was one of the largest corporate gifts to conservation in the United States at the time.

"As a youngster, I spent a great deal of time exploring the Dismal Swamp and appreciated firsthand Union Camp's gift to The Nature Conservancy," said **Michael Lipford, Director of The Nature Conservancy of Virginia**. "I'm proud to continue the legacy of protecting the Great Dismal Swamp so future generations can enjoy its distinct natural history."

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The Nature Conservancy is a leading conservation organization working around the world to protect ecologically important lands and waters for nature and people. To date, the Conservancy and its more than one million members have been responsible for the protection of more than 18 million acres in the United States and have helped preserve more than 117 million acres in Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific. Visit The Nature Conservancy on the Web at www.nature.org.

Ecosystem Investment Partners (EIP), was founded in 2006 to provide a private funding option for important conservation properties, and to demonstrate that good conservation investment can deliver market returns to serious investors. EIP delivers competitive returns to its investors through the use of new, market-based mechanisms that reward landowners for the restoration and protection of their natural resources (such as wetlands, streams and endangered species), as well as the sustainable use of more traditional resources (such as forestry and agriculture). Visit EIP on the Web at www.ecosystempartners.com.