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New Orleans to Host Inaugural Meeting of the World Delta Dialogues

WASHINGTON, DC (November 5, 2009)— New Orleans will host the inaugural meeting of the World Delta Dialogues, it was announced today in Washington. The international forum, entitled **DELTA2010**, will bring together leaders and scientists from across the globe to identify best practices and comprehensive strategies for creating sustainable deltas around the world.

A joint initiative of the America's WETLAND Foundation (AWF), the Royal Netherlands Embassy, The Nature Conservancy and the Greater New Orleans Foundation, **DELTA2010** will be held October 18- 20, 2010, at The Ritz-Carlton, New Orleans.

"It's most fitting that the first World Delta Dialogues will be held here in the heart of the Mississippi River Delta," said AWF Chair **R. King Milling**. "Like many other deltas, this is one of the most productive and endangered ecosystems on earth. As such, there is an unprecedented opportunity for collaboration among deltaic regions of the world to share technology, develop intellectual capital and build knowledge about their sustainability."

The announcement was made at a scoping session held in Washington, DC today which attracted government officials, policy makers, nongovernmental organizations and scientists from across the United States and as far away as China, Russia, Australia, Vietnam, Bangladesh and the Netherlands.

"There are similar patterns in the way we can address challenges and opportunities within the great deltas and watersheds around the world," said **Dale Morris**, a senior economist with the Royal Netherlands Embassy. "The World Delta Dialogues will allow us to begin looking at and learning from those patterns in a way that will benefit us all."

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World Delta Dialogues

Page 2

The world's most dramatic rate of land loss is occurring in the Mississippi River Delta. Since the 1930's, Louisiana has lost wetlands equal to the size of Delaware. In 2005, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita destroyed another 218 square miles, and if land loss continues at the current rate, some scientists predict one third of coastal Louisiana will have vanished into the Gulf by 2050.

"Now, more than ever, we are aware of the environmental challenges facing our region and how interrelated they are to our economy," said **Marco Cocito-Monoc**, regional initiatives director for the Greater New Orleans Foundation. "It is incumbent upon us to find better ways to protect and preserve all of our environmental, economic and community assets."

Experts in hurricane research, geology, ecology, coastal geomorphology, oceanography, engineering, landscape architecture, geography and economics are invited to participate in **DELTA**2010. A range of critical issues will be discussed at the meeting including: mapping solutions for sustainability, developing adaptation models for climate change and solving systemic problems in the world's deltas.

"The scale of restoration needed along Louisiana's coastline is unprecedented—it represents one of the greatest challenges that we, as a people, will ever have to face," said **Karen Gautreaux**, governmental affairs director for The Nature Conservancy of Louisiana. "That's why we are bringing together the best and brightest in science and engineering from around the world. Without scientific solutions and urgent actions, there is little doubt that one of the world's most productive and diverse ecosystems will be lost forever."

More information on **DELTA**2010 will be provided in the months ahead as plans progress.

America's WETLAND is one of the largest and most productive expanses of coastal wetlands in North America. This valuable landscape extending along Louisiana's coast is disappearing at a rate of 24 square miles per year. The America's WETLAND Foundation manages the largest, most comprehensive public education campaign in Louisiana's history. The campaign is raising public awareness of the impact of Louisiana's wetland loss on the state, nation and world. The initiative is supported by a growing coalition of world, national and state conservation and environmental organizations and has drawn private support from businesses that see wetlands protection as a key to economic growth. For more information, visit www.americaswetland.com.

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