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**National Environmental Education Act Reauthorization Introduced in Congress to
Keep America Competitive and Environmentally Literate**

*National organizations applaud lead sponsors Senator Gillibrand, D-NY,
Rep. Jared Polis, D-CO, and Rep. Michael N. Castle, R-DE.*

WASHINGTON (September 23, 2010)—The National Environmental Education Act (H.R. 6194) introduced today in both houses of the United States Congress, comes at a time when American students continue to lag behind their counterparts in other countries in critical areas such as science and math. As a nation, we are falling behind in preparing Americans for green jobs in environmental technology, clean energy and other related fields.

A broad coalition of environmental and educational organizations praises Senator Kirsten Gillibrand and Representatives Jared Polis and Michael Castle for advancing environmental education at a time when the nation needs it most.

The lead sponsors today launched the effort to update and modernize the National Environmental Education Act (NEEA), an act that 20 years ago laid the foundation for building environmental literacy in the United States and established the National Environmental Education Foundation. Since that time, NEEA has focused on elementary, secondary and graduate school initiatives, employee sustainability education at businesses, a greater emphasis on greener jobs and products, and much more.

“Now that our kids are back to school, it should be a reminder to all of us that we must adequately prepare our children for the future they will inherit. We also need to be focused on building the workforce of tomorrow – and that requires a greater focus on environmental education for more children and adults,” said Kathy McGlaufflin, director of Project Learning Tree and senior vice president of education at the American Forest Foundation. “Tomorrow’s leaders need to be equipped for tomorrow’s challenges,” added McGlaufflin.

The reauthorization act contains a number of revisions that would strengthen and modernize the NEEA, including targeted grants to increase environmental literacy and new efforts to prepare Americans for employment in the growing field of green jobs. It will help ensure that all Americans, from preschoolers to seniors, receive the educational foundation needed to better understand complex issues impacting the health of our fragile planet.

“Reauthorizing the National Environmental Education Act will bolster environmental literacy in America and strengthen our nation’s education and conservation infrastructure. Enhanced knowledge, provided by

this legislation, can be used to better protect the natural resources on which we rely for survival. The recent Gulf oil spill only highlights our need to bolster an informed, ecologically literate generation of conservation stewards," said Kevin Coyle, vice president of education and training at the National Wildlife Federation.

Investments in environmental education will bolster student performance in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM subjects), critical tools for a 21st century workforce. Environmental education encourages critical thinking, saves money, and positions America to be a leader in the global green economy. Studies show that environmentally literate students perform better on standardized tests and are more likely to overcome classroom challenges. Surveys indicate hiring managers value environmentally educated employees. Investments in green jobs will create or save roughly two million family-wage jobs and help drive America's economic recovery.

"The National Environmental Education Act is the longest-term stable funding source for environmental education in the federal government, and we're extremely pleased with the support it has received over the years," said Brian Day, executive director of the North American Association for Environmental Education. "However, throughout its history, funding for the Act's implementation has never been adequate to achieve the goals of the Act. And now in 2010, after a devastating oil spill, a summer of severe weather, a weak economy and continued job losses, supporting environmental education is needed more than ever so more Americans can understand how all of this is interrelated. "

"Education is the most powerful tool we have to transform lives and society and build a stronger conservation constituency for the future," said Judy Braus, senior vice president of education for the National Audubon Society. "The reauthorization of this important bill comes at a time when Americans are hungry to learn more, volunteer more, and take ownership for protecting the environment."

About the North American Association for Environmental Education

The North American Association for Environmental Education advances environmental education and supports environmental educators in Canada, the United States, and Mexico. NAAEE's Guidelines for Excellence in Environmental Education serve as the standard for the practice of the profession in formal and nonformal teaching venues. For more information, visit www.naaee.org.

About Audubon

Audubon's mission is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity. Our national network of community-based nature centers and chapters, scientific and educational programs, and advocacy on behalf of areas sustaining important bird populations, engage millions of people of all ages and backgrounds in positive conservation experiences. For more information, visit www.audubon.org.

About National Wildlife Federation

The National Wildlife Federation is America's largest conservation organization, inspiring Americans to protect wildlife for our children's future. NWF works with more than 4 million members, partners and supporters in communities across the country to protect and restore wildlife habitat, confront global warming and connect people with nature. For more information, visit www.nwf.org.

About Project Learning Tree

Project Learning Tree® (PLT), a program of the American Forest Foundation, provides educators with professional development and comprehensive environmental education curriculum for all grades and subject areas. The PLT network of 500,000 trained educators teaches students "how to think, not what to think" about complex environmental issues, and helps students learn the skills they need to make sound choices about the environment. The American Forest Foundation enhances the quality of America's woodlands through a 50-state network of partners and volunteers who lead initiatives on 24 million acres of family woodlands and engage youth and communities in conservation efforts. For more information, visit www.plt.org.