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Ceremony Highlights “Thank You Delaware Bay” Campaign

Campaign’s Message “Delaware Bay Takes Care of Us. Let’s Return the Favor.” Encourages Bay Stewardship

(Feb. 12) In a special ceremony today, “Thank You Delaware Bay,” a campaign designed to showcase the beauty and amenities of the bay and encourage actions to help protect its health and resources, was unveiled by program partners, Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control’s (DNREC) Delaware Coastal Programs, The Nature Conservancy, and the Partnership for the Delaware Estuary. The ceremony was held at DNREC’s Field Site Building on Pilottown Road in Lewes overlooking scenic views of the Delaware Bay’s Roosevelt Inlet and Beach Plum Island Nature Preserve.

“The Delaware Bay is an exceptional estuary, providing our region with food, jobs, history, recreational opportunities and precious natural resources,” said Sarah Cooksey, administrator for DNREC’s Delaware Coastal Programs. “The ‘Thank You Delaware Bay’ campaign celebrates the bay’s diversity, but also, through its incredibly action-oriented message – *The Delaware Bay Takes Care of Us. Let’s Return the Favor* – and website, the campaign encourages citizens to learn more, get involved, be heard, and take steps to protect this irreplaceable resource.”

The campaign takes a unique approach to raise awareness, instill a sense of personal connection, and encourage the public to take actions to help safeguard and protect the bay. The campaign includes a new logo – TYDB – a strong visual image designed to bring identity and recognition to the initiative. The logo and the campaign’s slogan - *The Delaware Bay Takes Care of Us. Let’s Return the Favor.* - are used in print advertisements, posters, and public service announcements to promote bay stewardship and direct people to the new website.

“Thank You Delaware Bay” will shine much needed attention on one of our region’s most important natural resources,” said Debbie Heaton, associate director of philanthropy for the Delaware Chapter of The Nature Conservancy. “For many years, The Nature Conservancy has worked throughout the Delaware Bayshores to help conserve and restore the estuary’s collective biological diversity. Our challenge has been to educate people on how the Delaware estuary benefits both people and nature. ‘Thank You Delaware Bay’ will go a long way to help us with this effort.”

The cornerstone of “Thank You Delaware Bay” is the beautifully designed website, www.tydb.org, which serves as the comprehensive “portal” for Delaware Bay information and encourages citizens to take action. The website challenges citizens to Learn More... Get Involved...and Be Heard. Visitors can view stunning photographs and a video featuring people and their everyday interactions with the bay. Video segments include “Thanks for the Catch” highlighting the bay’s significant recreational and commercial fishing industries, and “Thanks for the Job” showcasing the thousands of people who work at jobs that rely on the bay. The website includes a dropdown menu of the bay’s many benefits for visitors to explore and learn more.

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“Many people don’t realize that the Delaware River and Bay are home to one of the largest freshwater tidal estuaries in the world – one that has sustained our region and nation for hundreds of years,” said Jennifer Adkins, executive director for the Partnership for the Delaware Estuary. “Congress recognized the Delaware Estuary as one of national significance by including it in the National Estuary Program. The ‘Thank you Delaware Bay’ campaign inspires people to recognize the importance of the Delaware Estuary by showing us its connection to the things that are important to us in our daily lives – jobs, recreation, and a healthy environment.”

The website enables visitors to “Experience the Bay” by exploring the bay’s places – its wildlife refuges, nature centers, museums, cultural sites and more. Information and links on hunting, fishing, boating, hiking, birdwatching –all the amenities of the bay –are provided on the site.

The website provides a place where citizens can “Get Involved” by encouraging visitors to take a pledge to commit to actions at home, work, school and in their communities to protect the bay. Links to organizations committed to safeguarding and protecting the bay are listed, and visitors are challenged to join an organization, volunteer on a bay program, and report pollution impacts and threats to bay animals and marine life.

The website also serves as the place to “Be Heard” by including a page where citizens can learn more about policy work and pending legislations at the local, state, and federal level that affects the bay. State and federal government links are included to encourage public input and comment.

“Thank You Delaware Bay” is inspired by California’s “Thank You Ocean” campaign and funded by the State of Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control, in part, through a grant from the Delaware Coastal Programs with funding from the Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration under award number NA04NOS4190034.

The Delaware Coastal Programs in DNREC’s Division of Soil and Water Conservation is a network of programs that helps manage Delaware’s coastal zone and resolve conflicts related to coastal zone issues. Our mission is to preserve, protect, develop and enhance the resources of our state’s coastal zone through effective administration of the Delaware Coastal Management Program and the Delaware National Estuarine Research Reserve. For more information, visit www.swc.dnrec.delaware.gov/coastalmgt.

The Delaware Chapter of The Nature Conservancy works to protect ecologically important lands and waters for nature and people. The Chapter has helped protect more than 29,000 acres and manages 5,300 acres in preserves in Kent and Sussex counties. To learn more, visit www.nature.org/delaware.

The Partnership for the Delaware Estuary is a non-profit organization that leads collaborative and creative efforts to protect and enhance the Delaware Estuary – the tidal portion of the Delaware River, including parts of Delaware, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. It is one of twenty-eight Congressionally designated National Estuary Programs working to improve the environmental health of the nation’s estuaries. Visit www.DelawareEstuary.org for more information.