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NEW BOREAL INFORMATION CENTRE CREATED FOR NORTH AMERICA

VANCOUVER, May 9, 2007 - The newly created Boreal Information Centre will be a one-stop source of mapped information illustrating the bounty of natural characteristics and human use of North America's great boreal forest. It will also constitute a global example for integrating and providing access to high quality, objective natural resource information and is being looked at as a model by practitioners in other forested regions of the world.

Sponsored by a diverse and unique coalition of scientists, forest products suppliers and buyers, conservationists and resource managers, the Centre is publicly accessible via the internet at www.borealinfo.org and is an important resource for conservation organizations, governments and industry working toward the protection and sustainable management of the boreal forest.

At more than 1.6 billion acres, the North American boreal forest region covers more than half of Canada's land surface and reaches into much of Alaska and into northern Wisconsin, Michigan and Minnesota. It constitutes one of the world's most outstanding conservation opportunities, supplying vital environmental services and intact landscapes. It is home, history and livelihood for hundreds of aboriginal communities. The boreal region is also rich in natural resources and hosts a significant component of Canada's forest products and other resource-based industries. Objective and accessible scientific data on the boreal forest is needed for assessments and to support the maintenance of the range of environmental, cultural and economic values in the region.

"The North American Boreal Forest is widely recognized as the most intact of the world's great forests," said Peter Lee, director of Global Forest Watch Canada, one of the Centre's partners. "It is a nursery for billions of breeding songbirds, and has thousands of freshwater lakes. It's also an enormous carbon reservoir, helping to buffer climate change. But it is also an important energy and timber resource. Good, accessible information is needed to reconcile the use and protection of the boreal forest."

The Centre was initiated as a pilot project two years ago with grants from the Canadian Boreal Initiative, The Nature Conservancy, WWF-Canada, Xerox and Office Depot. Data was accumulated and organized by the Conservation Biology Institute of Corvallis, Oregon in partnership with Global Forest Watch Canada. The Centre's stated mission is: "*To provide objective, high-quality data and information to support North American boreal conservation and management.*" Though web-based, the Centre is physically based in Edmonton.

"Office Depot recognizes the Canadian Boreal Forest as critical to our global environment and our global economy" said Yalmaz Siddiqui, Environmental Strategy Advisor for Office Depot, a donor of the Centre. "We support the work of the Boreal Information Center because we believe it provides the vital scientific data needed to find a balance between conservation and responsible harvesting of wood for products demanded around the world."

"Good information is critical to good land use planning", said Larry Innes, acting Executive Director of the Canadian Boreal Initiative. "We are pleased to support the

Boreal Information Centre as a key mechanism for ensuring that accurate and reliable information is accessible. It will also help us to track progress towards the conservation objectives identified in the Boreal Framework”.

“This Centre represents a powerful combination of partners working toward a common goal of sustainable management of the boreal forest,” said Evie Witten, Boreal Forest Program Director for The Nature Conservancy, one of the Centre’s partners. “It is our hope that the Centre can help inform how our actions impact the local ecology, economy and forest as a whole.”

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The Boreal Information Centre’s Advisors:

- Canadian Beacons Project – University of Alberta
- Canadian Boreal Initiative
- Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society
- Conservation Biology Institute
- ForestEthics
- Forest Products Association of Canada
- Global Forest Watch Canada
- Nature Conservancy Canada
- The Nature Conservancy
- World Wildlife Fund Canada

The **Canadian Boreal Initiative** is working with a wide range of conservation organizations, First Nations, industry and other interested parties to link science, policy and conservation activities in Canada's boreal forest.

The **Conservation Biology Institute** provides scientific expertise to support the conservation and recovery of biological diversity in its natural state through applied research, education, planning, and community service.

Global Forest Watch Canada provides access to more complete information about development activities in Canada’s forests and their environmental impacts.

The Nature Conservancy is a leading conservation organization working around the world to protect ecologically important lands and waters for nature and people.

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For more information about the Centre, visit www.borealinfo.org.