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National Innovation Grant Funds Water Project in Pine Creek

Support Will Allow Reintroduction of the American Eel to Improve Water Quality

One of 48 newly-announced *TogetherGreen* national innovation grants will enable the Tiadaghton Audubon Society to improve the health of Pine Creek through the reintroduction of the American eel (*Anguilla rostrata*) which will rejuvenate the population of the mussel *Elliptio complanata*. These two aquatic species will work together as a natural water filtration system and increase the capacity for cleaning.

Pine Creek is an ecologically significant waterway that feeds into the West Branch of the Susquehanna River and ultimately into the Chesapeake Bay. However, over time it has faced a decline in water quality, most notably because of a collapse in the *Elliptio complanata* mussel population. The Conowingo Dam on the Lower Susquehanna River has prevented the migration of the eel northward since 1928. The American Eel must be present to act as a host for the *Elliptio complanata* larvae for two months in order for this mussel to begin a life cycle which can last up to 110 years. Increasing the mussel population is essential to improving water quality, as an adult of this incredible organism can filter up to one gallon of water per hour!

The \$15,389 grant will power a partnership between the Tiadaghton Audubon Society, the U.S. Geological Survey and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to improve the water quality of this creek, the watershed, and the bay through the reintroduction and rejuvenation of aquatic species.

“We are restoring the American eel to Pine Creek in an attempt to return this ecosystem to its original balance.” said Philip T. Krajewski, President of the Tiadaghton Audubon Society. “This is new bio-science. The American eel will help to bring back the mussel population which will improve the water quality and help to keep our watershed and community environmentally vital and safe. Mussels will keep Pine Creek strong. We are thrilled that the Toyota Corporation and the National Audubon Society are as excited about this project as is our chapter.”

The project will reach out to community groups, local high schools, and individuals in an effort to broaden the understanding of this unique aquatic relationship, seek volunteers for the ‘nuts and bolts’ of implementation, and identify persons who can share oral histories about eels and mussels in Pine Creek and its tributaries before the construction of the Conowingo Dam prevented the northward migration of the eels and contributed to the collapse of the mussel population.

“We are looking forward to continuing our work with the Tiadaghton Audubon Society as a partner on this exciting and innovative project to improve water quality for all species of wildlife in the greater Chesapeake Basin,” said William Lellis, Branch Chief of the USGS Northern Appalachian Research Lab in Asaph, PA.

The Tiadaghton Audubon Society innovation grant is part of \$1.1 million awarded by the *TogetherGreen* initiative this year. Audubon and Toyota launched the five-year *TogetherGreen* initiative in 2008 to fund conservation projects, train environmental leaders, and offer volunteer opportunities that significantly benefit the environment. Grantees were selected from scores of applicants across America. Funds were awarded to Audubon organizations that demonstrated exceptional innovation in working with other groups on projects that will produce tangible benefits for environmental quality.

“The real innovation here is bringing back native species to restore natural health,” said TogetherGreen Program Manager, Judy Braus.

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About *TogetherGreen*

Audubon and Toyota launched the five-year *TogetherGreen* initiative in 2008 to build the promise of a greener, healthier future through innovation, leadership and volunteerism. Nearly 90 projects totaling more than 2.5 million dollars have received Innovation Grants to protect land, water, and energy resources nationwide. For more information, visit www.togethergreen.org.

About Audubon

Now in its second century, Audubon connects people with birds, nature and the environment that supports us all. Our national network of community-based nature centers, chapters, scientific, education, and advocacy programs engages millions of people from all walks of life in conservation action to protect and restore the natural world. To learn about Audubon’s nationwide efforts to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, visit www.audubon.org

About Toyota

Toyota (NYSE: TM) established operations in the United States in 1957 and currently operates 10 manufacturing plants. Toyota is committed to being a good corporate citizen in the communities where it does business and believes in supporting programs with long-term sustainable results. Toyota supports numerous organizations across the country, focusing on education, the environment and safety. Since 1991, Toyota has contributed more than \$464 million to philanthropic programs in the U.S. For more information on Toyota's commitment to improving communities nationwide, visit www.toyota.com/community.