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Nature Conservancy Recognized by the United States Coral Reef Task Force

*Honored for Leadership and New Conservation Strategies*

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** — Dec. 6, 2001 — The Nature Conservancy has been honored with an award from the United States Coral Reef Task Force for global leadership and innovation in coral reef conservation.

Specifically, the Coral Task Force acknowledged the Conservancy for its pioneering work in coral reef conservation through the use of marine protected areas, coastal watershed management, debt-for-nature swaps and efforts to stop destructive fishing practices.

“The Conservancy works with local, regional and international partners from the non-profit and governmental sector to strengthen and assist in developing marine conservation strategies that support the protection of coral reefs throughout the world,” said Steve McCormick, Conservancy president and CEO.

The Conservancy’s landscape scale approach to protecting coral reefs in Asia Pacific, the greater Caribbean and the United States and its territories has led to original conservation approaches that attracted the notice of the Presidential Task Force. The Conservancy has been instrumental in creating a network of protected marine areas around the world by partnering with governments and local organizations to identify ecologically important marine areas, to set aside these areas for special protection and to ensure their long-term preservation.

The Conservancy’s continuing leadership in marine protected area design and management is demonstrated by Conservancy scientists who are developing principles to prevent and mitigate the effects of coral bleaching, a phenomenon related to global warming.

The Conservancy recognizes that environmental factors and stresses in the larger ecosystem landscape are critically linked to the

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health and survival of marine coral reefs. This broad landscape view influenced the Conservancy's work in coastal watershed management. To preserve coral reefs the Conservancy has helped protect vulnerable coastal watersheds, which ultimately have a huge impact on the marine environment.

The Conservancy orchestrated a debt-for-nature swap between the United States and Belize that preserved 16 miles of pristine Caribbean coast and valuable coral reef habitat.

The task force also recognized the Conservancy's efforts to stop destructive fishing. The Conservancy works with local partners to educate coastal communities about destructive fishing practices and to provide alternative, environmentally friendly means of generating income. The Conservancy and its partners have successfully influenced governments and communities with coral reefs to ban destructive fishing or establish "no-take" zones and to create the monitoring and enforcement mechanisms necessary to uphold these regulations.

This year, the Coral Reef Task Force also recognized The Reef Check Foundation, The U.S. Virgin Islands Coastal Zone Management Program and the Government of Guam. The U.S. Coral Reef Task Force (CRTF) was established in June 1998 through an Executive Order to lead the U.S. response to this growing, global environmental crisis.