CONTACTS:
Michael French
Forester
The American Chestnut Foundation
812-447-3285
michael@acf.org

Bill Miller
Virginia Division of Forestry
276-274-3311
william.miller@dof.virginia.gov

WHAT: Planting American Chestnuts on Reclaimed Mine Land
WHEN: Saturday, March 2, 2013 at 10 am
WHERE: Mullins/McFall site, 7 miles northeast of Pound, VA

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 26, 2013

American Chestnut Trees to Help Restore Mine Lands in Pound, Virginia

Pound, VA

On Saturday, March 2, The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF) and its partners will begin to plant approximately 1,000 potentially blight-resistant American chestnuts with other mixed hardwood trees on 22 acres of a reclaimed coal mine site near Pound, VA. TACF’s potentially blight-resistant American chestnuts, called Restoration Chestnuts 1.0, are the result of 30 years of careful breeding and research by TACF’s scientists in an effort to restore this native tree.

The planting is funded in part by a grant from the US Forest Service to the Virginia Department of Forestry and by a Conservation Innovation Grant awarded to The American Chestnut Foundation from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service to establish forest trees, including American chestnut, on 12 reclaimed mine sites in Appalachia. Over three years, approximately 250,000 seedlings, including more than 14,000 blight-resistant American chestnuts will be planted by TACF and project cooperators on a total of 360 acres. This project is the largest planting of potentially blight-resistant American chestnut trees in the Foundation’s history and marks a milestone in the restoration of this once dominant native tree.
The planting and monitoring of chestnuts at the Pound, Virginia site is the result of a partnership between TACF, the Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF), the Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative (ARRI) and Green Forests Work. The reclaimed surface mine site has been prepared using the Forestry Reclamation Approach (FRA), a method which breaks up the compacted soil so that trees can grow successfully.

“This is truly a win-win project,” said VDOF Senior Area Forester Bill Miller. “The community in and around Pound benefits from the reclamation of the former surface mine, and our natural environment benefits through the re-establishment of this vital tree species. We’re honored to have a role in this important event.”

“By participating in this planting,” said Dick Olson, a volunteer with TACF’s Southwest Virginia Restoration Branch, “we are enhancing the wildlife and forest components of a reclaimed surface mine where American chestnuts were once prevalent.”

To volunteer for the planting, email Doug Levin at SWVABranch@acf.org or contact the TACF Meadowview Research Farms at (276)944-4631.

To carpool to the planting site on March 2, meet at the Heartwood Artisan Center at I-81 Exit 14 in Abingdon at 8 am or meet at the site at 10 am. To get to the site from the community of Pound, follow VA-83 (Clintwood Hwy) toward Clintwood approx. 6.0 miles. Turn left onto VA-624 (Camp Creek Rd). Drive approximately 0.6 mile to the top of the hill. The site is located behind the ranch style house on the left.

On the day of the planting, all necessary equipment will be provided. Volunteers are advised to bring a lunch, drinking water, a rain coat, gloves, and wear good boots. Training will start at the site at 10 am, there will be a break for lunch, and the planting should finish mid-afternoon.

Once the dominant tree in America's eastern forests, the chestnut was a giant – growing over 100 feet tall and providing food for people and wildlife alike. A fungus, first observed in 1904 spread quickly, killing more than 4 billion trees and virtually wiping out the species. In 2005, TACF announced it had developed the first generation of potentially blight-resistant chestnut trees. TACF is a 501 (c) 3 conservation organization headquartered in Asheville, NC, with nearly 6,000 members and volunteers in 23 states. For more information on TACF and its work to restore the American chestnut tree, contact TACF Director of Communications Paul Franklin at (828)713-9547, email: pfranklin@acf.org or visit www.acf.org.