What: Flight 93 Memorial Planting  
Where: Stonycreek Township, PA  
When: Friday, April 26 and Saturday, April 27 from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm each day  

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
April 25, 2013  

Once Nearly Wiped Out by Blight, American Chestnuts Will Be Part of the Flight 93 Memorial Reforestation Project  

Stonycreek Township, PA  

More than 600 volunteers will gather over 4 days to plant 15,000 trees at the Flight 93 Memorial in Stonycreek Township, Pennsylvania. The first half of the planting took place on April 19 and 20; the second half of the planting will take place Friday, April 26 and Saturday, April 27. The planting includes 480 potentially blight-resistant American chestnuts donated by The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF). Once a common sight in the Pennsylvania landscape, American chestnut trees were nearly wiped out by blight in the 20th century. These new, potentially blight-resistant chestnuts that will be planted at the Flight 93 Memorial are the result of 30 years of scientific research and breeding by TACF.  

The trees will be planted on 20 acres of a reclaimed surface mine site several hundred yards uphill from the Flight 93 Memorial. In addition to American chestnut, the reforestation project, includes the planting of many species of hardwoods such as northern red oak, black locust, sugar maple, black cherry and many others, as well as pines and wildlife-attracting trees such as hawthorn, dogwoods and crabapple. The reforestation effort will eventually cover more than 340 acres with forest.  

The heroic story of Flight 93 is etched in our country’s history: On September 11, 2001, United Airlines Flight 93 crashed in a field in Stonycreek Township, just north of Shanksville, PA. The plane had been commandeered by hijackers who intended to crash the
plane into the Capitol building or the White House in Washington, DC. But passengers fought back and caused the plane to crash early, thwarting the attack. All passengers and airline staff lost their lives that day but many more lives were saved by their selfless actions.

Ten years later on September 10, 2011, a memorial to the 40 passengers and crew of the flight was dedicated and unveiled to the attendees and the families of the victims. The memorial will be the centerpiece of an expansive 2,220-acre park, one of the newest in the National Park system. Because 70 percent of this area was once a surface coal mine, the future vision for the park will build upon large-scale reclamation undertaken by mining companies and will include reforestation, pond rehabilitation, and planting of thousands of wildflowers and natural grasses.

"The American Chestnut Foundation was deeply honored to participate in this project," says TACF Forester and project liaison, Michael French. "The story reflected by the American chestnut - disaster followed by eventual restoration - offers a compelling and positive addition to the many stories that are represented by this monument to the heroes of Flight 93 and their families.

Once the mighty giant of our eastern forests, American chestnuts stood up to 100 feet tall, and numbered in the billions. In 1904 a blight, accidentally imported from Asia, spread rapidly through the American chestnut population. By 1950 the blight fungus had killed virtually all the mature trees from Maine to Georgia.

Then in 1983, a dedicated group of scientists formed The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF®) and began a special breeding process, which in 2005 produced the first potentially blight-resistant trees called Restoration Chestnuts 1.0. Now assisted by nearly 6,000 members and volunteers in 18 states, the organization is undertaking the test planting of Restoration Chestnuts 1.0 in select locations, including reclaimed mined land, throughout the eastern US.

TACF is a 501(c)(3) conservation organization headquartered in Asheville, NC. For more information on TACF and their work to restore the American chestnut tree, contact Paul Franklin at (828)713-9547 email: pfranklin@acf.org. Or visit www.acf.org.

Media wanting to attend either day of planting should contact:
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