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What: Reforesting Mined Lands with American Chestnut
When: Saturday, January 17, 2015, from 2 pm to 4 pm
(Snow date January 24th)
Where: Dairy Barn Meeting Room,
Frontier Culture Museum of Virginia
1290 Richmond Avenue, Staunton, VA

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 29, 2014

For decades, surface-mined lands of Appalachia have failed to regenerate forests. The public is invited to see how innovative work by The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF) has begun to re-establish trees in former strip mines. Please join the Virginia Chapter of TACF at the Frontier Culture Museum of Virginia at 2 pm on January 17th for a presentation by TACF Forester Michael French. Mr. French will show examples of successful reforestation plantings using American chestnut as he describes pioneering work by TACF in partnership with the Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative and Green Forests Work.

Mr. French's presentation includes remarkable before and after photos showing the results of plantings, including several in Virginia, showing success after just two or three years. On behalf of TACF, French has engaged thousands of students and other volunteers in plantings to implement the Forestry Reclamation Approach, an innovative best practice designed to bring back forests where previous practices have failed. TACF's transformational reforestation plantings and educational outreach have been funded by a United States Department of Agriculture Conservation Innovation Grant awarded to TACF by the Natural Resources Conservation Service in 2011.

Once the mighty giants of the eastern forest, American chestnuts stood up to 100 feet tall, and numbered in the billions. Virginia's mountains were the in the heart of the American chestnut range. From Maine to Georgia, the chestnut was a vital part of the eastern forest, provided abundant food for wildlife, and was an essential component of the economy. In the beginning of the 20th century the fungal pathogen responsible for chestnut blight,

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accidentally imported from Asia, spread rapidly through the eastern forests and by 1950 the fungus had eliminated the chestnut as a mature forest tree.

In 1983, a dedicated group of scientists and citizen scientist volunteers formed The American Chestnut Foundation and began a special breeding process, which in 2005 produced the first potentially blight-resistant trees called Restoration Chestnuts 1.0. Now assisted by more than 5,000 members and volunteers in 23 states, the organization is undertaking the planting of Restoration Chestnuts 1.0 in select locations throughout the eastern US.

The Virginia Chapter of TACF advances the work of the American Chestnut Foundation in the Commonwealth of Virginia. 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 TACF Director of Communications Ruth Gregory Goodridge, ruth@acf.org (828) 281-0047 x305, or visit www.acf.org. For more information about the Virginia Chapter of TACF visit vachestnut.org.

Michael French joined TACF in 2011 as Forester under a Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG), prior to which he was a reclamation specialist for Williams Forestry and Associates, supervising plantings on mined lands across Appalachia. While studying as an undergraduate at the University of Kentucky, Michael was hired by the Kentucky Chapter of TACF as an intern to help accelerate its breeding program and expand its public outreach. He held that position from 2004 to 2006 after which he was elected to serve as Vice President of the Kentucky Chapter from 2006 through 2010. In 2005, Michael helped spearhead the "father tree" breeding program by harvesting pollen from American chestnuts across the state and applying them to backcross chestnuts at TACF's Meadowview Research Farms, a practice that was quickly adopted by many of the southern chapters. He continues to sit on the board of the Kentucky Chapter TACF. Michael holds a BS in Biology from the University of Kentucky and is currently pursuing an MS in Forestry there. He can be reached at: Michael@acf.org or 812-477-3285.

Links to additional information:

http://www.acf.org/partnerships_in_action.php

http://www.acf.org/newsletter6.25.14staffarticle-minelandreforestation.php?utm_source=June+eNews+2014&utm_campaign=June+eSprout&utm_medium=email

<http://greenforestwork.com/>

<http://arri.osmre.gov/>