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MEDIA ALERT:

National Aquarium in Baltimore to Restore 15 Acres of Wetlands At Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge

WHO: National Aquarium in Baltimore conservationists will lead 50 national delegates from Restore America's Estuaries on a tour of Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge. Together they will plant the Aquarium's first grasses of the season. This restoration project is a joint effort with the National Aquarium in Baltimore, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the US Army Corps of Engineers, Maryland Conservation Corps, Salisbury Zoo and the Friends of Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge. Funding is provided by the Chesapeake Bay Trust and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

WHAT: Located near Cambridge, Md., the Refuge is the Aquarium's newest conservation project. Aquarium staff will work with community volunteers to plant and restore the wetlands, teaching them how to monitor and maintain them for future generations.

WHY: Maryland's wetlands are key to attracting and retaining wildlife along its shores. As wetlands disappear to development, erosion and pollution, native animal species relocate or perish.

The National Aquarium in Baltimore is committed to aquatic stewardship throughout the Chesapeake Bay. It has established successful restoration sites at Eastern Neck National Wildlife Refuge and at Barren Island.

WHEN/ **Sunday, April 13, 2003**

WHERE: **Planting and tour of the site: 12:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.**
Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge near Cambridge, Md.

Community Briefing: 4:00 – 5:00 p.m.

ESBA Education Center, Salisbury Zoo (Free admission)

The public is invited and encouraged to attend and learn how to get involved in restoring local wetlands.

PHOTO Conservationists planting grasses, tour leaders describing wildlife.

OPPS: Visually, this tour provides excellent "before and after" reference as to how the wetland looks now to compare to how it will look in four years.

NOTE: Restore America's Estuaries is holding its first annual conference in Baltimore. The Aquarium is hosting the fieldtrip to share its expertise in wetlands restoration with other concerned conservationists from around the country.

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