



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Jaclyn Reeves-Pepin
Dir. of Development, NABT
(719) 596-9782

Ron Gagliardo
AArk Training Officer
(404) 455-6832

**PUBLIC INVITED TO HEAR JEAN-MICHEL COUSTEAU
IN MEMPHIS ON OCTOBER 17TH**

Memphis, TN, October 9, 2008 – Jean-Michel Cousteau, world-renowned explorer, environmentalist and first-born son of legendary oceanic explorer Jacques-Yves Cousteau, will be the featured speaker for an October 17 *Conservation Celebration* to be held in the Heritage Ballroom of the Cook Convention Center from 6pm-10pm.

The *Conservation Celebration* is open to the public, and will include a cocktail hour, a silent auction celebrating the *Year of the Frog* and a three-course dinner, in addition to the presentation by Jean-Michel Cousteau, who will be sharing notable experiences from his life and career.

Since first being “thrown overboard” by his father at age seven with the newly invented SCUBA gear on his back, Jean-Michel has been exploring the world’s oceans. He spent much of his life with his family aboard the *Calypso* and *Alcyone*. For nearly 20 years, he served as the Executive Vice President of The Cousteau Society. In 1999, he launched Ocean Futures Society, a non-profit marine conservation and education organization, serving as a voice for the ocean by communicating in all media the critical bond between people and the sea and the importance of wise environmental policy. Jean-Michel’s collaboration with Green Cross International and the national Resources Defense council on issues

of global water security, protection of sensitive marine areas, prevention of oil spills and prevention of the use of damaging sonar systems have been long-standing achievements.

On the occasion of the *Conservation Celebration*, Jean-Michel will also speak briefly about another important cause: the global amphibian extinction crisis.

Event Details:

The *Conservation Celebration* is being sponsored by The National Association of Biology Teachers (NABT), which is holding its annual Professional Development Conference in Memphis from October 15th-18th.

Tickets for the *Conservation Celebration* are \$125 per person, with \$65 being a tax-deductible charitable donation. Proceeds from the *Conservation Celebration*, including the silent auction, will support NABT and Amphibian Ark, an internationally recognized conservation organization working to save critically endangered amphibians.

Space for the *Conservation Celebration* is limited, so please make your reservation today by registering at www.NABT.org or calling (800) 406-0775.

Please contact Jaclyn Reeves-Pepin for questions or additional information at jreevespepin@nabt.org and (719) 596-9782.

The Amphibian Crisis and Amphibian Ark (AArk):

After thriving for more than 360 million years, amphibians—frogs, toads, salamanders, newts, and caecilians (legless, tailless tropical amphibians that resemble eels or earthworms)—are dying in alarming numbers. About 122 species are believed to have become extinct since 1980. About half of the world's 6,000 species could become extinct within our lifetime, with at least 500 species facing imminent extinction. This rate of extinction is unprecedented since the demise of the dinosaurs.

Destruction of habitat, invasive species, pollution, global warming, and other human influences threaten many species throughout the animal and plant

kingdoms. In addition to these challenges, amphibians are being attacked by a lethal disease that has caused unprecedented and unexpected losses. The chytrid fungus quickly and quietly destroys entire species when introduced into new populations in the wild. Chytrid fungus has now been identified in association with amphibian die-offs on every amphibian-inhabited continent. This disease has decimated or wiped out species that had not been considered critically endangered. It happens so quickly that species disappear before anyone realizes they are in trouble.

The result is that amphibians are faring worse than other animals, as shown by the rates of threatened species (number of threatened species as percentage of species described, according to the IUCN Red List):

- 30% of amphibians
- 21% of mammals
- 12% of birds
- 5% of reptiles
- 4% of fish

For amphibians, the potential impact of chytrid fungus across all species is probably underestimated, and a significant number of amphibian species that have been described are too rare and too poorly known to assess their level of endangerment.

The good news is that chytrid fungus is manageable in amphibians in captivity. By rescuing breeding populations of critically endangered amphibians around the world and placing them in zoos or other institutions, species can be preserved until it is safe to release them into the wild again. Amphibian Ark is working to avert the threatened mass extinction by doing just this.

Reflecting the urgency of the need and the short timetable for action, Amphibian Ark has the full support and participation of the world's scientific leadership. It is a collaborative partnership of the 1,200-member World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA), the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)/Species Survival Commission (SSC) Conservation Breeding Specialist Group, the IUCN/SSC Amphibian Specialist

Group, and many other zoo associations, zoos, aquariums, botanical gardens, and conservation organizations.

Amphibian Ark's roles are to:

- spearhead and coordinate programs in the U.S. and around the world
- prioritize species for immediate rescue and coordinate placement of breeding populations in zoos and other institutions
- help provide resources for maintaining breeding populations until it is possible to reintroduce them into the wild

As part of their efforts to raise awareness of the global amphibian extinction crisis, Amphibian Ark established 2008 as Year of the Frog.

The National Association of Biology Teachers (NABT):

The National Association of Biology Teachers (NABT) is the “leader in life science education”, empowering educators to provide the best possible biology and life science education to all students. Since 1938, teachers have joined NABT to share experiences and expertise with colleagues from around the globe, keep up with trends and developments in the field, and promote knowledge and professional growth.

NABT recognizes how the efforts of biology teachers positively influence students, affect communities, and impact the environment. NABT members were instrumental in declaring 2008 the *Year of the Frog*, and have been working with Amphibian Ark and other groups around the world to raise awareness and educate the public on the amphibian extinction crisis.

Silent Auction Celebrating the Year of the Frog:

The *Conservation Celebration* silent auction celebrating the Year of the Frog will include many interesting frog-related items, including:

Holbrook Travel: 10 Trip to Fiji island of Vanua Levu

The winner will join Dr. Richard Murphy on a 10-day educational adventure on the island of Vanua Levu, second largest of the Fiji Islands. Activities will include

a visit to a local village to observe education practices as well as snorkeling, kayaking, and birding excursions. This once-in-a-lifetime experience will teach the winner relevant classroom applications while studying delicate ecosystems and conservation initiatives in a pristine environment.

Memphis Zoo: 4 Admission Tickets

Rated the #1 Zoo in America by TripAdvisor, the Memphis Zoo boasts exhibits and habitats featuring a full range of animals and horticulture. With more than just lions, tigers, and bears, it's easy to see why children and adults alike always enjoy their visit to the Memphis Zoo.

Carolina Biological Supply Co: Herp Habitat and Fire Bellied Toads

Carolina Biological Supply Co offers a full line of educational products for both life and physical science. These toads are easy to care for and come with everything required to create a perfect addition for any classroom.

Ward's Natural Science: Underwater Camera

The first waterproof camera designed for use in the classroom, this innovative tool allows you to view underwater scenes live on your TV screen with an effective 50X magnification. Using patented light technology, the Aqua Flex delivers a high intensity light beam to break through the turbidity found in school nature centers and classroom aquariums.

Digital Frog International: Classroom License for Digital Frog v2

Digital Frog is a well know software program that allows students to learn about anatomy and physiology using a virtual model of the classic frog dissections. It also includes animations and other interactive opportunities so students get the opportunity to learn more in depth concepts of structure and function.

###