



News Release

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\$500,000 grant launches major 4-state river conservation

NU Foundation issues challenge grant for Nature Conservancy effort

BERLIN, Connecticut, Oct. 5, 2004 – The Northeast Utilities Foundation announced today it has awarded a \$500,000 grant to The Nature Conservancy launching a large-scale, multi-state effort to improve the long-term viability of the full length of the Connecticut River, from the Canadian border to Long Island Sound, as well as its key tributaries.

The Connecticut River Program will elevate conservation of New England's most important waterway from the local level across state lines to focus the watershed – comprised of 20,000 river miles including tributaries – in its entirety.

“With its founding sponsorship, the Northeast Utilities Foundation is recognizing the need to protect this vital natural resource and expand on the progress that has already been made,” said Charles W. Shivery, Chairman, President and Chief Executive Officer of Northeast Utilities. “The Connecticut River is too often overlooked as the natural, economic and cultural asset that it is. With this grant, the NU Foundation is challenging others to recognize with their financial support the value the river brings to their lives and to their organizations.”

For the first time in its 50-year history, The Nature Conservancy's chapters in the four states through which the river flows will combine and coordinate their conservation efforts toward the same goal. A comprehensive planning process has already begun with the expertise of dozens of program partners representing a diversity of disciplines.

“The Connecticut River has certainly rebounded in recent decades from the condition it was in, but the work is far from over. The NU Foundation's gift allows The Nature Conservancy to take conservation efforts to the next level, on the scale of the entire watershed, for the benefit of generations to come,” said Steven J. McCormick, President and Chief Executive Officer of The Nature Conservancy.

While years of dedicated conservation efforts have greatly improved the river and its tributaries, pressures and threats -- both old and new -- persist. Invasive plant species are destroying native habitats. Land is being developed and water flow altered in ways that

contribute to pollution and prevent the movement of fish and other animal species. While some of these issues are being addressed in some areas, the Connecticut River Program would study them as they impact the watershed as a whole.

The Connecticut River Program will seek to:

- Inhibit the spread of invasive plant species and safeguard unaffected areas;
- Restore the natural flow, form and other dynamics of the river to improve aquatic diversity in and along the waterway;
- Promote and improve river connectivity – unbroken river access throughout the length of the river and its floodplain – which is essential for the movement of fish and other species; and
- Protect and preserve lands critical to the river’s health.

Among the areas of focus of the program are the key tributaries that are critical to the continued viability of the Connecticut River. They include, in Connecticut, the Eightmile and Salmon Rivers; in western Massachusetts, the Westfield River; and in New Hampshire, the Ashuelot River.

The Nature Conservancy has for more than 40 years been working to protect the Connecticut River and its habitats, protecting nearly a quarter of a million acres within the river’s watershed. Planning by the Conservancy to improve the Connecticut River on a larger scale began in earnest in the late 1990s.

The NU Foundation grant is to be distributed over five years in annual installments of \$100,000 to be used for conservation efforts in Connecticut, Massachusetts and New Hampshire, and with the first installment having already funded the start-up of the program. The scope of the program itself will also extend to Vermont and will include funding from other sources, including other anticipated corporate support and private donations to the Conservancy.

The NU Foundation, established in 1998 by Northeast Utilities (NYSE: NU), provides financial support to community initiatives that improve educational, social and economic conditions and protect the quality of the environment. Since its inception, the foundation has provided more than \$4.7 million in grants to better the lives of people in communities served by the Northeast Utilities family of companies in Connecticut, Massachusetts and New Hampshire. For additional information, please visit www.nu.com/aboutNU/foundation.asp.