UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA, PHILIPPE COUSTEAU’S AZURE WORLDWIDE, AND THE NATURE CONSERVANCY ANNOUNCE TEXAS WATERSHED GAME SIMULATION AT SXSW ECO

Austin, TX (Oct. 3, 2012) - The University of Virginia and Philippe Cousteau’s Azure Worldwide today announced a collaboration with The Nature Conservancy to develop a large-scale simulation game based on a major Texas watershed. The Texas Water Game will highlight water issues unique to Texas including water conservation and water sharing with participants taking on the roles of regional stakeholders. The Game is the latest project in the University of Virginia and Azure Worldwide’s Global Water Games initiative which has already produced a highly successful Chesapeake Bay watershed simulation and numerous collaborations nationally and internationally.

“Collaboration at the local level is essential for watershed conservation. The Texas Water Game will utilize science- and economics-based game technology to demonstrate how community stakeholders can work together to pursue innovative solutions,” said Jeffrey Plank, Associate VP for Research at UVA, leader of the Global Water Games project and the University-wide sustainability initiative. “UVA is thrilled to have the opportunity to work with The Nature Conservancy and Azure Worldwide on this fresh approach to finding solutions that work from both an economic and environmental standpoint.”

“Clean, unpolluted water is our most precious and most endangered natural resource,” said Philippe Cousteau, Co-founder Azure Worldwide. “Collaboration and innovative problem solving are the only ways we can ensure that we will have enough clean water to support the needs of a growing global community. The Texas Water Game represents this new approach in tackling global challenges.”

“They say everything is bigger in Texas and that rings true for our water issues, which is why The Nature Conservancy is excited to work with the University of Virginia and Azure Worldwide to bring the Global Water Game to Texas,” said Laura Huffman, Texas state director for The Nature Conservancy. “These collaborations make conservation cool and get everyone involved. There is no question that Texas faces an uphill battle just to guarantee adequate, clean water supplies for the future so our success depends on getting all Texans involved. This is game day.”

Studies indicate that by 2040, the population in Texas will more than double to 43.5 million people while water resources will decrease by nearly 20 percent. With these factors in mind, the Global Water Games template has been expanded to address water quantity as well as water quality issues. The Texas Water Game will engage stakeholders from multiple sectors – government, business, civic and community-based organizations, agriculture, nonprofit conservation, and universities – in identifying and sharing strategies for watershed conservation and water sharing.

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The Texas Water Game project will help set new directions for multiple-sector collaborations in local watersheds. The University of Virginia, Azure Worldwide, and The Nature Conservancy collaboration has its origins in discussions started after the Global Water Games’ UVA Bay Game was presented during a panel at SXSW Interactive 2012.

About The Nature Conservancy
The Nature Conservancy is the leading conservation organization working to protect the most ecologically important lands and waters around the world for nature and people. To date, the Conservancy and its more than one million members have been responsible for the protection of more than 15 million acres in the United States and have helped preserve more than 102 million acres in Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific. The Nature Conservancy of Texas (nature.org/texas) maintains 250,000 acres of wild lands in 30 preserves across Texas and, with partners, has conserved nearly 1 million acres for wildlife habitat across the state.

About the Global Water Games Initiative
The Global Water Games Initiative is a collaboration between the University of Virginia and Azure Worldwide, a strategic environmental design, development, and marketing company co-founded by environmentalist and social entrepreneur Philippe Cousteau and Andrew Snowhite, a UVA environmental sciences alumnus. Global Water Games provides innovative tools and prototypes for developing computer-based simulations of watersheds to show the relationship between human activity and nature. Players assume the roles of key stakeholders making decisions based on livelihood or regulatory authority to discover the economic and environmental impact of their decisions. The Global Water Games template supports rapid development of a realistic participatory simulation of any watershed. To learn more about the Global Water Games Initiative, visit www.globalwatergames.org.

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