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**National Geographic Returns \$500,000 in Geography Education
Funds to Connecticut Resources Recovery Authority
Society Offers to Match Funds for Connecticut Student Endowment
If New Co-sponsor Comes Forward**

HARTFORD, Conn. — National Geographic Society officials presented \$500,000 to Connecticut Resources Recovery Authority today, representing CRRA's contribution in 1998 to establish the Connecticut Geography Education Fund. National Geographic had matched the CRRA contribution dollar for dollar, and the resulting endowment has supported geography and environmental education programs in Connecticut schools through annual grants. The Society returned the funds after questions regarding the original CRRA funding process were raised by the Connecticut Attorney General's office.

Barbara Chow, executive director of National Geographic's Education Foundation, provided the CRRA board with a stewardship report on the work of the endowment since its inception, which has made nearly \$300,000 in grants for Connecticut students and teachers. She indicated that the Society will keep its share of the fund in place for six months in hopes that another Connecticut donor or donors can be found to match the Society's investment.

"Much good work has been done in Connecticut as a result of this endowment, and it would be a tragedy to have to abandon such a productive program because of funding technicalities that have nothing to do with children and teachers," said Chow. "We entered the alliance in good faith and have made every effort both to fulfill our commitments to CRRA and advance the important cause of geography education in Connecticut."

Attorney General Richard Blumenthal also attended the CRRA board meeting and praised National Geographic's efforts to improve geography education in Connecticut and around the world and its attempts to ensure the continuation of the Connecticut Geography Education Fund.

"We're grateful for the National Geographic Society's cooperation in returning the \$500,000 to CRRA and its member municipalities. The educational purposes of the grant are worthy and worthwhile, and my personal hope is that other funding sources will step forward. But these activities were not proper for CRRA to underwrite, since they are totally unrelated to the performance of its lawful duties," he said.

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Bill DeGrazia, co-coordinator of the Connecticut Geographic Alliance, which has overseen the Society's geography education program effort in the state for the past 17 years, was joined by teachers and education professionals involved in the program.

"Nearly \$300,000 of the CRRA funds have already been returned to the state in the form of high-quality educational programs, which means the state and CRRA have received a particularly high rate of return on investment from this initiative," DeGrazia said. "While we very much regret the unusual turn of circumstances that bring us here today, it's our hope that the attention will cause some other entity to come forward with funding so that this important work can continue."

Michael A. Pace, CRRA chairman, said, "In working to restore CRRA's financial health, our new board and management team have had to revisit a number of actions taken by the previous administration. While advancing geography education in Connecticut schools is certainly a worthwhile goal, the Attorney General found that it really wasn't CRRA's place to do so. We appreciate how National Geographic has responded to this unfortunate turn of events, in particular its generous offer to continue the endowment if new Connecticut funds are contributed to match their contribution in order to ensure that this valuable educational initiative is not abandoned.

"The Society and the endowment partners have all acted in good faith from the beginning. The programs they've established and the teachers they've trained set a remarkable standard of excellence for improving our children's understanding of the world," Pace added.

Launched in 1988, the mission of the National Geographic Society's Education Foundation is to motivate and enable each new generation to become geographically literate. With approximately \$100 million in assets, the Education Foundation has dispersed more than \$54 million in grants over 15 years for innovative educational programs to bring the excitement and relevance of geography to life. The Foundation's programs include a nationwide grassroots network of geographic alliances — professional development partnerships between local universities and K-12 teachers — online resources, public-awareness campaigns, and national training and mentoring programs for teachers. For more information, go to www.nationalgeographic.com/foundation.

The mission of the Connecticut Geographic Alliance is to restore high-quality geography to Connecticut K-12 classrooms and to improve the geographic literacy of all Connecticut students.

The Connecticut Resources Recovery Authority is a quasi-public agency whose mission is to work for — and in — the best interests of the municipalities of the state of Connecticut. CRRA's new board of directors and new management team develop and implement environmentally sound solutions and best practices for solid waste disposal and recycling management on behalf of municipalities. CRRA also runs environmental and recycling educational programs through its Visitors Center in Hartford and Garbage Museum in Stratford. For more information about CRRA and its activities, visit <http://www.crra.org>.

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