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PRESS RELEASE

PARTNERS UNVEIL “HANDS ACROSS THE OCEAN” EXHIBIT ON THE NATIONAL MALL

Project Concludes Artist’s 27-Year Environmental Art Project

Washington, D.C. – Officials from the Federal government and private sector organizations today unveiled “Hands Across the Ocean,” an international art project designed to help celebrate children, art and the environment.

The exhibit, which is outside on the National Mall near the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History, includes one half-mile of murals created by children from 110 countries, led by renowned artist Wyland, promoting environmental awareness of oceans, lakes, rivers and wetlands. Wyland is an artist best known for painting large outdoor murals of whales and ocean life. The project is the culmination of a 27 year project by Wyland’s and closes a chapter in the artist’s mission of creating 100 life-size environmental themed murals, dubbed the “Whaling Walls” for communities around the world.

“It is a profound honor to celebrate the conclusion of the Whaling Wall odyssey in conjunction with the launch of the new Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History’s Sant Ocean Hall,” **said Wyland.** “The spirit of discovery about the ocean’s wonders that people will experience through its amazing exhibits is what I’ve been working to foster with my murals, and through the Wyland Foundation.”

To celebrate the opening, the Wyland Foundation, Alice Ferguson Foundation, and the Smithsonian Institution, along with representatives from the White House Council on Environmental Quality, the U.S. Department of Interior, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration joined more than 100 Washington, D.C.-area school children to create a 450-square foot mural of the Potomac River watershed. The National Park Service rangers along with volunteers provided by NOAA and the Alice Ferguson Foundation, guided students experienced through a series of educational exhibits including ones related to the Wyland Foundation’s acclaimed “Clean Water Challenge” curriculum.

"This project truly shows the beauty of sea life around the world--through the creativity of a great marine artist and the thousands of children he inspires," **said White House CEQ Chairman James L. Connaughton.** "This Administration is thrilled to be a part of this collaborative effort. The President and Mrs. Bush recognize the importance of cooperative conservation and education - both nationally and internationally -- to make our oceans and coasts cleaner and more productive."

"Conservation of our oceans requires that citizen stewards combine scientific knowledge with passion and commitment to protect the world's waters and the life those waters

sustain. But first must come the inspiration to act," **said Interior Deputy Secretary Lynn Scarlett.** "These murals, created with helping hands of students from around the world, give us all that inspiration to act."

"This initiative is a step forward in increasing ocean awareness," **said retired Navy Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Jr.,** Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and NOAA Administrator. "I hope this project inspires future generations in an interest in the ocean to protect and manage this vital resource."

"We are happy to celebrate the historic opening of the Sant Ocean Hall with this wonderful mural by Wyland and all the children who participated in the 'Hands Across the Ocean' project," **said Cristián Samper, Director of the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History.** "The new ocean hall and this beautiful work of art will remind everyone that we truly are living on an 'ocean planet.'"

"Our students had a great time today painting with Wyland on the National Mall," **said Tracy Bowen, Executive Director of the Alice Ferguson Foundation.** "The experience elevated their awareness and appreciation for Oceans and their connection to it through our Potomac River."

"Hands Across the Ocean," was first displayed in Beijing, China for the 2008 Beijing Olympic Cultural Festival and Green Olympics. The exhibit will remain on the National Mall until Friday, October 3rd before embarking on a tour across the United States.

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