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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Enoree Ranger District Receives National Award for Indian Creek Wildlife Habitat Restoration Initiative

(Whitmire, S.C.) Earlier today, the National Association of Forest Service Retirees (NAFSR) presented the Enoree Ranger District with the national John McGuire Award for outstanding work in natural resource management on the Indian Creek Wildlife Habitat Restoration Initiative (ICWHRI). Forest Service Chief Abigail Kimbell, Regional Forester Liz Agpaoa, NAFSR Board Chair George Leonard, Francis Marion and Sumter National Forests Forest Supervisor Jerome Thomas and Enoree District Ranger Elizabeth (Beth) LeMaster all spoke at the award ceremony held at the Enoree Ranger District office in Whitmire.

“I’m extremely proud of our district personnel for their tremendous efforts to reach out for partnerships to create such a broad-based initiative,” said LeMaster. “And I’m equally proud of those partners for their ability to recognize seemingly polarizing issues as pertinent to the landscape as a whole. I am also thankful to the NAFSR for recognizing the effort that has gone into this project by honoring the district with this award.”

In 2004, the Forest Service joined with partners to initiate the ICWHRI on the Enoree Ranger District and adjacent private lands. The approximately 16,000-acre project restores and improves wildlife habitat for grassland-dependent species such as bobwhite quail and certain songbird species including Bachman’s sparrow, loggerhead shrike and prairie warbler. The loss of appropriate habitat due to downtrends in farming, development and the spread of invasive non-native grasses has contributed to a significant regional decline in these species over the past several decades. The project focuses on the re-establishment of warm season native bunch grasses and the eradication of the competing invasive species through practices such as thinning and prescribed burning. Nine partners (federal and state agencies and conservation organizations) and 21 private landowners are involved in the ICWHRI.

The John R. McGuire Award is presented by the NAFSR to deserving Forest Service employees for outstanding work in natural resources management. The award is named in honor of John McGuire, who served as the 10th Chief of the Forest Service from 1972-1979, and helped draft the National Forest Management Act. The NAFSR is a nonprofit organization of former agency employees who are dedicated to the promotion of the ideals and principles of natural resource conservation on national forests.

For more information on the Enoree Ranger District, visit: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/fms>.

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