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Salmon Falls Watershed Collaborative Honored with National U.S. Water Prize

(Durham, NH, February 22) The Salmon Falls Watershed Collaborative, an ambitious inter-state effort to protect drinking water supplies for more than 28,000 residents in Maine and New Hampshire, was awarded the 2012 U.S. Water Prize by The Clean Water America Alliance.

Conceived through the efforts of the drinking water protection programs in the states of both Maine and New Hampshire, the Salmon Falls Watershed Collaborative brought together natural resource experts, municipalities, land trusts, and local water districts and developed an Action Plan to protect clean drinking water for current and future generations.

The Piscataqua Region Estuaries Partnership (PREP), which is administered by the University of New Hampshire, serves as the lead convener for the Collaborative since they are a conservation organization with a mission to maintain and restore the health of the Great Bay estuary that borders the two states. The Salmon Falls River is the largest river system contributing to the Great Bay estuary, and was recently identified by the U.S. Forest Service as being the most threatened in the nation with regard to a potential decline in water quality due to conversion of private forested lands to housing.

The selection of the Salmon Falls Watershed Collaborative for the U.S. Water Prize highlights the importance of inter-jurisdictional partnerships to protect and sustain drinking water supplies. The Collaborative unites to protect forests, champion smarter development approaches, and reduce water pollution from existing and future land development.

In a joint statement Rachel Rouillard, Executive Director of PREP and Andrews Tolman from the Maine Center for Disease Control's Drinking Water Program said, "We are delighted by this award and proud of the work so many residents, municipal officials, and other key stakeholders have done and will continue to do into the future to ensure clean water for the Salmon Falls watershed residents and ecosystem."

The Clean Water America Alliance President Ben Grumbles said "the water champions are showing America how to innovate, integrate and educate for water sustainability and economic success." The award to the Salmon Falls Watershed Collaborative and five other organizations will be made on April 23, in Washington, D.C.

The Collaborative's work has been made possible through funding support from NH Department of Environmental Services, Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as part of the national Source Water Collaborative. Other key partners in the Collaborative include: the Wells and Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserves, Maine Rural Water Association, Granite State Rural Water Association, South Berwick and Berwick water districts, City of Somersworth, Maine Non-point Education for Municipal Officials (NEMO), Strafford Regional Planning Commission, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, York County SWCD, Acton Wakefield Watersheds Alliance, and five land trust organizations.

To learn more about the Salmon Falls Collaborative or view the group's Action Plan, please visit <http://www.prep.unh.edu/sfwc.htm>

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