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PRESS RELEASE:

U.S. Embassy Celebrates World Wetland Day at Xuan Thuy Ramsar Site

To celebrate World Wetland Day and highlight U.S. support for wetland conservation in Vietnam, Deputy Chief of Mission John S. Boardman will visit communities in Giao Thuy District, Nam Dinh Province on February 1, 2005. During the visit to Xuan Thuy National Park, Vietnam's only Ramsar site, Mr. Boardman will announce a small grant to support Con Lu Bird Conservation Club, Xuan Thuy National Park, and BirdLife International conduct community-based conservation activities.

Mr. Boardman's visit to Xuan Thuy Ramsar Site will highlight the biological and cultural diversity of Xuan Thuy. Mr. Mr. Tran Xuan Giai, Vice Chairman of Nam Dinh Province People's Committee and Mr. Nguyen Viet Cach, Director of Xuan Thuy National Park will also give presentations.

February 2 each year is World Wetland Day. That day marks the signing of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (the Ramsar Convention) in Iran in 1971. There is only one Ramsar site in Vietnam – Xuan Thuy National Park – located at the mouth of the Red River in Nam Dinh Province.

In 2005, the US Ambassador's Fund will support a project entitled "Strengthening Community Support for Conservation at Xuan Thuy Important Bird Area (IBA)." The project is implemented by Xuan Thuy National Park with technical support from BirdLife International. The \$20,000 grant will support local institutional capacity building and community-based conservation activities in the buffer zone of Xuan Thuy National Park. Specific activities include conservation awareness raising, bird monitoring, and developing an information center.

Through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the United States also supports forest protection in central Vietnam, coastal management in Ha Long Bay, and protection of endangered primates on Cat Ba Island and in Cao Bang Province.

The theme of World Wetland Day 2005 is "There's wealth in wetland diversity--Don't lose it!"

Note to Journalists: Those wishing to learn more about the event should call the USAID Environment Program Manager Mr. Nathan Sage at (4) 831-4580 Ext. 119.