



CONTACTS:

Brian Levine
Office Depot
561-438-2895
blevine@officedepot.com

Jason Anderson
Conservation International
202-912-1464
j.anderson@celb.org

Rob Riordan
NatureServe
703-908-1831
rob_riordan@natureserve.org

Jim Petterson
The Nature Conservancy
303-541-0369
jpetterson@tnc.org

OFFICE DEPOT PARTNERS WITH LEADING CONSERVATION ORGANIZATIONS TO INCORPORATE CONSERVATION SCIENCE INTO PAPER PROCUREMENT DECISIONS

Five Year, \$2.2 Million Effort Funds New Forest & Biodiversity Conservation Alliance

Delray Beach, Fla., March 22, 2004 – Office Depot, (NYSE: ODP), the world's leading reseller of paper, today announced a five-year, \$2.2 million strategy to develop the information, standards and tools needed to advance the company's forest and biodiversity conservation policies. The project work is expected to help reduce the environmental footprint of the company's forest and paper product suppliers while contributing to global biodiversity conservation.

To achieve these objectives, Office Depot is collaborating with NatureServe, Conservation International and The Nature Conservancy – three of the world's most respected science-driven conservation organizations – to form the *Forest & Biodiversity Conservation Alliance*, a cooperative working framework that will coordinate the complementary strengths and resources of each organization to address forest and biodiversity conservation issues within the supply chain.

"The creation of the Alliance is another strong demonstration of Office Depot's commitment to pursue practical approaches to issues of environmental concern," noted Bruce Nelson, Chairman and CEO of Office Depot. "Environmental stewardship is advanced by people and organizations that are specific in what they seek to achieve. We are perfectly clear on the values we want to promote and advance, the types of forests we want our suppliers to avoid, and the forest practices we will and will not accept. The activities of this alliance will assist forest managers in their efforts to address those values, and provide Office Depot with the information and tools we need to incorporate conservation science into our procurement decisions."

Nelson noted that the objectives of the Alliance are reflected in a new *Forest & Biodiversity Conservation* section of Office Depot's Environmental Paper Procurement Policy, also released today.

The Alliance, and the integration of its objectives within Office Depot's Environmental Paper Procurement Policy, is the product of more than 10 months of collaboration, during which time the conservation science organizations worked with Office Depot to:

- Identify the challenges to forest and biodiversity conservation faced by landowners, managers and Office Depot's own sourcing and vendor compliance personnel; and
- Develop projects that would address these challenges, while facilitating the implementation of Office Depot's policies on *Rare & Vulnerable Forests* and *Forests Containing Exceptional Biodiversity Values*.

To meet Office Depot's goal of being responsible, transparent and accountable, Alliance members have committed to annually review and publicly communicate the progress and results of its efforts.

Projects undertaken by the participating organizations will initially fall into four priority areas:

- **Developing Scientific Information to Improve Forest Management:** The Alliance will develop data to help foresters identify and manage hundreds of imperiled and at-risk forest species and natural communities, in regions such as the Pacific Northwest, the Southeastern United States and British Columbia. Funding will also help improve information systems to manage data about these species and ecosystems.
- **Refining and Applying Science-based Methods for Conserving Biodiversity:** This includes methods to effectively prioritize forest lands for biological inventory, and to identify and conserve key biodiversity areas within forest landscapes. Target landscapes are expected to include the boreal forests of Canada and the Atlantic Forest region of Brazil.
- **Enhancing Environmental Procurement Practices:** This includes methods and tools to incorporate conservation criteria into domestic and international sourcing decisions as well as vendor compliance processes.
- **Training Forest Managers and Scientists:** This includes regional workshops to train interested foresters, conservation professionals and landowners in the use of these data, methods and tools.

"Good decisions start with good information," said Mark Schaefer, President and CEO of NatureServe. "By improving our scientific understanding of forest species and their habitats, we can help forest managers do a better job of conserving these precious resources. Office Depot's support will further that goal."

"Through the engagement of businesses up and down the paper supply chain, the Alliance hopes to actively influence conservation decisions made on the ground, at the forest landscape level," said Steve McCormick, president and CEO of The Nature Conservancy. "We will use our expertise to help integrate scientific knowledge and leading edge biodiversity conservation planning into forest management decision-making."

While most forest and paper companies are eager to implement sound conservation practices, the scientific information, methods and tools needed for conservation priority setting, planning and implementation are not always available, consistent or understood. One goal of the project is to engage Office Depot suppliers and the forest certification community, to the greatest extent possible, in efforts leading to measurable conservation outcomes for forest species, ecological communities and landscapes.

Office Depot has already briefed key suppliers (Abitibi Consolidated, Bowater, International Paper and Weyerhaeuser) and the dominant North American forest certification systems (CSA International, The Sustainable Forestry Board – the independent governing body of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative – and The Forest Stewardship Council) to begin soliciting feedback and developing a strategy for project development.

“The collaboration of conservation science and business ingenuity is required if we are to work directly with pulp and paper suppliers and purchasers to provide economic opportunities for local communities while protecting the last remaining pristine forests in the world’s biodiversity hotspots,” said Peter Seligmann, Chairman and CEO of Conservation International.

The participating organizations have agreed to apply their complementary strengths, geographic presence, program scope, scientific knowledge and experience to achieve measurable conservation outcomes in temperate, tropical and boreal regions of the world where wood fiber production for paper products plays a defining role in land use and natural resource management. Throughout this process, the Alliance will seek broad consultation among interested stakeholders that share its goals.

###

Press Conference Call Information

Office Depot, Conservation International, NatureServe and The Nature Conservancy are hosting a conference call for the media at 3:00 p.m. (Eastern Time) today. U.S. media representatives should call 800-314-7867 (confirmation 528848). International media may call 719-867-0640. A replay of the call will be available for seven days and can be accessed by calling 719-457-0820 or 888-203-1112.

About Office Depot

With annual sales of more than \$12 billion, no one sells more office supplies to more customers in more countries than Office Depot. Founded in 1986 and headquartered in Delray Beach, FL, the company conducts business in 23 countries and employs nearly 50,000 people worldwide. Office Depot is the world’s number two online retailer – generating \$2.6B in sales for FY’03. In North America, Office Depot has 900 retail stores in addition to a national business-to-business delivery network supported by 22 delivery centers, more than 60 local sales offices and 13 regional call centers. Additional press information can be found at: <http://mediarelations.officedepot.com>.

About Conservation International

Conservation International (CI) believes that the Earth’s natural heritage must be maintained if future generations are to thrive spiritually, culturally and economically. CI is currently working on projects in more than 40 countries on four continents to protect global biodiversity and demonstrate that human societies can live harmoniously with nature. CI develops scientific, policy, and economic solutions to protect threatened natural ecosystems that are rich in biodiversity. To find out more, visit www.conservation.org.

About NatureServe

NatureServe is a non-profit conservation group dedicated to providing the scientific information and technology needed to guide effective conservation action. NatureServe represents a network of 75 natural heritage programs and conservation data centers in the United States, Canada, and Latin America that collect and analyze information on plants, animals, and ecosystems. NatureServe is a leading source for detailed scientific information about rare and endangered species and threatened ecosystems. Visit us on the web at www.natureserve.org.

About The Nature Conservancy

With operations in all 50 U.S. states and 30 other countries, The Nature Conservancy is a private, international, non-profit organization established in 1951 to preserve the plants, animals and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive. To date, the Conservancy and its one million members have been responsible for the protection of more than 117 million acres in the United States and 27 countries around the world. Additional information can be found at <http://nature.org>.