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MEDIA CONTACT: Kimberly Maroe,
Public Information Manager, 954-357-8053

MEDIA CONTACT: Scott Medvin, Public Information Officer, 954-357-6015

Broward County City First in Florida to be Certified By National Wildlife Federation

Coconut Creek Receives "Community Wildlife Habitat" Certification

*NatureScape Broward to Receive Prestigious National Association of Counties
Award*

The City of Coconut Creek has been certified as a Community Wildlife Habitat by the National Wildlife Federation. The Broward County city is the first city in Florida, and the 11th in the country, to receive this recognition.

"We got it, it's official, we've been certified," said Coconut Creek Mayor Marilyn Gerber. "The city's plan was to reach this goal in time for our 40th Anniversary in 2007. Fortunately, our team, led by Todd De Jesus with a host of committed volunteers, pulled it together in record time!"

In order to be certified by the National Wildlife Federation, the City of Coconut Creek needed to collect points in a number of categories, including having a certain number of individual properties certified as Backyard Wildlife Habitats. An individual property may be certified if it meets certain criteria. The property must provide food, water, shelter, a place for animals to raise offspring and it must be a sustainable environment. Each individual property certified brought the city one step closer to its goal.

Coconut Creek also had to implement a number of educational project goals, such as the creation of an informational kiosk and resource library at City Hall, as well as the creation of a web site for community members to learn more about the project.

"I'm ecstatic that Coconut Creek has set a precedent in the state," said Broward County Mayor Kristin Jacobs. "I know that the City of Wilton Manors is close to certification, and a number of cities are expressing interest. It is great to see the municipalities embracing the tenets of NatureScape."

NatureScape Broward also has reason to celebrate. The water conservation program has been awarded a 2005 Achievement Award by the National Association of Counties' (NACo). The Achievement Award Program is a noncompetitive category that recognizes county programs that are innovative, creative, and effective.

Mayor Jacobs, who declared 2005 "The Year of the Environment," will receive the award on July 17, at NACo's 2005 Annual Conference held in Honolulu, Hawaii.

"I've nurtured the Broward NatureScape program from the very beginning," said Mayor Jacobs. "I'm pleased to see that it is receiving the accolades and recognition it deserves. It's been a team effort, and our hard work is paying off in a number of ways."

By presenting this award to NatureScape Broward, NACo acknowledges the significant role that the program plays in ensuring a positive connection between the urban population of Broward County and the environment.

"By protecting and restoring native habitat and in promoting environmentally-friendly landscape maintenance, the NatureScape program is working to improve the quality of life for Broward County residents and urban wildlife, and ensuring the viability of future water supplies," said Dr. Jennifer Jurado, Water Resources Manager for the Environmental Protection Department. "For these reasons, NatureScape is truly a program worthy of this distinction."

On Thursday, June 23, at 8:30 a.m., Mayor Jacobs will moderate a panel on "Planning for Florida's Future Water Needs" at the Florida Association of Counties' Annual Conference in Tampa. Panelists include Dr. Jurado, and Diana Guidry, a Natural Resources Specialist for Broward County.

"Water is a finite resource," said Mayor Jacobs. "We must plan ahead to ensure a consistent supply of quality water for our residents and all living things."

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