



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC AND NORTH COAST TOURISM COUNCIL UNVEIL
GEOTOURISM MAPGUIDE AND WEB SITE ON CALIFORNIA'S REDWOOD COAST
March 11 Event to Mark Historic Achievement for Sustainable Travel, Culture & Recreation**

"Geotourism (n): Tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place — its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage and well-being of its residents."

SCOTIA, Calif. (March 9, 2010)—Dozens of top national and local leaders in nature, travel and sustainability will come together on Thursday, March 11, to mark the rollout of the Redwood Coast Geotourism MapGuide and Web site. This landmark project, a partnership of National Geographic's Center for Sustainable Destinations (CSD) and the North Coast Tourism Council, has taken several years to plan and execute and is a historically significant asset for everyone who visits or lives in Northern California.

The Redwood Coast encompasses six large counties and begins in the San Francisco Bay Area, continuing north to the California-Oregon border. The new interactive Geotourism Web site and MapGuide highlights this area in detail and is designed to identify and sustain natural, cultural and historic attractions that are the very essence of Northern California.

"This is a showcase of what makes Northern California so critically and beautifully significant," said James Dion, associate director of the CSD. "More than ever, this project underscores the importance of conserving this region's tremendous scenic and historical assets for future generations."

The official project site, www.visitredwoodcoast.com, already illustrates the achievement. From Marin County to Del Norte County, viewers can pinpoint and learn details about everything from nature trails and tide pools to mushroom walks and endangered animals. According to Richard Strom, project leader for the North Coast Tourism Council, the site encourages sustainable tourism choices to both international and domestic travelers. It is a tool to refine vacation planning for specific destinations and even encourages visitors to add and correct online resources.

"We looked throughout Northern California to find the ideal gathering spot to launch the MapGuide, and through a great partnership with Humboldt County we selected Scotia, a small town with a huge story," said Strom. "One of the very last company towns, Scotia was founded and is still run by a lumber company driven by sustainability. We are holding the event in the historic Winema Theater and the Scotia Inn, both built entirely from redwood and both signifying California history and heritage. You can literally feel nature pulse around you in Scotia."

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The launch event features presentations and a mill tour. J. Michael Fay, a National Geographic Explorer-in-Residence and a conservationist at the Bronx-based Wildlife Conservation Society, will be the keynote speaker at the event. In 2007-2008 Fay walked the entire range of the coastal redwood to call attention to the destruction of this vital, extraordinary species, which resulted in the cover story of the October 2009 National Geographic magazine and the National Geographic Channel special, "EXPLORER: Climbing Redwood Giants."

"The launch has already attracted the attention of government and travel leaders, and the R.S.V.P. list for the March 11 event is growing every day," said Strom. "This sustainability project has been led and driven by dozens of leaders donating time, money and expertise so we can all feel confident about our collective futures and help preserve the things that make the North Coast so extraordinary." Sonoma, Marin, Humboldt, Del Norte, Lake and Mendocino counties are included in the Geotourism Project.

National Geographic used its acclaimed mapmaking and sustainable tourism expertise to help produce the Geotourism Project with the North Coast Tourism Council and the Bureau of Land Management. The Geotourism Project was facilitated by the California Coastal National Monument as a means of supporting the communities that are impacted by the proximity of the monument. Save the Redwoods League and a multitude of private businesses also supported the project through funding and participation.

The National Geographic Society has worked with community-based alliances to develop similar Geotourism MapGuides in other regions around the world. Projects have been completed or are ongoing in the Central Cascades, Greater Yellowstone, the Crown of the Continent (Alberta, British Columbia, Montana), Guatemala, Sonoran Desert (Arizona, Sonora), Romania, Norway, Honduras, Peru, Baja California, Rhode Island, Vermont and Appalachia. The National Geographic Society is one of the world's largest nonprofit scientific and educational organizations. Founded in 1888 to "increase and diffuse geographic knowledge," the Society works to inspire people to care about the planet.

Advance media interviews and comprehensive site tours are available on request.

For more information on the North Coast Geotourism Project, visit www.visitredwoodcoast.com.

For more information on National Geographic's Center for Sustainable Destinations, visit www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/sustainable/.

For more information on California's Northern Coast, visit www.NorthCoastCA.com.

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