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THE NORTH FACE EXPLORE FUND AWARDS GRANT TO THE AMERICAN RIVER CONSERVANCY *The Conservancy's Epic Sierra Adventures supports a national effort to increase outdoor participation among youth*

Coloma, CA, June 8, 2011- The North Face has awarded a \$2,500 grant to The American River Conservancy to help children and families explore the outdoors. The Conservancy uses best available science, volunteers and partnerships to preserve rivers, land and the life they support. Through education and recreation, the Conservancy inspires the care of natural landscapes for future generations. Epic Sierra Adventures is a great opportunity for to share the joy and wonder of the outdoors with today's youth. Epic Sierra Adventures was selected from hundreds of applications because of our mission of preserving rivers and land for life by educating the next generation of outdoor enthusiasts and environmental stewards. In the first of two grant cycles in 2011, The North Face awarded \$125,000 Explore Fund grants to 52 projects helping more than 30,000 kids to connect to nature.

"Support from the Explore Fund helps both The North Face and the Conservancy focus on breaking down barriers to getting youth outdoors. Epic Sierra provides youth with the opportunity to learn new skills, to step beyond perceived boundaries and engage in a variety of outdoor recreational activities," says Michael Dotson, Environmental Education program manager.

Epic Sierra Adventures was established in 2008 to promote outdoor recreation and environmental education for high school youth, ages 14-18, of all socio-economic backgrounds. Since its creation, the program has provided opportunities to youth to explore the outdoors, regardless of their family income. Many existing programs offer adventure travel options for teens, but Epic Sierra is unique in that it focuses on environmental education and stewardship. By offering meaningful and enjoyable service projects, the program effectively encourages youth to tread lightly and give back to the land and communities they visit. When teens finish an Epic Sierra Adventure, they have gained more than just an adventure. They have gained perspective on their place in the natural world.

In addition, Epic Sierra has been able to advance the Conservancy's mission exponentially with the support of several important partner organizations including The North Face, Royal Robbins, Mountain Hardwear, and REI. These partners are vital to the success of the program, by providing roughly one-third of our participants with scholarships to attend Epic Sierra.



“First-hand experience is essential to ignite a passion for the outdoors, and that shouldn’t be limited by gender, race or income level,” said Ann Krcik, director of outdoor participation at The North Face. “At The North Face, we’re dedicated to providing everyone with the access to our natural playgrounds and the resources they need to get outside.”

The 2011 Epic Sierra season takes place this July and August with 2 trips available to high school youth. The first trip, beginning on July 10th, has space available. Trip two, beginning July 24th, is currently filled up, but accepting a wait list. Each trip lasts 2 weeks and takes youth on an adventure that includes stops along the South Fork American River, Lake Tahoe, June Lake, Mono Lake and Yosemite National Park.

To learn more about the American River Conservancy and Epic Sierra Adventures visit www.arconservancy.org or www.epicsierra.org. To learn more about all of the Explore Fund grantees and to keep up on their progress visit www.planetexplore.com.

About The American River Conservancy

Since 1989, the American River Conservancy (ARC) has been preserving rivers and land for life. As a non-profit community organization in the central Sierra Nevada foothills, we work to preserve natural areas and cultural resources and build an enduring ethic of care, building a sustainable future for humans in harmony with nature.

About The North Face Explore Fund

The North Face® Explore Fund™ is a grant program committed to supporting non-profit, community organizations that break down the barriers preventing children and families from experiencing the outdoors. The Explore Fund, administered by The Outdoor Foundation, finds, engages and provides funding for new partners that help further the mission of inspiring the next generation of explorers and conservationists by helping them discover nature's playground.

About PlanetExplore

PlanetExplore is an online community founded by The North Face, powered by partner organizations that share a passion for the outdoors, and designed to help individuals and families learn about and participate in outdoor activities and events in their area. PlanetExplore is a portal to the outdoors designed to inspire and enable people of all ages to become regularly active outside, and to enjoy the benefits gained through a connection to nature.

For more information, please visit our websites:

The Explore Fund www.explorefund.com

Planet Explore www.planetexplore.com

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