

NEWS RELEASE

September 13, 2006

For Immediate Release

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Poland Spring Water Company Makes \$300,000 Investment in Support of Hands-On Science Education

Grant will Enable the Gulf of Maine Research Institute to Offer a
Unique Marine Science Experience
to Maine Students

Portland, Maine -- The Gulf of Maine Research Institute (GMRI), a marine research and education institution that promotes awareness and public understanding of the Gulf of Maine ecosystem, today announced an educational partnership in which Poland Spring Water Company will assume the lead sponsorship role of GMRI's *LabVenture!*, a statewide interactive learning program for middle school students.

Poland Spring Water Company has committed \$300,000 to support *LabVenture!* that provides a unique opportunity for Maine students to take on the role of scientist as they experience life at a working marine research facility. Lead support from Poland Spring Water Company will allow GMRI to offer this hands-on learning experience to fifth or sixth grade students from every community in Maine, free of charge.

Unveiled today was a specially wrapped bus with underwater marine images, which will be used to transport students to GMRI's lab on Portland's working waterfront.

"*LabVenture!* will literally transport Maine's students to GMRI labs where kids will work side by side with scientists and researchers," said Tim Brown, Sr. Vice President, Sales and Marketing of Nestlé Waters North America of which Poland Spring Water Company is a division. "This is a unique opportunity to be part of teaching Maine's children about the water resources that sustain us all. As a company that bottles natural spring water, we understand the importance of sustaining water resources and their surrounding ecosystems. Having our children understand this is a legacy we want to pass on."

In 2005, GMRI completed construction of a research facility that promises to be one of the world's most significant marine research laboratories to be built in the last decade. Among the unique features of the facility is a digital interactive education lab, the Sam L. Cohen Center for Interactive Learning. Designed to make science more accessible to the general public, the Cohen Center currently features *LabVenture!*, which uses digital technology to engage middle school students with cutting-edge marine research. *LabVenture!* is a 2 _ hour, hands-on learning experience that includes a multimedia group presentation along with free standing digital kiosks

(including interactive touch screens, an array of scientific tools, and large plasma display screens) that guide students through a series of research activities.

“Maine students have few opportunities to interact with scientists or science directly,” said Don Perkins, President of the Gulf of Maine Research Institute. “Children are naturally inquisitive about the world around them. Our goal is to provide a statewide resource to help school systems cultivate the scientific curiosity that comes so naturally to young people. This partnership with Poland Spring Water Company sets us on the path to accomplish our goal of inspiring Maine students and providing *universal access* to science and scientists.”

To ensure equal and universal access by Maine children from diverse backgrounds, GMRI is committed to making *LabVenture!* available, free of charge, for fifth or sixth grade classes in all Maine communities (approximately 15,000 students annually). Between January and June, GMRI has hosted over 5,000 students, representing schools in 13 of Maine’s 16 counties. School trips for this fall have restarted after the summer break; 112 sixth grade students from the Leonard Middle School in Old Town will experience *LabVenture!* this week. The goal of *universal access* will be achieved over a three-year ramp up period: 50% of Maine’s fifth or sixth grade students in each county (~7,500 students) in 2006; 75% of each county (~11,250 students) in 2007; and 90% of each county (~15,000 students) in 2008.

About Gulf of Maine Research Institute

The Gulf of Maine Research Institute (GMRI) was established in 1968 to develop pragmatic solutions to complex problems to support the evolution of the Gulf of Maine ecosystem and the human community that depends on it. GMRI accomplishes this by convening the public to discuss, debate and resolve aquatic resource conflicts, conducting unbiased scientific research to improve public understanding of the Gulf of Maine and its watershed, and educating Maine residents and visitors about fresh and saltwater ecosystems.

GMRI’s new facility, located on the Portland, Maine waterfront, provides a neutral, collaborative platform for research partnerships among leading research organizations, the fishing community, and private industry with a focus on fishery ecosystem research. A hybrid marine research and education facility, the Institute is closely linked to the community, strategically focused on the Gulf of Maine bioregion, and complemented by a unique research interface that will engage primary school students and the general public with marine science.

About Poland Spring Water Company

The Poland Spring Water Company is a division of Nestlé Waters North America Inc, which has 8,400 employees across the United States.

The Poland Spring Water Company employs almost 700 people in Maine at plants in Poland Spring and Hollis and contributes more than \$100 million to Maine’s economy each year, including spending of over \$60 million with Maine-based small businesses and contractors. A new bottling plant is planned for Kingfield, Maine. Poland Spring is the leading bottled spring water brand in the U.S., with sales primarily in the northeast.

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