

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### GE'S BIRCHWOOD POWER FACILITY RECEIVES INTERNATIONAL HABITAT CONSERVATION AWARD

KING GEORGE, VA — Employees at GE Energy Financial Services' Birchwood Power Facility in King George, Virginia received international recognition for their contributions to wildlife habitat conservation at the Wildlife Habitat Council's (WHC) 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Symposium, *The Value of Green* in Baltimore, Maryland. The GE unit demonstrated its commitment to environmental stewardship and increasing native biodiversity by achieving *Wildlife at Work*<sup>SM</sup> recertification for the Birchwood Power Facility.

"For 20 years, the Wildlife Habitat Council has led ground-breaking initiatives on more than two million acres of land for the benefit of wildlife and conservation education," said Robert Johnson, WHC President. "WHC members embrace their role as leaders in environmental stewardship at the local, national and global level, voluntarily managing their lands to support sustainable ecosystems and sustainable societies. Congratulations to Birchwood Power for stepping up to meet the challenges of creating a healthy and biodiverse natural world."

Some 260 of the Birchwood Power site's 360 total acres are maintained as undeveloped grassland and forest land, and are available for wildlife habitat. In addition, a wildlife management program at Birchwood promotes and maintains biological diversity by ensuring the basic needs of wildlife are present. Program team members plant and enhance vegetation by using species native to the Virginia coastal ecosystem, promote the presence of native pollinators including hummingbirds, butterflies and bees, and promote populations of avian and mammalian species.

The wildlife team integrates native species into formal landscaping around the power facility by inter-planting local species into already vegetated fields, creating wildflower gardens to attract pollinators, and planting wildlife food plots in various locations. Species inter-planted into existing fields include butterfly milkweed, flame azalea, mountain laurel, and New York aster. In addition, the team maintains wildflower gardens, which include several plants known to be used by local pollinating species, such as purple coneflower, Joe-Pye weed, tall coreopsis, spiked blazing star, milkweed, blue vervain and wild bergamot. To promote greater vegetative diversity on site, team members work with qualified professionals to control the presence of the highly invasive tree-of-heaven. In addition, to encourage employee participation and awareness, Birchwood held a wildlife photo contest in 2007, awarding cash prizes for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place in three categories: Animals, Vegetation and Birchwood in the Environment.

To attract avian species to the site, team members maintain a variety of boxes and platforms to encourage nesting. The cavity-nesting program is designed to help offset the reduction of available natural cavities caused by increased land development practices. Four volunteers constructed and installed 11 nesting boxes suitable for eastern bluebirds and tree swallows in 2002. In addition, in 2006, volunteers recognized an opportunity to expand the avian species program after observing an osprey constructing a nest on a nearby utility pole. In just a short time, an osprey platform was constructed and placed, and it has been the site of successful fledging during each breeding season since its placement. The nest is located on the facility's main entrance road, visible to plant employees and visitors.

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The Birchwood Power Facility was one of 173 sites recognized at the 2007 Symposium for creating a *Wildlife at Work*<sup>SM</sup> program. In addition, 69 *Corporate Lands for Learning*<sup>SM</sup> programs reach thousands of learners from schools and scout groups to master gardeners and university researchers. Since 1990, WHC has certified 432 programs worldwide. The certification program recognizes outstanding wildlife habitat management and environmental education efforts at corporate sites, and offers third-party validation of the benefits of such programs. Certification requirements are strict and require that sites apply for periodic renewal.

**About GE Energy Financial Services**

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**About the Wildlife Habitat Council**

Celebrating 20 years in conservation, the Wildlife Habitat Council (WHC) is a nonprofit, non-lobbying organization dedicated to increasing the quality and amount of wildlife habitat on corporate, private and public lands. WHC devotes its resources to building partnerships with corporations and conservation groups to create solutions that balance the demands of economic growth with the requirements of a healthy, biodiverse and sustainable environment. More than 2.4 million acres in 46 states, District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and 16 other countries are managed for wildlife through WHC-assisted projects. To learn more, visit [www.wildlifehc.org](http://www.wildlifehc.org). Celebrating 20 Years in Conservation!

**Editor's Note:** Caption for photo accompanying this release: An osprey sits atop a nesting platform erected by Birchwood Power Plant employees on its grounds in King George, Virginia. The facility's Wildlife Habitat Enhancement Program was recently recertified for the third time by the Wildlife Habitat Council. The Birchwood plant is owned by GE Energy Financial Services and operated by GE Energy.