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Great Ape Trust evacuates campus; ape residents safe on higher ground ***Member tours suspended until further notice***

Des Moines, Iowa – June 11, 2008 – Great Ape Trust of Iowa non-essential staff evacuated Tuesday after floodwaters from the Des Moines River spilled over a low spot in an agricultural levee, flooding administrative suites and leaving the 230-acre campus in southeast Des Moines mostly under water. Ape residents are safe in their buildings, which are built significantly above historic Flood of 1993 levels, and no immediate evacuations of the orangutans and bonobos are planned.

Member tours, held on Tuesdays and Thursdays through early September, will be suspended for the foreseeable future. Members who have scheduled tours are asked to check The Trust's Web site, www.GreatApeTrust.org, for updates and information.

The ape buildings were constructed with the arboreal tendencies of the apes – seven bonobos and three orangutans – in mind, and are functioning as officials expected they would during times of high water on the campus. The orangutan home stands three stories, or 30-feet, high, and the 13,000-square-foot bonobo home features a pair of 25-foot towers where the apes enjoy spending time. Great Ape Trust officials are confident that ape safety will not be compromised, even with significant new flooding expected later in the week.

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“This campus was designed with the Floods of 1993 in mind,” said Al Setka, director of communications for the scientific research facility studying ape intelligence and behavior. “That meant we used catchment areas and retention ponds to help control the high water on this campus, and even with that we knew we would see some high water.”

Dr. Rob Shumaker, director of orangutan research, praised the Great Ape Trust staff for their quick response to the emergency situation and their work to keep the apes safe and dry. Great Ape Trust officials developed and filed with the Association of Zoos and Aquariums an emergency action plan that guided the evacuation process. “We hoped we would never have to use it, but now that circumstances have required it, it has proven valuable,” he said. “Everything worked perfectly and our No. 1 priority has been met: Our apes and our people are safe.”

William M. Fields, director of bonobo research, said water is a natural containment for great apes, making the former sand quarry an ideal location for Great Ape Trust. “We have been prepared for a high-water emergency since moving here, and the building is working as we designed it to work.”

Members of the orangutan caretaker staff said during a briefing of Great Ape Trust personnel Wednesday morning that the orangutans were calm and seemed to be content to watch the activity around their buildings as employees shored up the foundation of their home with sandbags. The ape buildings remained dry after floodwaters submerged the administrative office suites and the interior road, and animal caretakers and other essential staff are being transported to the ape residences by boat. The scientific research and administrative staffs are working at temporary office facilities near The Trust.

Quick work by employees to clear the office suites of valuable research data and other files in a matter of about two hours minimized Great Ape Trust losses, which will be covered by insurance, said Operations Director Jim Aipperspach. Stork Townsend Engineering, the Des Moines company formerly owned by the family of Great Ape Trust founder Ted Townsend, responded to a call for help and sent both a crew and a box truck to store files and office equipment.

“They are real heroes,” Aipperspach said. “The evacuation could not have been

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accomplished so quickly without their assistance.”

Additional flooding is expected after the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers began releasing water Tuesday evening from Saylorville Reservoir, located upstream on the Des Moines River, and Great Ape Trust is located southeast of the confluence of the Des Moines and Raccoon rivers, and officials are closely monitoring forecasts for heavy rains Wednesday and Thursday in those river basins.

“Clearly, our challenges are not over,” Shumaker said.

GREAT APE TRUST BACKGROUND

Great Ape Trust of Iowa is a scientific research facility in southeast Des Moines dedicated to understanding the origins and future of culture, language, tools and intelligence. When completed, Great Ape Trust will be the largest great ape facility in North America and one of the first worldwide to include all four types of great ape – bonobos, chimpanzees, gorillas and orangutans – for noninvasive interdisciplinary studies of their cognitive and communicative capabilities.

Great Ape Trust is dedicated to providing sanctuary and an honorable life for great apes, studying the intelligence of great apes, advancing conservation of great apes and providing unique educational experiences about great apes. Great Ape Trust of Iowa is a 501(c) 3 not-for-profit organization and is certified by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). To learn more about Great Ape Trust of Iowa, go to www.GreatApeTrust.org.

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Insights Through Collaborations with Apes