



For more information, contact:

Al Setka
Director of Communications
Great Ape Trust of Iowa
515.243.3580
515.720.7430 (mobile)
asetka@greatapetrust.org

Trust officials join chorus applauding EPA for call on cell phone recycling

*Great Ape Trust makes it easy for consumers to recycle old cellular units,
and benefit the environment and great apes in the process*

Des Moines, Iowa – January 14, 2008 – If Americans recycled 100 million of the estimated 130 million cellular phones they have discarded, enough energy could be saved to power nearly 200,000 U.S. homes for a year, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which is teaming with cellular phone makers, providers and retailers in a [national recycling campaign](#). The EPA said that if consumers were able to reuse those 100 million phones, the environmental savings would be even greater, saving enough energy to power more than 370,000 U.S. homes each year.

Great Ape Trust of Iowa officials applauded the EPA for the campaign and said the world-class scientific research center in southeast Des Moines already is doing its part to keep old cell phones out of landfills. The Trust has been providing drop boxes for the collection of cell phones to businesses, schools and civic groups since 2005, and already has recycled hundreds of old phones that otherwise might end up in a landfill.

“This is a win-win situation because it’s ecologically responsible and also supports Great Ape Trust conservation projects around the world,” said Andy Antilla, a senior orangutan caretaker who oversees The Trust’s cell phone and ink-jet cartridge

NEWS RELEASE

recycling program. “We commend the EPA for drawing attention to this important issue, and we want to remind consumers that we are continuing to provide this valuable service.”

Great Ape Trust operates its cell phone recycling program through [Eco-Cell](#), a non-profit group partnering with conservation organizations to keep cell phones out of landfills and help organizations such as The Trust raise money for conservation. Great Ape Trust recently earned “Silverback Status” for recycling more than 1,000 phones since the project began in September 2005.

At rates ranging from 45 cents to \$15 per recycled phone, more than \$1,000 has been raised in direct conservation aid in the countries where great apes are found in the wild. The Trust also recycles ink-jet cartridges, a program that has raised more than \$900 for *in-situ* conservation since 2005.

Those interested in joining the recycling effort and receiving collection boxes to place in their businesses or other venues should inquire by e-mail at info@greatapetrust.org. The Trust accepts all cell phones, regardless of age or condition, as well as batteries and other accessories.

Though cell phones are made from copper, plastics, precious metals and minerals, all of which can be recycled and adapted to different uses, fewer than 20 percent of unwanted cell phones are recycled each year, according to the EPA. In addition to saving energy, recycling old phones helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions and conserve natural resources. Cell phones not only take up landfill space – the 130 million discarded cell phones equal about 65,000 tons of electronic garbage – but they also contain toxic substances such as arsenic, antimony, cadmium, cobalt, copper, lead and zinc. Some, like carcinogenic cadmium, pose serious threats to the environment and public health.

According to Eco-Cell, recycling cell phones also reduces the demand columbite-tantalite – coltan for short. When refined, coltan becomes metallic tantalum, which has unique properties for storing an electrical charge and is used in many modern electronic devices, including laptop computers, pagers and PDAs, as well as cell phones. Coltan is important for the miniaturization of these devices, as capacitors made from it have an unmatched ability to hold high voltages at very high temperatures.

NEWS RELEASE

Up to 80 percent of the world's coltan resources are in the eastern areas of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), where sale of the metallic ore – along with diamonds, gold, timber, ivory, cobalt and other natural resources –financed armed conflicts among competing groups in that unstable area of Africa. Mining of coltan, sometimes called “the new blood diamond,” is one of the factors that has further decimated one of the last remaining population of one of the world's rarest creatures – the critically endangered Eastern Lowland gorilla (*Gorilla beringei graueri*). The United Nations has reported that since the turn of the century, the Eastern Lowland gorilla population in Congo has declined 90 percent.

In response to an outcry by conservationists and others, many technology companies now reject coltan mined anywhere in central Africa and instead are turning to Australia, which also has rich deposits of columbite-tantalite.

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.

####

Insights Through Collaborations with Apes