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**TREES 4 FLORIDA INFORMS COMMUNITIES ON IMPORTANCE OF PREPARING
AND REPLACING TREES DAMAGED BY HURRICANES, STORMS**

ORLANDO, FL --- With the recent devastation to trees in Florida by hurricanes, storms and fires, millions of dollars in valuable tree resources have been lost. Jointly, the Florida Urban Forestry Council (FUFC) and the Florida Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) are unveiling the new Trees 4 Florida program focused on making the public more aware of the need to be vigilant in safeguarding our trees and preserving Florida's greatest green resource.

A single urban tree in Florida returns over \$90,000 of direct benefits during the lifetime of that tree to the residents and visitors to the Sunshine State according to the U.S. Forest Service. Direct benefits include the reduction of pollutants, extension of the life of paved surfaces, increased real estate value, increased sociological benefits and improved traffic safety.

"Additionally, trees affect consumer perceptions and behaviors, save energy and improve economic sustainability," says Celeste White, past president of the Florida Urban Forestry Council. "Research shows that trees in a community attract businesses and tourists, people linger and shop longer on tree-lined streets and businesses that lease offices in developments with trees find their workers are more productive and absenteeism is reduced. Thus, it is important to promote the benefits of trees and reverse the negative perception of tree failures resulting from storms and hurricanes."

The Trees 4 Florida campaign is a public service made possible by funding from the USDA Forest Service through the Florida Division of Forestry's Urban and Community Forestry Grant Program to the FUFC and ISA. Included in the campaign are English and Spanish print and broadcast PSAs as well as the Web site *treesarecool.com*.

For the general public, the *treesarecool.com* Web site has information on such areas as what trees grow best in Florida, the right places to plant the right trees, how to prune trees in preparation for hurricanes and other helpful tips to save our tree environment and preserve Florida's greatest green resource. Additionally, there are tips from two of the top experts in the field, Urban Horticulturist and Author Tom MacCubbin and Arborist and Assistant University of Florida Professor Francisco Escobedo.

Media outlets can also access broadcast- and print-quality PSA spots and ads through the *treesarecool.com* site, as well as interviews with MacCubbin and Escobedo.