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Confluence Coalition to Receive Audubon Award

ST. LOUIS – Dora Gianoulakis, Co-chair of the Save the Confluence Coalition, has been invited to receive St. Louis Audubon's first-ever Outstanding Conservation Advocate Award at the Society's 2011 Awards Dinner and Silent Auction on March 5th at Orlando Gardens in Webster Groves. The Award honors an individual, group or organization that has significantly affected public policy or decisions for the benefit of birds, other wildlife, and their habitat through professional service, volunteerism, or communications. The evening will also include a silent auction, several other award presentations and a keynote presentation by The Trumpeter Swan Society.

The Save the Confluence Coalition (www.savetheconfluence.org) led the recent opposition effort against two separate casino proposals for the Missouri bank of the Mississippi River south of the confluence with the Missouri River. For over a year, the Coalition coordinated testimony at public hearings, letter writing and postcard campaigns, and volumes of research on the impact of the proposals. The campaign became focused on the developers' application for the one remaining casino gaming license in Missouri. Victory was proclaimed when that license was awarded in December to the Isle of Capri Corporation for their project in Cape Girardeau.

St. Louis Audubon supported the Coalition because of the impact such a large commercial development project would have on the bird and wildlife habitat of the Confluence and the Columbia Bottom Conservation Area. The entire area is designated an Important Bird Area due to its critical role in providing feeding, nesting and resting resources for over 25 species of birds at risk of population decline. Over 240 bird species have been observed at Columbia Bottom, and five of those are listed as endangered by the State of Missouri, including the Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon and Snowy Egret.

"The Board of Directors felt strongly about creating this special award for the Save the Confluence Coalition," said Karen Meyer, St. Louis Audubon Conservation Committee member. "While helping to protect the birds and wildlife of the Confluence from this immediate threat, the Coalition also educated community leaders, landowners and the general public about the value of these lands as open space for the well being of the birds and our community."

Other award recipients will include Brad Jacobs, Missouri Department of Conservation ornithologist, and Patrick Osborne, Ph.D., Executive Director of the Whitney R. Harris World Ecology Center at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. Also, Dave Tylka, biologist, consultant and retired teacher at St. Louis Community College at Meramec, will receive the Robert J. Terry Lifetime Achievement Award.

The Dinner is open to the public, but advance registration is required. Orlando Gardens is located at 8352 Watson Road. Complete details can be found on our website, www.stlouisaudubon.org or our Facebook page, <http://www.facebook.com/pages/St-Louis-Audubon-Society/116967501667135>.

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Founded in 1915, St. Louis Audubon became the first affiliated chapter of the National Audubon Society in 1944 and shares its vision to create a community connection to nature through education and conservation. With a focus on birds, St. Louis Audubon provides the general public with free classroom education programs, seminars, field trips, and hands-on conservation projects. Representing over 3,400 members in the 10 county St. Louis area, it is the largest Audubon chapter in Missouri.