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Charleston WATERKEEPER® Raises Awareness About the Health of Local Waterways at The Great Oyster Point Runoff

Celebrating Charleston's Waterways and Raising Funds for the Organization's Water Quality Monitoring Program

December 15, 2011 - Charleston, SC: On a windy Saturday in early November, Charleston Waterkeeper hosted the first-ever Great Oyster Point Runoff on and around Colonial Lake, a day-long festival encouraging the public to discover, learn about and celebrate the many ways to have fun on and near Charleston's waterways. For the first time in more than 20 years, recreational use of Colonial Lake was encouraged and water-enthusiasts took to kayaks, sailboats, canoes and stand-up paddleboards in celebration of their right to clean waterways locally. More than 500 people came out in support of the event and over \$2,000.00 was raised in support of Charleston Waterkeeper's water quality monitoring program. Colonial Lake served as the pilot test site for the water quality monitoring program, which provides valuable information into the state and health of our waterways. The event was part of the Waterkeeper Alliance SPLASH Event Series, a national series of events presented by Toyota in partnership with KEEN.

Executive Director of Waterkeeper Alliance, Marc Yaggi, attended the day's events and commented, "we were thrilled to join Charleston Waterkeeper and the Charleston community for our national SPLASH event series. The huge turnout demonstrated the strong support that Charlestonians have for clean water and the value they place on having on-the-water recreational opportunities. Their strongest advocate for that is Charleston Waterkeeper."

The event, which took place in the Colonial Common area of Ashley and Broad Streets, shed light on important water issues facing our community, highlighting stormwater runoff as a primary source of water pollution in Charleston. Unbeknownst to many, Colonial Lake is fed by Cummings Creek, which, once a naturally existing creek, now flows beneath downtown streets by way of a concrete culvert. Attendees began the day with an Open Paddle around the lake, taking to their boat of choice for a chance to participate in a boat parade, exhibition race and other fun activities. Awards provided by event sponsors, Toyota and KEEN, were given to winners and participants of the race. It was a lively crew, sporting noisemakers, signs and water-related attire that helped to set the tone for a fun, exciting afternoon.

"By joining with Waterkeeper Alliance nationally, we were able to provide Charlestonians with a tangible display of the connectivity between our actions on land and the quality of our waterways. The Great Oyster Point Runoff was a celebration of our right to clean water, while also serving as a platform for our organization to highlight the importance of programs like our water quality monitoring program," said Cyrus Buffum, Executive Director of Charleston Waterkeeper.

Sponsors, non-profit organizations and water-focused clubs were on hand to talk about the many ways to enjoy local waterways, while vendors provided gear demonstrations, workshops and equipment rentals for those in attendance. Charleston Waterkeeper will continue to publish results from its water quality monitoring program at Colonial Lake and beyond, providing helpful information about the health and potential threats to this waterbody.

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Fresh local oysters, local food trucks, including Taco Boy and Strada Cucina, as well as craft beer from Palmetto Brewing and New Belgium Brewing Co. were available for attendees while they enjoyed live music provided by Mark Mandeville & Old Constitution and the South Carolina Broadcasters. The festival was free and open to the public. Attendees paid \$10/person (in advance) to register and float their boat on Colonial Lake (\$15 the day of event). For more about the event and the efforts of Charleston Waterkeeper, please visit www.oysterpoint.org.

Founded in September 2008, Charleston **WATERKEEPER**® is a citizen-based, environmental organization committed to defending local waterways against pollution, while protecting the public's right to clean water. As a member of the **WATERKEEPER**® Alliance, Charleston **WATERKEEPER**® is one of nearly 200 other **WATERKEEPER**® programs around the world dedicated to clean water and strong communities. Through the use of scientific monitoring, legal research, community outreach and education, Charleston Waterkeeper strives to measurably improve the quality of local waterways. For more information and to get involved, please visit www.charlestonwaterkeeper.org.

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