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Media Contacts: Steve Parren, Vermont Fish & Wildlife (802) 879-5669

Lilla Lumbra, Vermont Fish & Wildlife (802) 241-1454

BALD EAGLES BUILD NEST IN VERMONT'S CONNECTICUT RIVER VALLEY

WATERBURY, VT – Bald eagles successfully nesting in Vermont may be one step closer.

A pair of bald eagles was recently seen putting the finishing touches to a nest located in the Connecticut River valley in southern Vermont. Dr. Hector Galbraith, a professional ornithologist and ecological consultant, located the nest in a large white pine after observing an adult eagle pulling grass and flying off.

According to Galbraith, he observed two adult eagles lining the nest with grasses, an activity that usually signals the final phase of nest building.

“Over the years I have seen lots of juvenile eagles in the area,” said Galbraith. “I believe, within a decade, there could be ten pairs of eagles breeding on the Connecticut River.”

Eagles sightings in southeastern Vermont are increasing. An expanding eagle population in Massachusetts has meant more eagles moving up and down the Connecticut River.

“We are excited about the prospect of bald eagles nesting in Vermont and believe it will eventually happen,” said Steve Parren, a wildlife biologist for the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department. “We’ll monitor the nest to see if the pair is successful, but it’s late in the nesting season and they may not lay eggs this year. However, their nesting activity bodes well for next year. We urge people to respect wildlife and stay away from the nest.”

This is not Vermont’s first bald eagle nesting attempt in recent years. A pair of bald eagles displayed territorial behavior at Somerset Reservoir eight years ago but no nest was found. In 2002, a pair of bald eagles built a nest near the North Springfield Reservoir but failed to lay eggs. A great horned owl took over the nest the following year and the eagles never returned to the nesting site.

Historical records of bald eagles in Vermont are scarce, but they were reported to have nested near Lake Bomoseen in the 1940s. Currently, Vermont is the only state in the continental United States that does not have bald eagles nesting within its borders.

The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department is coordinating a bald eagle restoration effort to establish a breeding population of bald eagles to the Lake Champlain basin. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Wildlife Federation, Outreach for Earth Stewardship, and Central Vermont Public Service (CVPS) are partners in the project.

Eight young eagles were successfully reared and released from the Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area in Addison during 2004. The project’s second season will begin with the arrival of more eaglets in early May. To learn more about the project and Vermont’s eagles visit the Vermont Bald Eagle Restoration Initiative website: www.cvps.com/eagles.