



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Alabama State Port Authority's Muddy Creek Wetlands Management Area Home to Alabama's Newest Champion Trees**

**Mobile, Alabama – July 26, 2013** – The Alabama State Port Authority (ASPA) received recognition from the Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC) in its naming of two ASPA owned trees to the 2013 Champion Tree Program. Modeled after American Forests' "Big Tree" Program, the AFC Champion Tree program honors the largest tree of each species in Alabama. Of the 27 trees nominated this year, 12 trees were selected by species, size, trunk circumference, height, and crown spread. Including the 2013 recipients, Alabama is now home to 143 Champion Trees.

The Port Authority's two trees, a Pond Cypress and a Slash Pine, are located at its Muddy Creek Wetlands Management Area in Theodore, Ala. The Pond Cypress (*Taxodium ascendens*) measured 92-feet in height with a 32-foot canopy and a 131-inch trunk circumference and is located about 200 feet to the left of the boardwalk running along the southern end of Muddy Creek. The Slash Pine (*Pinus elliottii*) also measured 92-feet in height with a 53-foot canopy and a 118-inch trunk circumference. The Slash Pine is located on the north end of Muddy Creek just east of the beaver pond. Both trees are expected to be marked with AFC Champion plaques later this year. Muddy Creek Wetlands Management Area is located on Old Industrial Road, which runs east/west between Bellingrath Road and Mitsubishi Lane in Mobile County, Ala.

Wetland Resources Environmental Consulting and the Port Authority's Environmental and Program Management department oversee Muddy Creek. Gena Todia, owner of Wetland Resources Environmental Consulting, and her subcontractor, Fred Nation, submitted the trees to AFC for consideration. "I've worked on this property since 1996, and just this year, during our spring management work, realized that the huge cypress trees are pond cypress and not bald cypress," said Todia. "Similarly, I've walked past slash pine all these years assuming it was a loblolly pine because of its size." Todia's colleague, Fred Nation, recognized that pine as a slash pine leading both Nation and Todia to think the trees would qualify as state champions and to file application, on behalf of the Authority, to the Alabama Forestry Commission.

James K. Lyons, director and chief executive of the Port Authority noted, "It's a real pleasure and honor to receive this important designation. Our Muddy Creek program was geared to restore important habitat nearly lost to development in the Theodore area. Now this recreational area is a thriving home to native plants, birds and animals and is something the public can enjoy."

- more -

The Port Authority began plans to construct Muddy Creek in 1996. The program was designed to restore wetlands and coastal plain habitat along the Muddy Creek basin running through 200 acres of ASPA held land. In addition to restoring the wetlands, the program sought to remove and control invasive plant species choking out native longleaf and slash pine, tupelo gum, sweet bay magnolia and coastal plain grasses. Today, this national award winning program controls a long list of invasive, exotic plants once threatening the site and offers over 2 miles of walking trails and boardwalks.

The Alabama State Port Authority owns and operates the State of Alabama's public, deep-water port facilities at the Port of Mobile and handled over 25 million tons of cargo in fiscal year 2012. The Authority's container, general cargo and bulk facilities have immediate access to two interstate systems, five Class 1 railroads, and nearly 15,000 miles of inland waterway connections. Learn more at [www.asdd.com](http://www.asdd.com) or on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/AlabamaStatePortAuth](http://www.facebook.com/AlabamaStatePortAuth).

###

**CONTACT:**

Judith Adams / Alabama State Port Authority  
251-441-7003 / 251-751-3497 cell / [jadams@asdd.com](mailto:jadams@asdd.com)