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EARTHCARE CONGRESS TO HIGHLIGHT PLIGHT OF WALDEN POND

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CONCORD, Mass., Feb. 22 /PRN/ -- A symbolic center for Earth Day events worldwide, the four-day Walden Earthcare Congress will bring together internationally renowned environmentalists, artists, corporate executives, researchers, students, educators, performers and interested citizens to discuss the economic, social and spiritual significance of wilderness, the ecological price of our standard of living and how citizens, industry, environmental groups and government can work together to balance the need for a life-sustaining, healthy environment against society's demands on nature.

Walden Pond, the site of Henry David Thoreau's famous experiment in simple living nearly 150 years ago, was chosen as the focus of the Congress because it continues to be a catalyst for awakening a deeper understanding of our relationship with the world around us. From Tolstoy to Gandhi, from John Muir to Rachel Carson, Walden has had a profound influence on people the world over. As it faces the pressure of suburban sprawl and encroaching development, Walden becomes an even more compelling symbol of the need to protect our wild areas in the 21st century and is thus a logical setting for the Earthcare Congress.

"The simple and compelling message of Thoreau and Walden is that in destroying the environment we are, in fact, destroying ourselves," said organizer John Malcolm Forbes. "The purpose of the Walden Earthcare Congress is twofold: to engage people in an integrated approach to the environmental challenges of our time and to reconnect with Thoreau's vision, thereby enabling participants to return to their own communities inspired to discover their own 'Waldens.' "

The Congress has already received widespread support from national, international and local organizations and businesses. Says George Frampton, president of the Wilderness Society and speaker at the Congress, "This event is well-designed to relate the symbolism of Walden and the thoughts of Thoreau to today's reality." In addition to the Wilderness Society, the Sierra Club, Massachusetts Audubon Society, the Center for American

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Studies at Concord and **Biopolitics International Organization**, based in Greece, have joined in sponsoring the Congress.

The Congress will begin at Walden Pond on April 19, with a ceremonial opening by Slow Turtle, Supreme Medicine Man of the Wompanoag Nation. Massachusetts Audubon Society President Gerard Bertrand, will deliver the keynote address, "Walden - A Microcosm of the Challenges to the World's Environment." Bill McKibben, author of *The End of Nature*; Harvard professors, Edward O. Wilson and Peter S. Ashton; British author and environmentalist, Charlotte Waterlow and Thoreau scholar Tom Blanding will also be speaking at the Congress. Vance Martin, executive director of the International Wilderness Leadership Foundation, will discuss "Thoreau and Walden in the International Context."

Other highlights of the Congress include speeches by Arun Gandhi, grandson of the Mahatma; Thomas Boylston Adams, author and historian; and Paul Brooks, author and environmentalist who will also be presenting a Henry David Thoreau-John Muir Environmental Award. Major folk artists Cheryl Wheeler and Canadian folk singer, Ferron, will devote an evening to "Songs of Walden."

Case studies, workshops and panel discussions will round out the weekend. A partial list of panelists includes Professor Nicholas Ashford of MIT's Environmental Policy Program; Paul Bureau, director of the Energy and Environment Department at Monsanto Plastics & Resins Company; and Agni Vlavianos-Arvanitis, founder and president of Biopolitics International in Greece.

Participants will work together to formulate The Walden Declaration on the Environment and the Walden Earthcare Network, an ongoing communication network to be centered in Concord.

Earth Day activities, beginning at the Old North Bridge, will continue with a walk to Walden Pond where the Walden Declaration on the Environment and the formation of the Walden Earthcare Network will be announced. Participants will be greeted at the Thoreau site by David Barto as Henry David Thoreau. There will be a setting of stones at the Thoreau cairn and a tree planting ceremony followed by guided nature walks in Lincoln and Concord.

For more information on registration or volunteering for any of these events, call or write the Walden Earthcare Congress at 508-369-4252, 40 Stow St. C-8, Concord, Mass. 01742.

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