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**LIBRARIAN OF CONGRESS NAMES APPALSHOP FILM TO
NATIONAL FILM REGISTRY**

Whitesburg, KY – December 27, 2005

Librarian of Congress James H. Billington announced his annual selection of 25 motion pictures to be added to the National Film Registry, including the 1975 film *THE BUFFALO CREEK FLOOD: AN ACT OF MAN*, directed by Mimi Pickering and produced by Appalshop, Kentucky's nationally renowned media arts center.

Under the terms of the National Film Preservation Act, each year the Librarian of Congress names twenty-five "culturally, historically, or aesthetically" significant motion pictures to the Registry. The list is designed to reflect the full breadth and diversity of America's film heritage, thus increasing public awareness of the richness of the American cinema and the need for its preservation. The latest round of titles brings the total number of films placed on the list since the Registry was created in 1989 to 425.

"This is a great honor as this select group of films is the only such listing that covers the breadth of American filmmaking, from dramatic features to documentaries and film art," said Stephen Gong, Deputy Director of the University Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive in Berkeley. "The National Film Registry constitutes our National Film Treasures."

"Appalshop's work has been a cultural beacon, for the people of the Appalachian region, for independent filmmakers, for media arts leaders, and also for people who, like me, celebrate and study the role of independent media in a democratic society," stated Pat Aufderheide, Director of the Center for Social Media at American University's School of Communications and a film critic who has followed Appalshop's development.

BUFFALO CREEK FLOOD: AN ACT OF MAN is described by the Library of Congress as a "powerful documentary" that "represents the finest in regional filmmaking,

providing important understanding of the environmental and cultural history of the Appalachian region.” It poignantly portrays the impact that the February 1972 collapse of a coal-waste dam had on the West Virginia communities it devastated. A wall of sludge, debris and water tore through the valley below, leaving in its wake 125 dead and 4,000 homeless. The Pittston Company, owners of the dam, maintained that the disaster was “an act of God.” Interviews with survivors, representatives of union and citizens’ groups and officials of the Pittston Company are juxtaposed with actual footage of the flood and scenes of the ensuing destruction.

A native of California who attended Antioch College, filmmaker Mimi Pickering relocated to eastern Kentucky thirty-four years ago to learn filmmaking at Appalshop. Her documentaries often feature women as principle storytellers, focus on injustice and inequity in the Appalachian region, and explore the efforts of grassroots people to deal with community problems as they work for social change. The stories are told primarily through the voices and images of those most directly involved or affected by the issues.

Pickering is a recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship and two Kentucky Arts Council Fellowships, as well as media grants from the American Film Institute, the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Kentucky and West Virginia Humanities Councils. Her award-winning documentaries include CHEMICAL VALLEY (1991, co-directed with Anne Lewis) about issues of environmental justice in the Kanawha Valley of West Virginia; DREADFUL MEMORIES (1988), an exploration of the legacy of Sarah Ogan Gunning, a singer and songwriter from eastern Kentucky; and HAZEL DICKENS: IT’S HARD TO TELL THE SINGER FROM THE SONG (2002), a portrait of this National Heritage Award winner described by the *Washington Post* as "a living legend of American music, a national treasure."

For more than three decades, Appalshop has produced and presented artistic work in a wide range of media that celebrates the culture and voices the concerns of people living in the Appalachian Mountains and rural America. Since its beginning in 1969 as a War on Poverty economic development project, the organization has trained several hundred young people and produced over 100 films and videotapes that document the reality of life in Appalachia. Appalshop films have aired nationally on PBS, and screened

everywhere from mountain hollows to big city museums, from Kingdom Come in east Kentucky to cultural centers in Europe, China, India, Indonesia and the Middle East.

Over the last thirty-six years, Appalshop has grown into a nationally recognized collective that also produces music, audio recordings and radio, literature, theater, visual arts and photography. Its divisions include Roadside Theater, June Appal Recordings, and community radio station WMMT-FM. The subject matter of Appalshop's works range from depicting traditional arts to exploring history to dealing with the social issues that affect the region today.

BUFFALO CREEK FLOOD: AN ACT OF MAN is currently undergoing preservation with assistance from support from the Women's Film Preservation Fund and Cineric Laboratory. In the spring of 2006 it will be released on DVD along with BUFFALO CREEK REVISITED, Mimi Pickering's 1984 film that looks at the lingering effects of the flood on the West Virginia communities. A screening series and discussion tour will take place throughout West Virginia in 2006, made possible by a grant from the West Virginia Humanities Council.

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Links:

Appalshop	www.appalshop.org
Buffalo Creek Flood (film)	www.appalshop.org/film/buffalo
Librarian of Congress Adds 25 Films	www.loc.gov/today/pr/2005/05-262.html
National Film Registry	www.loc.gov/film/nfr2005.html