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FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

John Sutter, Director of Marketing & Sales
563-557-9545

MUSEUM & AQUARIUM WELCOMES NEW FURRY FRIENDS

Dubuque, Iowa – April 27, 2011—A pair of North American Beavers (*Castor canadensis*) have paddled their way into the National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium. The beavers were given to the Museum & Aquarium by the Minnesota Zoo and arrived on Tuesday, April 26, 2011. The beavers are on exhibit in the William Woodward Mississippi River Center's Flooded Forrest aquarium.

Beaver played a significant role in the fur trade of early Dubuque. The beaver was trapped out and almost extirpated in North America as its fur and castoreum were highly sought after. The beaver furs were used to make clothing and beaver hats. In the United States extensive trapping began in the early 17th century. In fact, much of the westward expansion and exploration of North America was driven by the quest for this animal's fur. During the approximately 30 years (1806–1838) the West, from the Mississippi River to California and from Canada to Mexico was thoroughly explored and the beaver was brought to the brink of extinction. With protection in the late 19th and early 20th centuries the current beaver population has rebounded to an estimated 10 to 15 million; however this is still a fraction of the originally estimated 100 to 200 million North American beaver before the days of the fur trade.

The beaver is the largest rodent in North America and the third largest rodent in the world, after the South American capybara and the Eurasian beaver. Adults usually weigh 33 to 77 lbs, and measure around 3.3 ft in total body length. Beaver can grow to weigh as much as 90 lbs.

The Museum & Aquarium beavers are brother and sister, and were captive born at the Minneapolis Zoo.

For more information please call 563-557-9545 or visit www.rivermuseum.com.

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