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NEWS RELEASE

USDA, Tennessee Sign Shared Stewardship Agreement to Improve Forest Conditions on Public and Private Lands

NASHVILLE, January 14, 2021 – Tennessee’s forests will benefit from strengthened partnerships between federal and state agencies following today’s virtual signing of a Shared Stewardship agreement.

Under Secretary of Agriculture James Hubbard represented the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Tennessee’s Department of Agriculture Commissioner Charlie Hatcher, Department of Environment and Conservation Commissioner David Salyers, and Wildlife Resources Agency Director Bobby Wilson all signed on behalf of Governor Bill Lee.

The agreement between USDA’s Forest Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service and the state agencies establishes a framework to improve collaboration, accomplish mutual goals, further common interests, and effectively respond to the increasing ecological challenges and natural resource concerns.

“This Shared Stewardship agreement builds on a long history of collaboration between USDA and the state of Tennessee,” said USDA Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment Jim Hubbard. *“We are reaffirming our joint commitment to set management priorities that achieve outcomes across jurisdictions.”*

This new agreement centers on USDA’s commitment to work with states and other partners to use the best available science to identify high-priority forests that require active management, and to ensure the long-term sustainability of public and private lands.

“Our state natural resource agencies have a long history of cooperation to ensure the wise use and protection of our natural resources,” Tennessee Governor Bill Lee said. *“This Shared Stewardship agreement with our federal partners extends our commitment to keeping our forests productive, healthy, and resilient.”*

Tennessee becomes the 9th state in the South and 25th in the Nation to sign such an agreement to strengthen partnerships within the state to increase the scope and scale of critical forest treatments that support communities and improve forest conditions.

More information on Shared Stewardship and the agreement can be found on the U.S. Forest Service website at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/shared-stewardship>.

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