

# NEWS RELEASE

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## **SHERWOOD FOREST CONSERVATION EFFORT PROTECTS ENDANGERED WILDLIFE HABITAT AND LOCAL JOBS**

*More than 4,000 Acres of Biologically Important, Resilient Forestland in Southeast Tennessee Protected Thanks in Large Part to the Land and Water Conservation Fund*

**FRANKLIN & MARION COUNTIES, Tenn.** (Nov. 10, 2016)—Today [The Conservation Fund](#) and [The Land Trust for Tennessee](#), in partnership with the State of Tennessee, announced the protection of 4,061 acres of forestland in the South Cumberland region. With funding from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)—through both the U.S. Forest Service’s Forest Legacy Program and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund—more than eight miles of streams in the Crow Creek Valley and vital habitat for more than one-third of all the federally threatened painted snake coiled forest snails known to exist have been conserved.

Located an hour west of Chattanooga and adjacent to Franklin State Forest and Carter State Natural Area, the surface of the property will be managed by the State for public access and recreation, drinking water quality for the downstream community of Sherwood, wildlife habitat protection and sustainable forest management. The Tennessee Department of Agriculture’s Division of Forestry will manage a portion of the newly protected land as part of Franklin State Forest, expanding future hunting access. The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation will manage the rest as part of Carter State Natural Area and South Cumberland State Park.

“By providing protection of threatened species and preserving one of Tennessee’s most scenic lands, Tennessee State Parks will preserve and protect this wild place forever,” said **Brock Hill, Deputy Commissioner for Parks and Conservation**. “The South Cumberland State Park area is unique in many ways. We look forward to managing this land for public recreation and the benefit of all state park guests.”

The Conservation Fund, with transactional support from The Land Trust for Tennessee, purchased 3,893 acres earlier this year from a private mining company, which retained the rights to mine limestone underneath the property for the next 50 years. This will allow the company to continue operations and maintain local mining jobs. In agreement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the company donated an additional 168 acres to mitigate for impacts to the painted snake coiled forest snail habitat.

This innovative conservation effort was made possible with funding from the LWCF—a bipartisan, federal program that uses a percentage of proceeds from offshore oil and gas royalties, not taxpayer dollars—which was provided through the merit-based Forest Legacy Program and was implemented in partnership with the Tennessee Department of Agriculture. LWCF funding has leveraged significant public and private funding from the Tennessee State Lands Acquisition Fund, the Open Space Institute’s Resilient Landscapes Initiative and South Cumberland Landscape Fund and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Recovery Land Acquisition Grants program, provided through Section 6 of the

Endangered Species Act. LWCF is annually funded by the U.S. Congress, including Tennessee's U.S. delegation representing Franklin and Marion Counties: U.S. Senator Lamar Alexander, U.S. Senator Bob Corker and U.S. Representative Scott DesJarlais.

"Preservation of Sherwood Forest in Franklin County will help provide future generations with opportunities for hunting, hiking and recreation in a beautiful area of our state," said **U.S. Senator Lamar Alexander**. "The State of Tennessee, The Conservation Fund and The Land Trust for Tennessee deserve our appreciation for their hard work and dedication to permanently protect Tennessee's most diverse and important lands."

"Millions of people visit Tennessee each year to experience our incredible God-given outdoor amenities, and this newly protected land in the Sherwood Forest will preserve rare and endangered species while also expanding recreational opportunities for Tennesseans and visitors," said **U.S. Senator Bob Corker**. "It is important that this land is available for future generations, and I appreciate the hard work of all who are making that a priority."

"The Sherwood Forest in Tennessee's Fourth Congressional district provides multiple resources that sustain the local economy and help protect the sensitive wildlife in the area," said **U.S. Representative DesJarlais**. "As an outdoorsman, I am pleased to learn that Sherwood Forest will also soon provide new opportunities for public recreation. Its protection will enable outdoor enthusiasts to come and discover the natural wonders that our great state has to offer. Thank you to all the contributors of the Sherwood Forest project and for their continued efforts to preserve the land for future generations."

The painted snake coiled forest snail is only found in Franklin County, Tennessee, with the entire known population inhabiting privately owned land prior to this conservation effort. In addition to the snail, this project protects habitat supporting the federally endangered Morefield's leather flower as well as seven additional rare species of plants and animals. Identified as a "hot spot" for ecological resiliency, the land is also likely to support wildlife far into the future.

"This land acquisition serves as a major milestone in forest and wildlife habitat conservation for Tennessee," said **Ken Arney, deputy regional forester with the U.S. Forest Service's Southern Region**. "Thanks to funding from the Forest Legacy Program, our state partners can now protect the habitat of many rare and vulnerable species while ensuring the Sherwood Forest's economic benefits to local communities."

"Protection of this site, made possible by the cooperation of many partners, is a significant accomplishment in efforts to recover the painted snake coiled forest snail," said **Mary Jennings, Supervisor of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Tennessee Field Office**. "The recent discovery of a population of Morefield's leather flower on the property further demonstrated its importance for maintaining diverse elements of Tennessee's rich natural heritage."

"The Sherwood Forest project exemplifies so much about the values and priorities of The Land Trust for Tennessee," said **Liz McLaurin, President and CEO of The Land Trust**. "What a privilege it is to work with public and private conservation partners like The Conservation Fund, Open Space Institute, multiple state and federal agencies to protect a place for recreation, as habitat for rare and endangered species, for wildlife connectivity and for climate resiliency."

"OSI is proud to have supported the protection of Sherwood Forest, whose unique landscapes and unusual limestone bedrock give it the critical ability to provide habitat to wildlife even in an uncertain climate," said **Peter Howell, OSI's Executive Vice President of Conservation Capital & Research**

**Programs.** “Sherwood Forest is now part of a landscape of thousands of protected acres that will prove to be a natural stronghold for wildlife for generations to come.”

“Nowadays, conservation cannot be an either-or choice. This private-public partnership demonstrates how we can work together to find solutions that protect the environment and natural resources, while supporting local economies and jobs,” said **Ralph Knoll, Tennessee Representative with The Conservation Fund**. “We’re thankful to Senators Alexander and Corker and Representative DesJarlais for their continued support of LWCF, which is so critical to conservation in Tennessee, and to all the partners who made this conservation success possible.”

#### **About The Conservation Fund**

At The Conservation Fund, we make conservation work for America. By creating solutions that make environmental and economic sense, we are redefining conservation to demonstrate its essential role in our future prosperity. Top-ranked for efficiency and effectiveness, we have worked in all 50 states since 1985 to protect more than 7.8 million acres of land, including more than 290,000 acres of beloved natural lands across Tennessee. [www.conservationfund.org](http://www.conservationfund.org)

#### **About The Land Trust for Tennessee**

The Land Trust for Tennessee is an accredited, statewide non-governmental nonprofit organization founded in 1999 with offices in Nashville, Chattanooga and at Glen Leven Farm. The Land Trust has protected over 100,000 acres of treasured farmland, historic sites, open spaces, recreational areas and wildlife habitats across Tennessee. <http://www.landtrusttn.org>

The Sherwood Forest project was supported through the Open Space Institutes’ Resilient Landscapes Initiative and Southern Cumberland Land Protection Fund, which are made possible with funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, Lyndhurst Foundation, Benwood Foundation, and Merck Family Fund. These initiatives seek to build capacity of land trusts working to respond to climate change.

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