



Sewanee Environmental Institute

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**THE LAND TRUST FOR TENNESSEE, THE UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH
COMPLETE CONSERVATION PLAN FOR THE SOUTH CUMBERLAND REGION**

SEWANEE, Tenn. - The Land Trust for Tennessee and Sewanee: The University of the South today announced the completion of a comprehensive plan for conserving the natural and cultural resources of the South Cumberland region. The plan caps a two-year effort that involved more than 30 organizations, culminating in “Cumberland Voices: A Conservation Vision for the South Cumberland Region.” The plan covers over 4 million acres and includes portions of Tennessee, Alabama, and Georgia. The Lyndhurst Foundation provided a lead gift to help initiate the planning effort.

The goals of the planning effort were to outline specific strategies for the conservation community to address with local stakeholders; to facilitate communication and resource sharing among governmental and nongovernmental stakeholders in the region; and to produce a document that describes the extraordinary natural and cultural resources of the region in order to attract more local, regional, and national funding for conservation.

“This plan represents a great opportunity for Sewanee to demonstrate its dedication to living beyond the classroom what we have learned in the classroom, and to show our

commitment to environmental stewardship in the region,” said John McCardell, vice-chancellor and president of the University of the South. “‘Cumberland Voices’ has far-reaching implications for the University and the citizens of the Cumberland Plateau.”

The South Cumberland region contains some of the largest privately owned forest lands remaining in the eastern US. The forested landscapes of the region provide habitat for numerous rare species, offer breathtaking views, and include recreational hotspots like Fall Creek Falls State Park, the Cumberland Trail, and Walls of Jericho. Jackson County, Alabama, contains the Paint Rock River, one of the most biologically important rivers in North America.

The forests are also critical to maintaining water quality, as well as an economic base for the local forest industry.

The US Department of Interior recently announced two projects in Tennessee -- a potential new national wildlife refuge in the Paint Rock River watershed in Franklin County and the Tennessee Riverwalk in Chattanooga – as part of the America’s Great Outdoors Initiative. Both of these initiatives are also priorities outlined by South Cumberland plan.

“The great landscapes of our nation have roadmaps for conserving their natural and cultural resources,” said Jeanie Nelson, executive director of The Land Trust for Tennessee. “The protection of the extraordinary resources of the South Cumberlands has a direct impact on the long term economic viability of the region, and enhanced quality of life for its citizens. We are grateful to the many partners who participated in the planning process.”

“The collaboration between The Land Trust for Tennessee and Sewanee: University of the South represents an exciting new type of partnership for achieving landscape-level conservation objectives in our region,” said Jon Evans, director of the Sewanee Environmental Institute (SEI). “Through the work of our Landscape Analysis Laboratory, Sewanee has made a long-term commitment to provide the computer mapping and scientific analyses necessary to guide future conservation decision-making on the Cumberland Plateau.”

“Over the next several months The Land Trust, SEI, and partner organizations will be meeting with community leaders from across the region to present the plan,” said Chris Roberts, South Cumberland project manager for The Land Trust. “This will be a great way to find out more about ways we can work together towards developing mutual goals for conserving open space.”

About The Land Trust for Tennessee

The Land Trust for Tennessee is a private, not-for-profit 501(c)(3) charitable organization, founded in 1999. Its mission is to preserve the unique character of Tennessee’s natural and historic landscapes and sites for future generations. To date, The Land Trust for Tennessee has protected over 60,000 acres of land and is working with numerous other landowners and

communities across the state. The Land Trust works with willing landowners to find ways to preserve forever the historic, scenic and natural resource values of their land. The organization is supported primarily by financial contributions from individuals and foundations. The Land Trust has offices in Nashville, Sewanee and Chattanooga. More information is available at www.landtrusttn.org.

About The Sewanee Environmental Institute

The mission of the Sewanee Environmental Institute is to facilitate interdisciplinary student-faculty research across disciplines and to enhance the academic programs at the University of the South. In 2008, the institute was formed with the strategic vision of promoting field teaching and research on the University's 13,000-acre landscape, one of the largest campuses in the United States. The Institute builds on nearly a decade of collaborative environmental research and conservation work in the South Cumberland region. The Sewanee Environmental Institute helps Sewanee faculty and undergraduate students connect with outside organizations on projects related to forest conservation, ecological restoration, land use policy, nonpoint source pollution and other issues relevant to our local region, the Cumberland Plateau, and beyond.

Sewanee: The University of the South, familiarly known as Sewanee, comprises a nationally recognized College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and a distinguished School of Theology. Located on Tennessee's Cumberland Plateau, Sewanee enrolls 1,500 undergraduates and approximately 100 seminarians. For more information about Sewanee: The University of the South, visit www.sewanee.edu.