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National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Announces Over \$1 Million in Funding to Restore and Improve Cumberland Plateau Forestlands

WASHINGTON, D.C. (September 25, 2017) — The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) today announced more than \$1 million in grants to support forestland restoration and working forests throughout the Cumberland Plateau of Tennessee, Kentucky and Alabama. Grantee organizations have committed more than \$1.5 million in match, generating a total conservation impact of more than \$2.5 million.

The grants were awarded through the [Cumberland Plateau Stewardship Fund](#), a public-private partnership between NFWF, the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, International Paper's Forestland Stewards partnership, Altria Group and the American Forest Foundation's Southern Woods for At-Risk Wildlife partnership. This is the fifth year the fund has administered grant awards.

“The 2017 grants from the Cumberland Plateau Stewardship Fund represent a continued commitment to restoring forest and freshwater habitats in one of the most biodiverse regions of the country,” said Jeff Trandahl, executive director and CEO at NFWF. “The investments made through this public-private partnership will benefit a range of wildlife, including bobwhite quail, wild turkey, fish, crayfish and mussels.”

The projects supported by the eight grants announced today are expected to establish more than 2,000 new acres and enhance an additional 6,800 existing acres of shortleaf pine habitat. Projects also will establish and enhance more than 1,000 acres of riparian forest and improve more than 250 miles of stream habitat.

“The Cumberland Plateau is renowned for both the natural and economic benefits of its working forestlands,” said Ken Arney, acting regional forester for the U.S. Forest Service's Southern Region. “The significant private funding contributed to this partnership greatly accelerates and promotes active stewardship of critical forest ecosystems, resulting in conservation gains that might otherwise have been lost.”

In addition, this year's grantees will provide educational and technical assistance related to shortleaf and riparian forest restoration to more than 1,100 private landowners, with an anticipated 100 landowners entering into stewardship programs on private lands.

“Eight projects, three states and more than \$1 million to take eight big steps focusing on forest restoration, strengthening working forests and improving water quality along the Cumberland Plateau is exciting,” said Mike Oetker, acting regional director for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. “It's a big deal for clean water, healthy fisheries and wildlife, and strong, working

forests. It recognizes the important conservation, recreational, and economic values all of us share across the Plateau.”

A complete list of the 2017 grants made through the Cumberland Plateau Stewardship Fund is available [here](#).

“Our entire business depends on the sustainability of forests,” said Tom Cleves, International Paper’s vice president of global citizenship. “We are thrilled to team up with organizations that share our commitment to responsible forest management. By working together, we will continue to promote responsible forest stewardship and ensure healthy and productive forest ecosystems for future generations.”

Stretching from northwest Alabama through central Tennessee and eastern Kentucky, the Cumberland Plateau is one of the most biologically rich landscapes in the United States. A combination of complex landforms, limestone geology, and large, intact blocks of forest habitat creates diverse terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems hosting numerous endemic and rare species.

“Our companies depend on high-quality tobacco and grapes to make their products. From seed to disposal, our companies recognize that they have an important role in reducing their environmental impact,” said Kathryn Fessler, director of corporate citizenship for Altria Client Services. “We’re proud to support the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation’s reforestation and water conservation efforts in the Cumberland Plateau.”

Since 2013, the Cumberland Plateau Stewardship Fund has invested \$3.5 million in projects. These investments will establish more than 9,600 acres and improve more than 62,500 additional acres of shortleaf pine and riparian forests, as well as improve 288 miles of stream habitat, benefitting the native species that rely on those forests and streams.

"Families and individuals own the majority of the forests in the south, including in the Cumberland Plateau," said Tom Martin, president and CEO of the American Forest Foundation. "These individuals want to do right by the land, but lack the technical expertise and funds to get the work done. We are excited to continue working with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and our other partners to help these landowners make an impact."

About the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

Chartered by Congress in 1984, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) protects and restores the nation's fish, wildlife, plants and habitats. Working with federal, corporate and individual partners, NFWF has funded more than 4,500 organizations and committed more than \$3.8 billion to conservation projects. Learn more at www.nfwf.org.

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