



## **Joint Statement from the Duck River Watershed Grassroots Coalition On the Signing of HB1510 / SB1590**

The Duck River Watershed Grassroots Coalition applauds the Tennessee General Assembly, the leadership of House Speaker Pro Tempore Pat Marsh, Senator Kerry Roberts, the many sponsors, and Governor Bill Lee for signing HB1510 / SB1590, expanding scenic river protections for the Duck River and several important tributaries, including the Buffalo River, Beaverdam Creek, Lick Creek, Piney River, and Swan Creek.

HB1510 / SB1590 reflects a shared understanding that certain places require a higher standard of care. This legislation represents a meaningful and long-awaited step forward in protecting the Duck River Watershed, one of Tennessee's most vital natural resources. For the communities, organizations, and individuals who have worked for years to elevate the importance of the Duck River, this moment reflects both persistence and partnership.

"Passing scenic river legislation is difficult at best. The designation is like a historical stamp that, down through the ages, becomes part of the essence of the river. As for the Duck River, it was not a close question. It is truly one of the most special and scenic rivers in the world," said Doug Jones, President of the Duck River Conservancy, reflecting on the years of work that led to this moment.

Behind this legislation is a broad and growing coalition of local advocates, landowners, businesses, scientists, and policymakers who recognize that the future of the Duck River Watershed is inseparable from the future of the communities it serves. From the River's role as the primary drinking water source for hundreds of thousands of Tennesseans to its extraordinary ecological significance, the Duck has demanded thoughtful, durable protections.

Kevin Vann, Founder of the Duck River Watershed Society, highlighted the role of grassroots advocacy in advancing protections for the river, sharing, "Grassroots advocacy is the baseline approach for environmental issues. When local communities understand the environmental impacts of a project, they strive to become informed and activated."

Elevating the connection between the river, local communities, and outdoor recreation, Higher Pursuits, an outdoor outfitter along the Duck, was excited to see the Duck River and other waterways protected by the Scenic River Bill. “Paddling provides a connection to nature, a reminder that things were here before us and will continue after us. It is a reminder that we are not owners but caretakers. Protecting the Duck River and its tributaries helps to ensure a free-flowing river, an amazing place to seek adventure, make memories with family and friends, enjoy, relax, reconnect, heal, exercise, and grow.”

Importantly, HB1510 / SB1590 builds on years of groundwork. It reflects sustained engagement across the watershed, thoughtful input from diverse stakeholders, and a growing recognition that proactive measures are necessary to avoid reactive consequences.

Gale Courtney Moore, President of Friends of the Duck River, called the passage of the bill a “dream come true” for her organization. “The Duck River is a gift that we cherish. As stewards of this gift, we realize that protecting this River is a responsibility. We are grateful to the legislature for sharing in this endeavor.”

While this legislative milestone is significant, it is not the end of the work. Scenic River designations are important steps in the right direction, but are limited in their protection of these waterways. Ongoing collaboration with state agencies, local governments, and communities will be essential to ensure holistic protection of Tennessee’s rivers. Continued investment in sound science, responsible policy, and strong community engagement will be critical to maintaining the momentum created by the passage of this legislation.

“We are deeply grateful to the legislature for passing HB1510/SB1590, which acknowledges the importance of this unique watershed and strengthens support for its protection in alignment with our work through Governor Lee’s Duck River Watershed Planning Partnership,” added Grace Stranch, CEO of Harpeth Conservancy.

The Coalition remains committed to working alongside partners at every level to ensure the Duck River Watershed continues to serve as a source of drinking water, economic vitality, and ecological richness for generations to come.

Respectfully,

**Duck River Watershed Grassroots Coalition**

Duck River Conservancy  
Duck River Watershed Society  
Friends of the Duck  
Harpeth Conservancy  
Higher Pursuits  
McEwen Group