

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:  
Thursday, May 18, 2017

CONTACT: Kim Schofinski  
(615) 350-3431

### **2017 Governor's Environmental Stewardship Awards Announced**

NASHVILLE – Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam and Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation Commissioner Bob Martineau today announced the winners of the 2017 Governor's Environmental Stewardship Awards. Winners will be recognized for their achievements and positive impact on the state's natural resources in an awards ceremony to be held in Nashville on June 16.

"These organizations represent the spirit and drive that make the Volunteer State great," Haslam said. "I thank all of the winners for their individual contributions to the environment and for keeping Tennessee a beautiful state in which to live and work and to visit."

The Governor's Environmental Stewardship Awards program recognizes exceptional voluntary actions that improve or protect our environment and natural resources with projects or initiatives not required by law or regulation. In its 31st year, this year's awards program covers nine categories: Building Green; Clean Air, Energy and Renewable Resources; Environmental Education and Outreach; Environmental Education and Outreach (school category); Land Use; Materials Management; Natural Heritage; and Sustainable Performance.

"I applaud all who were nominated and those who won for working to protect our state's natural resources in an efficient, sustainable way," Martineau said. "Voluntary actions are crucial to safeguard and improve our natural environment."

The 2017 Governor's Environmental Stewardship Award recipients are:

- Belmont University – Davidson County
- Chattanooga Area Regional Transportation Authority – Hamilton County
- City of Lebanon – Wilson County
- Keep Knoxville Beautiful – Knox County
- Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization – Knox County
- Metropolitan Nashville Airport Authority – Davidson County
- Nashville Fire Department Station 19 – Davidson County
- New Hope Christian Academy – Shelby County
- Sherwood Forest Project – Franklin & Marion Counties
- Suttree Landing Park – Knox County
- The Nashville Food Project – Davidson County

The 2017 awards roster includes two Pursuit of Excellence Awards, which recognize past award winners who continue to demonstrate a high regard for environmental stewardship practices. The winner of one additional honor, the Robert Sparks Walker Lifetime Achievement Award, will be announced at the awards ceremony.

A panel of 22 professionals representing agricultural, conservation, forestry, environmental and academic professionals judged more than 89 nominations and selected this year's award recipients based on criteria including on-the-ground achievement, innovation and public education. Details about each award winner can be found below:

### **Category: Sustainable Performance**

#### **Winner: Belmont University, Davidson County**

Belmont University's R. Milton and Denice Johnson Center received its LEED Gold certification in April of 2016. This building is home to Belmont's campus dining facility, the Curb College of Entertainment and Music Business, programs in Media Studies and a new major on campus, Motion Pictures. The 134,000 sq. ft. building sits atop a 1,000+ space parking garage. This parking garage and others on campus have free charging stations for electric vehicles and designated spaces for car/vanpool and fuel efficient vehicles. Two of the garages have been upgraded with LED lights and fixtures to cut both energy use and utility costs. The building also boasts a geothermal heating and cooling system and a composting operation. The heating and cooling system is expected to yield a savings of 40 percent in energy annually. The composting system converts food and cardboard waste into enriched soil additives through large dehydrators, which reduces overall waste from food operations. It also helps divert waste from landfills. The University has installed a stormwater run-off collection system that collects in underground storage tanks. The collection tank is one-third the size of an Olympic swimming pool and has allowed Belmont to utilize over 12 million gallons of reclaimed water for irrigation in 2016. Belmont now has three buildings on campus that are LEED certified and eight buildings that have been built with sustainable features. The University continues to take a comprehensive look at how they can be environmentally sensitive and be a leader in sustainability and environmental responsibility among universities.

### **Category: Clean Air**

#### **Winner: Chattanooga Area Regional Transportation Authority, Hamilton County**

The Chattanooga Area Regional Transportation Authority (ARTA), with funding provided by the Tennessee Valley Authority, launched an integrated public Level 2 charging and electric vehicle car share network along its existing public transit system. There are 56 charging stations across 20 locations and energy use is offset by three new solar power generators, with a combined capacity of 80kW. The total emissions reduction equaled 530 tons of CO2 with the implementation of this program. ARTA recognized the value in promoting multimodal travel solutions that can be integrated into the transit system. Electric charging and car share station sites were designed to coordinate with ARTA's mainline bus and Electric Shuttle routes, Bike Chattanooga Bicycle Transit System locations and key downtown parking garages. Additionally, ARTA selected Green Commuter to launch the state's first all-electric public car share system, with the initial deployment of 20 Nissan LEAFs in Chattanooga. These vehicles use the public charging stations and are maintained and sponsored by Green Commuter.

### **Category: Energy and Renewable Resources**

#### **Winner: City of Lebanon: Waste to Energy, Wilson County**

The City of Lebanon has started operating a downdraft gasification plant at its wastewater treatment facility. The gasification initiative is the first in the nation and the largest downdraft gasifier in the world. The facility cost was a little over \$3.5 million, diverting 8,000 tons (equivalent to a line of semi-trucks four miles long) of wood and sludge waste from the local landfill, and converting 36,000 Tennessee scrap rubber tires into energy annually. This will eliminate 2,500 tons of carbon emissions per year. The facility produces a leftover carbon-rich biochar that the city plans to sell to local farmers to fertilize crops as a potential new revenue stream. The plant also has the capacity to generate 1.8 million kilowatt-hours of electricity behind the meter, which has the ability to power 312 homes. In addition to gasification, Lebanon is taking steps to support the only commuter rail system in Middle Tennessee by installing one MW of solar arrays at both the water and wastewater treatment plant to offset the electrical costs, starting a pilot recycling program for residents, and continuing the conversion of city vehicles from fossil fuels to natural gas.

### **Category: Environmental Education and Outreach**

#### **Winner: Keep Knoxville Beautiful, Knox County**

Keep Knoxville Beautiful (KKB), founded in 1978 to help clean up the city prior to the 1982 World's

Fair, is a locally-funded, non-profit, independent affiliate of Keep America Beautiful. In 2016, KKB accelerated their educational outreach programs by facilitating over 65 neighborhood, waterway and roadside cleanups, collecting over 36 tons of roadside waste and three tons of recyclables, and removing over 100 waste tires from roadsides and waterways. KKB facilitated and supported over 1,600 volunteers to work nearly 4,000 hours and mobilized their recycling trailer at seven public events. KKB reached nearly 400 students at 23 educational engagement presentations and presented as educational exhibitors at over 20 public events. KKB instituted four new programs in 2016 to engage more of the community. These programs include “Trash Runs”, which are geared toward rapid trash removal and the “Beautification Mobs” to create long-lasting visual enhancements to entrance corridors along interstates. KKB also bought a recycling trailer that provides an organized recycling receptacle for public events. The trailer is painted with mission specific messaging to facilitate education and outreach while providing a community service. KKB also added to their event list the Rocky Top Pickin’ Party, which is a fall fundraiser with local musicians.

**Category: Pursuit of Excellence**

**Winner: Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization: Smart Trips, Knox County**

Smart Trips provides an incentive-based reward program for businesses and commuters who choose to unburden the transportation system through various green trips, including telecommuting, ride-sharing, carpooling, biking, walking, bus and transit. The program collects data on historically not well-documented data of alternative transit trips. Enhanced reporting on alternative trips provides a more holistic view of the regional transit system in the Knoxville area and leads to enhancements for all roadway users. Relative to the affordability of gasoline and the increase in single occupancy vehicle trips, Smart Trips is experiencing an increase in active users, whose trip reporting indicates a rising trend in longer and more diverse trips. The program began in 2003 and grew exponentially in 2012 by adding over 1,000 registered commuters. To date they have had over 949,969 registered commuters logging multiple modes of commuting. Smart Trips users logged 17,908,426 miles in “alternative” commutes over the last six years, including carpool, vanpool, transit, bicycle, walking, telework and compressed workweeks. This represents 8,414,344 metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions prevented as well as significant reductions of NOx, volatile organic compounds, particulate matter and other tailpipe air pollutants.

**Category: Pursuit of Excellence**

**Winner: Metropolitan Nashville Airport Authority, Davidson County**

The Metropolitan Nashville Airport Authority (MNAA) has continued to build on their core values of sustainability while having a visible impact to their 12.2 million visitors. MNAA has added compressed natural gas (CNG) shuttles and buses to their fleet. In 2016, MNAA saw an opportunity to use their limestone quarry to provide a water-source lake plate geothermal cooling system that would support the cooling load of the nearly 900,000 sq. ft. terminal building. MNAA rolled out 20 new CNG powered shuttles to service parking lots at the Nashville International Airport (BNA). These consist of 15, 24-passenger shuttles, two 29-passenger shuttles, and three 14-passenger shuttles. These shuttles join eight new BNA Express Park CNG powered shuttles that were put into service in June 2016. Based on an annual estimated consumption of 300,000 gallons of diesel, greenhouse gas emissions at the airport shuttle operations will be reduced by 14 percent. This equates to an annual reduction of 587 tons of greenhouse gas emissions. These improvements help the health and well-being of the public who flies in and out of the facilities as well as the employees and workers who support the aviation operations. MNAA identified a way to harness the thermal properties of deep water which had accumulated over decades in an abandoned quarry on airport property. The \$10.4 million cold deep water system is used to cool the entire terminal building, reduce the use of electricity, and reduce potable water consumption by providing irrigation means for airport landscaping.

**Category: Building Green**

**Winner: Nashville Fire Department Station 19, Davidson County**

Nashville Fire Department Station 19 is the first LEED Platinum certified fire station for new construction in the entire Southeast. The station's eco-friendly design resulted in a 60 percent diversion of construction waste from a landfill, one-third less water use and a 44 percent reduction in energy costs. Fifteen percent of the building's electricity use is provided by its 33kW solar panel array and 31 percent of all materials used were regionally manufactured or locally sourced, with 16 percent of the building materials being recycled. In 2016, Fire Station 19 saved over \$11,000 in electricity costs compared to a comparable building, and generated nearly 39,000 kWh of solar energy. Lighting levels were optimized to provide only the required light needed in corridors, which led to a 41 percent reduction in lighting power density. Additionally, Fire Station 19 is sub-metered in real time. Every circuit in the facility is directly monitored for energy consumption on a second-to-second basis so problems can be detected immediately and city energy managers can respond accordingly.

**Category: Environmental Education and Outreach**

**Winner: New Hope Christian Academy, Shelby County**

New Hope Christian Academy's students are actively learning environmental stewardship through several education programs including the school's urban garden. The school addresses education as it relates to energy conservation measures, recycling and composting with outreach to students and their families to make them aware of how to care for the environment and sustainability both at home and school. In January 2016, the school had a "Bust the Energy Hog" campaign where classrooms were equipped with light switch plates reminding them to conserve energy and thermometers to monitor their room temperature. Classrooms were awarded with "Bacon Bucks" when they were discovered doing a good job. Each classroom has recycling bins and faculty is proactively working to become paper free by having students turn in assignments online and sending emails and texts to parents. Through the recycling program, the school recycled 15,000 pounds of paper and cardboard in 2016. New Hope collected over 300 bags of raked leaves from families last fall as well as food compost material from school meals. The material is used to enhance soil for the school's urban farm, which they created from a nearby vacant lot. The urban farm is used as an outdoor classroom to teach students about plants and the food that comes from them. During the growing season, they have a Pay-What-You-Can-Veggie Stand, where parents can get organic foods at affordable prices. New Hope has two bee hives at the farm as well, where fifth grade students harvest the honey, bottle it, and sell it within the school community.

**Category: Natural Heritage**

**Winner: Sherwood Forest Project, Franklin & Marion Counties**

The Sherwood Forest Project has added 4,061 acres of high-quality forestland and critical habitat to the public land areas in the South Cumberland region. The project involved purchasing the additional acres from a private mining company. Funding was made available from the Land and Wildlife Conservation Fund, through the merit-based Forest Legacy Program, and implemented in partnership with the Tennessee Department of Agriculture. The additional acreage was added to the approximately 41,000 acres of already protected forestland, including Bear Hollow Mountain Wildlife Management Area, Franklin State Forest, Carter State Natural Area, and Walls of Jericho State Natural Area. Acquisition of this land ensures the protection of habitats critical for federally-listed endangered, threatened or federal candidate species, including the endangered Morefield's leather flower and the federally-threatened painted snake coiled forest snail. Additionally, two rare animals, the Eastern small-footed bat and Allegheny woodrat, are protected by the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency. These animals have been recorded on the property along with four-toed salamanders, barking tree frogs, and Rafinesque's big-eared bat, which are state-protected animals. The 4,061-acre tract also contains the Griffin Shelter, which is the only excavated prehistoric rock art site in Tennessee. There are four panels of elaborate and deeply incised petroglyphs and artifacts used to carve the art and perform sacred activities. The project also protects over eight miles of stream and riparian habitat in the Gunter'sville Lake watershed, which are critical for protecting drinking water quality for the community of Sherwood.

**Category: Land Use**

**Winner: Suttree Landing Park, Knox County**

As you walk through Suttree Landing, Knoxville's new downtown eight-acre linear park, it is hard to imagine that from the 1940s until 2004, this was an industrial site home to a bulk oil storage facility, a textile dying operation and an engine parts manufacturer. To facilitate this transformation, the City of Knoxville successfully negotiated a Brownfield Voluntary Agreement with the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation's Division of Remediation in 2010. Six years later, the city has a beautiful, multi-use riverfront park. This project illustrates that the conversion of a Brownfield site into an outdoor recreation space can be accomplished through strategic planning, partnerships, community involvement and active stakeholder involvement toward a common vision. The city applied for and received a \$400,000 Community-Wide Brownfield Assessment Grant from U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to assess properties along the waterfront. The collaborative effort between EPA, the City of Knoxville and TDEC identified 12 sites with significant redevelopment potential. Two of the sites were used for Suttree Landing Park. With the creation of the park came the connection of the Urban Wilderness in South Knoxville, a recreation, cultural and historic preservation initiative, incorporating 1,000 forested acres in and around the South Waterfront. The park contains a Riverwalk, two festival lawns, four overlook areas with seat walls and picnic tables, an ADA-accessible children's playground, a put-in area for kayaks and canoes, and a surface parking lot for larger events. The park festival lawn has an irrigation system that pumps water from the river, reducing the need for potable water on site. Bioswales were installed to manage water runoff and tolerate periodic flooding. The Riverwalk consists of a six-foot wide soft surface running trail, a five-foot furnishing zone composed of bike racks, benches, and lighting, and a 12-foot hard surface, and a multi-use path for bicyclists and pedestrians.

**Category: Materials Management**

**Winner: The Nashville Food Project, Davidson County**

The Nashville Food Project is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to bring people together to grow, cook and share nourishing food, with the goals of cultivating community and alleviating hunger in Nashville. This is critical work as 17 percent of Tennessee residents do not have enough food to sustain a healthy lifestyle. In 2016, The Nashville Food Project recovered more than 120,000 pounds of edible healthy surplus food from local farms, grocers and restaurants. With the majority of the food used in their Meals Program, they were able to provide more than 3,100 meals to vulnerable communities each week. These weekly meals are shared in partnership with more than 27 local nonprofits. The Nashville Food Project strives for maximum sustainability throughout their meals programs by sharing meals in compostable clamshell containers. Meals are supplemented with local, sustainably-grown food and they dedicate a portion of their food budget to their local farmer investment expenditure. Purchasing produce from local farmers supports the farmer, the farmer's sustainable practices and the local economy. Any food that is not fit for human consumption is fed to The Nashville Food Project's flock of urban chickens or added to their compost system. This in turn supports their production gardens, which produced over 6,200 pounds of organically-grown produce for meals in 2016. The Nashville Food Project's four community gardens provide land, resources and training to empower 100 low-income families, immigrants and refugees to support their families' food and financial needs. They are actively working towards a system of zero food waste.

###