

Reforestation: A Practical Investment in Tennessee's Economy, Water & Land

What difference does reforestation make for communities in Tennessee?



Tennessee's forestry sector generates \$21.7 billion in annual output and employs more than 85,500 people statewide.¹ That economic base depends on healthy, productive forests, and on the next generation of trees being planted today.



About 70% of Tennessee's public-supply water comes from surface water, and more so in middle and eastern Tennessee, where reforestation opportunity is greatest.^{6,25} As the Division of Forestry (TDF) puts it, most clean water comes from forested watersheds.⁷



White oak, a keystone species in Tennessee's forests, is among its most valuable hardwoods, prized for whiskey barrels. Without action, experts project a drop in white oak within 40-50 years, as current management isn't supporting the next generation.³



Outdoor recreation, including hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing, drives \$13 billion+ in annual spending in Tennessee, supports 214,442 jobs, and nearly \$1.8 billion in state and local taxes, all depending on forests reforestation helps sustain.²

How can reforestation be supported and expanded in Tennessee?



Expand income-generating voluntary reforestation programs on private land.

Tennessee has 6.8 million acres of reforestation opportunity, 98.4% on private land.⁹ Cost-share programs, forestry assistance, and market incentives can help landowners establish forests and generate income from voluntary reforestation.^{20,21}



Expand native tree seedling production.

White oak supports Tennessee's wildlife, whiskey industry, and long-term carbon storage. Nursery and seed orchard programs help ensure the seedling supply and genetics needed to meet growing demand for reforestation.^{3,20,22-24}



Fund riparian forest buffer planting in priority stream corridors.

Many of Tennessee's highest-opportunity reforestation areas lie along stream corridors in the Cumberland and Tennessee River watersheds. Riparian buffer planting can restore forest cover while delivering water, wildlife and flood-resilience benefits.^{6,9}



Expand TDF forester capacity to support reforestation at scale.

Tennessee's 6.89 million acres of reforestation opportunity depends on foresters who help landowners develop plans, access programs, and implement projects. TDF reports demand for assistance exceeds available capacity.^{9,20,27}

87%

of voters nationwide (80% GOP, 88% IND, 93% DEM) support "providing financial incentives and programs for private forest and woodland landowners to sustainably manage their land to keep forests healthy and adopt practices that naturally remove carbon from the air."¹⁹



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