



FORD MEDIA CENTER

## Ford Funds Stream Restoration at University of Tennessee's Lone Oaks Farm

**MEMPHIS** — At the 2022 Memphis International Auto Show, Ford Motor Company and the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture announced an historic agreement that will propel economic development, education, and conservation throughout the mid-south.

The two have signed a stream mitigation and restoration agreement that will restore the stream waters flowing through the University's Lone Oaks Farm. UT Extension is developing Lone Oaks, a 1,200-acre facility, into a world-class 4-H and STEM (science, technology, education, and math) Education Center in Middleton. Lone Oaks is located just 45 minutes east of Memphis and in close proximity to Ford's BlueOval City. Both properties are under development, and earlier this month UT Extension celebrated laying the top beam of the first of many overnight camping facilities at the 4-H Center. Education programs at Lone Oaks already serve about 5,000 K-12 students each year, but the new facility will allow the program to continue growing and offer overnight STEM programs and camps. Knowing the workforce needs in STEM fields are growing across the region, the timing couldn't be better.

"Every year, UTIA provides valuable life skills as well as STEM education opportunities to nearly 112,000 students across Tennessee," said UT President Randy Boyd. "Ford's investment in Lone Oaks will ensure our 4-H programs will be able to expand STEM education to Tennessee students for years to come."

Linda C. Martin, UTIA interim senior vice chancellor and senior vice president, says Tennessee has 7,216 4-H clubs, which is the most of any state in the nation. "The ability to offer overnight educational programs and daily STEM activities at Lone Oaks in West Tennessee is a tremendous enhancement to the region's educational opportunities," she adds.

The Clean Water Act of 1972 requires that any impact on streams and wetlands from development projects, such as buildings and roads, be offset by restoring and permanently protecting an equivalent amount of habitat elsewhere. The size of the BlueOval City project required Ford to invest in a significant stream restoration project, and the UT Institute of Agriculture was prepared to meet this need through a restoration project at Lone Oaks Farm. This unique agreement allows Ford to meet its regulatory requirements while also benefiting the entire region through funding STEM education and 4-H Youth Development at Lone Oaks. The agreement totals \$16.5 million, which covers the construction cost of restoring some 20,000 feet of streams on the Lone Oaks property while also providing long-term financial sustainability for Lone Oaks' educational programs. The residual funds from the project will be invested by the UT Foundation to support education programs at Lone Oaks Farm in perpetuity.

"At Ford, our goal is to create a positive impact on people and the planet. We're proud to enter into this innovative partnership with the University of Tennessee that will help restore and protect the streams and wetlands at the Lone Oaks Farm and create educational opportunities that will inspire and benefit future generations," said Bob Holycross, vice president of sustainability, environment and safety engineering at Ford. "This is just one way we can fulfill our purpose to help build a better world."

The project involves many other partners, including The Tennessee Wildlife Federation and the West Tennessee River Basin Authority (WTRBA). The Tennessee Wildlife Federation is a nonprofit that advances conservation in Tennessee through advocacy, education and on-the-ground conservation projects, including stream and wetland restoration. WTRBA, an independent unit of the Tennessee

Department of Environment and Conservation, is charged with managing rivers, streams, lakes, and other water issues in West Tennessee. WTRBA is responsible for the design, engineering, construction, and monitoring for the stream restoration.

“In addition to restoring the stream, this partnership will create additional opportunities for our UT Extension professionals to develop STEM programs with an emphasis on workforce skills and preparation for higher education. As the needs of employers in the region and state change, we are tailoring our educational programs to match those needs,” says UT Extension Dean Ashley Stokes.

“The vision for Lone Oaks Farm includes introducing young people to agriculture and conservation through STEM education programs. We are extremely excited to partner with Ford and support both their sustainability goals and the University’s and community’s education goals,” says Ben West, director of strategic partnerships with UTIA. “This investment will provide quality, hands-on education programs for students throughout the region for decades to come.”

Through its mission of research, teaching and extension, the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture touches lives and provides Real. Life. Solutions.[utia.tennessee.edu](http://utia.tennessee.edu).

## About Ford Motor Company

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