



## HAMILTON COUNTY, TENNESSEE

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY MAYOR

WESTON WAMP

### For Immediate Release

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## State, Hamilton County Announce Plans for State Park at McDonald Farm

*Governor Lee's Proposed Budget Includes \$45.3 Million to Create a New State Park at Historic Site*

**HAMILTON COUNTY, TN (February 15, 2026)** — State of Tennessee officials, State Senator Bo Watson, and Hamilton County Mayor Weston Wamp today announced plans to create a signature state park at McDonald Farm. Governor Bill Lee's proposed state budget includes \$45.3 million to help transform more than 1,300 acres of the historic property into Tennessee's next great state park.

"Hamilton County has a unique opportunity to both preserve the iconic landscape of McDonald Farm and create an economic engine that will connect the Cumberland Trail to Sale Creek," said Mayor Wamp. "We are incredibly grateful to Governor Lee and TDEC for proposing funding that would represent the largest parks investment in Hamilton County history and the largest single capital investment ever made in North Hamilton County."

Under the proposed terms and with approval by the County Commission, approximately 800 acres in Hamilton County and 500 acres in Rhea County would be conveyed to the State, while Hamilton County would retain roughly 800 acres. Of the acreage retained by Hamilton County, more than 250 acres will remain a county park, including preservation of the storied homestead, which annually hosts the Hamilton County Fair.

"This is a major win for Hamilton County," said State Senator Bo Watson. "Governor Lee's \$45.3 million investment protects this beautiful property, strengthens outdoor recreation, and delivers a strong return for taxpayers. I'm proud to support a project that preserves McDonald Farm and enhances quality of life in our community."

According to the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC), state parks of similar scope generate \$11 million in annual economic output and support an average of 77 jobs. The State has also committed \$1 million annually for park operations and plans for camping and recreational amenities, including construction of a visitor center. As part of Governor Lee's commitment to expand Tennessee's state park system to 70 parks, McDonald Farm is positioned to become the state's 70th park.

“Tennessee State Parks is dedicated to preserving, protecting, and sharing our natural resources with Tennesseans and visitors alike,” said TDEC Deputy Commissioner Brian Clifford. “We are grateful for the opportunity to partner with local leaders toward the goal of conserving a significant portion of McDonald Farm and adding it to Tennessee’s enduring legacy of conservation.”

District 1 Hamilton County Commissioner Gene-O Shipley, who represents Soddy-Daisy and Sale Creek, has been a leading advocate for protecting McDonald Farm and ensuring its future use as a recreational asset for the community.

“For years, the people in my district and Hamilton County have asked us to preserve McDonald Farm, and today, we’re doing just that,” said Commissioner Shipley. “This decision protects our quality of life and ensures this land remains intact for future generations.”

A resolution will be brought before the Hamilton County Commission in the coming weeks to signal its intent to transfer the land to the State of Tennessee.

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