Simmons First Foundation Awards Ducks Unlimited $100,000 for the Mississippi River Wetland Conservancy Project - June 8, 2022

MEMPHIS, Tenn. – June 8, 2022 – The Simmons First Foundation has awarded Ducks Unlimited (DU) a grant of $100,000 to support the Big River Park Conservancy project located along the Mississippi River in Memphis, Tenn., and West Memphis, Ark.

The Simmons First Foundation was established in 2013 to help give back to the communities that have been vital to their continuing growth and success. Retired Simmons Bank CEO Tommy May leads the foundation and guides it in its mission to build stronger and more vibrant communities for the future. The foundation aims to improve the lives of children through programs that enhance education and healthcare. In 2021, Simmons First Foundation established a $3 million endowment to support environmental efforts to aid conservation and sustainability projects. The Simmons First Foundation develops and expands programs, especially those serving areas with the most in need.

“The Simmons First Foundation is honored to support the mission of Ducks Unlimited,” said Tommy May, chairman of Simmons First Foundation. “Our organizations believe in the power of supporting our communities, and Ducks Unlimited has conserved more than 15 million acres in North America throughout the last eight decades. We are honored to provide a grant which will support the organization’s habitat restoration and conservation efforts and provide a better quality of life for wildlife and our communities.”

DU has pledged to help raise over $5 million for the Big River Park Conservancy project. Receiving this $100,000 grant and several other donations is an excellent start toward meeting the goal. This unique project will create a new public recreation area between Memphis’ vibrant downtown and the growing tourism amenities of West Memphis.

This project’s approximately 1,500 acres of land sits along the western bank of the Mississippi River. This property is accessible from the nearby interstate, the Levee Trail, and downtown Memphis via the Big River Crossing pedestrian bridge. This Park will provide a myriad of benefits to Memphis and West Memphis residents and visitors, inspire a deeper connection with the Mississippi River, and demonstrate the importance of a working river and its floodplain.

“It is exciting for DU to have great partners like Simmons First Foundation join with us in this project to conserve 1,500 acres along the Mississippi River,” said Ducks Unlimited Chief Fundraising Officer Amy Batson. “This is a unique opportunity to re-establish this region to benefit wildlife, water quality, and a healthy ecosystem.”

DU’s national headquarters is based in Memphis, though regional offices are across the United States. Over the past 85 years, DU has become the world’s largest and most effective private, nonprofit waterfowl and wetlands organization in North America. In 2020, DU surpassed an impressive milestone — conserving 15 million acres of wetlands and associated uplands across North America. The habitat conserved by DU and its partners has made a tremendous positive impact on communities and wildlife across the continent.

About Big River Strategic Initiative

The Big River Strategic Initiative (BRSI) is a collection of projects activating and celebrating the Mississippi River and its surrounding landscape. BRSI has now grown to include Big River Crossing, an active biking and pedestrian bridge over the Mississippi River connecting Tennessee and Arkansas, and Big River Trail System, a mixed-use trail network spanning over 110 miles with 7 miles of established trails in Big River Park.

Simmons First Foundation

The Simmons First Foundation was established in 2013 to provide support to our communities which have been so vital to our ongoing growth and success. Retired Simmons Bank CEO Tommy May leads the foundation and guides its mission to build stronger and more vibrant communities for the future. First and foremost, the foundation aims to improve the lives of children through programs that enhance education and healthcare. The foundation has also provided the seed money for “Go Forward Pine Bluff,” a community renewal program that focuses on economic development, infrastructure and government, education, and quality of life. If successful, the program could serve as a blueprint for revitalization efforts in communities across the Simmons footprint. Since 2014, Simmons First Foundation has contributed approximately $1.9 million to the communities we serve. In 2021, Simmons First Foundation established a $3 million endowment to support environmental efforts to aid conservation and sustainability projects.

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