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## Web site devoted to saving rural land

Focus is on Williamson County's Harpeth River watershed

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A new Web site with tools devoted to helping Williamson County landowners learn more about saving their rural and undeveloped property is now online.

<http://conserveMyLand.org>">ConserveMyLand.org is a site featuring conservation facts, testimonials and other information devoted to helping people living along the Harpeth River Watershed learn more about saving their land. This is a pilot program focusing on the communities along the Harpeth River, but officials hope to one day expand the work into a regional program.

In Williamson County, land experts say the need for greater land conservation is pressing.

The county lost 20 percent of its farmland in a five-year period from 2002-2007, according to James D. Perry, director of Williamson County Extension office.

Nationally, 2 million acres of farmland and a half million acres of forest land are lost to urban sprawl every year. Experts say two acres of mostly prime farmland are lost every minute to development.

The American Farmland Trust ranks Tennessee in the top ten areas with the "loss of prime farmland."

"Through use of GIS housing density data, projected growth throughout much of Tennessee will dramatically displace farmland by 2030," said Christine Olsenius, executive director of the Nashville-based Southeast Watershed Forum.

To illustrate the loss of farmland, the Web site features an animated build-out of the Harpeth River Watershed showing housing density changes each decade from 1970 and projected into 2030.

The site also features video testimonials from local residents who have saved their land from future development.

As part of the site, landowners can learn more about how conservation easements work, get more information about various state and federal programs and contact officials in the partners who helped launch the site.

The Southeast Watershed Forum developed the site in partnership with the Land Trust for Tennessee, the Harpeth River Watershed Association, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Williamson County Soil and Water Conservation District, and the Williamson County Agricultural Extension office.