



## THE SCHOOL OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Missouri Forest Landowners to Benefit from New Partnership:**

Suntory Global Spirits and Independent Stave Company Confirm Collaboration with University of Missouri Extension to Increase Support Available for Sustainable Forest Management

COLUMBIA, Mo. (October 29, 2024) – Two key players in the cooperage and spirits industry have partnered with the University of Missouri Extension to provide increased direct support to Missouri landowners seeking to manage their forested acreage.

Independent Stave Company, a manufacturer of high-quality oak barrels and cooperage products, and Suntory Global Spirits, a global premium spirits company with iconic bourbon brands like Jim Beam and Maker’s Mark, provided 25 percent of the funds needed to support a three-year program. These contributions enabled the university to partner with the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and access federal funding for the remaining 75 percent through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQUIP). The goal of the partnership is to expand sustainably managed forest land in Missouri.

According to the USDA National Woodland Owners Survey, family landowners own 84 percent of Missouri’s 15.6 million forested acres, yet less than 10 percent are believed to have a management plan in place prepared by a professional forester. The new program will offer educational programs to 1) raise awareness among forest landowners and 2) help reduce the backlog of landowners seeking a management plan to qualify for federal cost share dollars.

“While raising the general awareness and promoting the many benefits of sustainable forest management are important, the real bottleneck at the present time is not enough professional foresters to prepare plans,” said Dr. Hank Stelzer, Natural Resources Education Director for MU Extension. He goes on to say that a management plan must be written before a landowner can qualify for reimbursement of the actual forest stand improvement practices. Stelzer says the

position supported by this program does not take jobs from private consulting foresters, but rather “help[s] eliminate the delay in getting sustainable forest management on the ground.”

The partnering organizations are hopeful this program, which will be evaluated throughout its three-year duration, will set an important precedent in effective sustainability-focused outreach programs that may be expanded into other states.

“Sustainability is key to our industry, since crafting barrels or brown spirits requires a long-term vision,” confirmed Garret Nowell, Director of Log Procurement for Independent Stave Company. “While the cooperage industry only accounts for a small percentage of white oak harvest, we want to be sure we are more than doing our part to protect white oak for the future and the landowners who serve as important stewards.”

“Throughout our supply chain, we prioritize sustainability and continue to take steps to protect the natural resources that go into our premium spirits brands,” said Kim Marotta, Chief Environmental Sustainability Officer at Suntory Global Spirits. “Partnering with the University of Missouri Extension to increase support for sustainable forest practices will ensure their longevity so that we can make an important difference in promoting healthy forests.”

[Independent Stave Company](#) is a dynamic, family-owned cooperage company reaching customers in more than 40 countries. Founded by the Boswell family, Independent Stave Company still embraces the core values of family, innovation, community, and hard work.

[Suntory Global Spirits](#) As a world leader in premium spirits, Suntory Global Spirits inspires the brilliance of life, by creating rich experiences for people, in harmony with nature. Known for its craftsmanship of premium whiskies, including Jim Beam® and Maker's Mark®; Japanese whiskies, including Yamazaki®, Hakushu®, Hibiki® and Toki™; and leading Scotch brands including Laphroaig® and Bowmore®, Suntory Global Spirits also produces leading brands such as Tres Generaciones® and El Tesoro® tequila, Roku™ and Sipsmith® gin, and is a world leader in Ready-To-Drink cocktails, with brands like -196 and On The Rocks™ Premium Cocktails.

A global company with approximately 6,000 employees in nearly 30 countries, Suntory Global Spirits is driven by its core values of Growing for Good, Yatte Minahare and Giving Back to Society. The company’s Proof Positive sustainability strategy includes ambitious goals and investments to drive sustainable change and have a positive impact on the planet, consumers and communities. Headquartered in New York City, Suntory Global Spirits is a subsidiary of Suntory Holdings Limited of Japan. For more information, visit [www.suntoryglobalspirits.com](http://www.suntoryglobalspirits.com) and [www.drinksmart.com](http://www.drinksmart.com).

