Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning

Taking Care of Wild Places Since 1966

TCWP May 2025 Newsletter

May 2025 - Newsletter No.381

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Your voice matters! Since 1966, this newsletter has connected our community—but we need your input to keep it fresh, relevant, and engaging. Please take a moment to fill out our quick reader survey.

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Your feedback will help determine how—and if—you receive this newsletter in the future!

Inside this issue

Inside TCWP.....1
1. Fresh Look, Bold Future: TCWP's New Logo, Website, and Strategic Plan!
2. Gas Pipeline Fight: Entering the Final Stretch and Planning for What's Next
3. Oneida Line Trail: A Path Toward Opportunity
4. Paddling Forward: Pellissippi Blueway Gains Momentum
5. Building a Team to Monitor Nuclear Development in Oak Ridge
6. Fighting for Tennessee's Wetlands: Advocacy in Action

Guest Author: George Nolan.....4

NEWS CAPSULES.....4

OAK RIDGE.....4
1. The Expanding Nuclear Landscape in Oak Ridge: What's Happening and Why It Matters
2. Tennessee Valley Authority's (TVA) Clinch River Nuclear Site Expansion
3. TRISO-X Fuel Fabrication Plant

STATE of TENNESSEE.....5
1. The Fight Over Wetlands: A Legislative History
2. Roundup, Lawsuits, and Labels: Tennessee's Debate on Protecting Pesticide Makers
3. Gaslighting the Grid: Tennessee Labels Natural Gas as Clean and Renewable
4. Amid Chaos, Conservation Wins One
5. Scenic Rivers Protected (for Now): Landfill Threat Postponed

NATIONAL / FEDERAL.....7
1. A Challenging Landscape for Environmental Protections: Finding Hope.

THE WORLD.....8
1. Global Energy Shift: Renewables Reach New Heights Amid Rising Demand

TCWP Events.....8
1. Upcoming Events
2. Recent Events
3. 2025 Calendar

INSIDE TCWP

1. Fresh Look, Bold Future: TCWP's New Logo, Website, and Strategic Plan!

Look up! Right there at the top of this page, you're getting the first-ever public peek at TCWP's brand-new logo! After more than 25 years with our iconic ironwood leaf, we're turning the page with a fresh design that reflects both our deep roots and dynamic future. But that's not all—behind the scenes, we're working hard with our web developer to launch a new website that will make it easier than ever to explore our work, get involved, and stay informed. Stay tuned for the big reveal through our eblasts and Facebook updates!

Support TCWP
by donating, joining, or renewing your membership

TCWP Board Meeting

The Officers and Directors of Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning meet the third Thursday of each month.

Members are welcome to call, email, or attend a board meeting to raise issues that TCWP needs to address. We welcome your input.

This exciting chapter of growth and modernization also includes completing our strategic plan—a thoughtful roadmap for TCWP's four core programs: Protection, Advocacy, Stewardship, and Education. We've added clear objectives, strategies, and tactics to the goals we set back in April 2023, ensuring we're not just dreaming big but doing big. Curious about what that looks like? Check out the article on the Pellissippi Blueway later in this section for a glimpse into one of our Protection Goal objectives in action!

2. Gas Pipeline Fight: Entering the Final Stretch and Planning for What's Next

The proposed gas pipeline crossing the Cumberland Plateau has successfully navigated key federal approvals, including certification from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) and receipt of a Section 404 permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Now, the project faces its final regulatory hurdle: securing a Section 401 water quality permit from the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC). This crucial state-level decision ensures that the project complies with the Clean Water Act.

A public hearing on TDEC's draft permit was held on May 1 in Cookeville, where TCWP staff, including Executive Director Nancy Manning, did provide oral comments alongside many concerned citizens. We will also submit comprehensive written comments urging TDEC to deny the permit based on the significant environmental risks posed by the pipeline's numerous Obed WSR tributary crossings and potential degradation of water quality and alternatively to require third party investigation during installation.

Even though we advocate for TDEC to deny the permit, TCWP is preparing for the unfortunate possibility that construction will proceed. We are actively developing plans for citizen science-based monitoring to assess water quality during pipeline installation.

Guided by TDEC's Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), we aim to establish a credible monitoring framework that can alert regulators to any emerging water quality issues. These efforts will help ensure accountability and provide data that may influence mitigation or enforcement actions, protecting the exceptional streams and habitats of the Cumberland Plateau.

3. Oneida Line Trail: A Path Toward Opportunity

Momentum continues to build for transforming the abandoned Oneida railroad line into a 41-mile recreational trail stretching through Scott, Campbell, and Anderson counties. In April, the Surface Transportation Board granted TCWP's request for an additional year of interim trail use and approved the Trust for Public Land as the new permit holder, giving local partners vital time to explore trail management options and ownership solutions.

Meanwhile, Oneida-based nonprofit *Echoes of Tennessee Rail* has taken proactive steps to address landowner concerns by installing no-trespassing signs and purchasing barriers to prevent ATV access. With support from community leaders and landowners alike—as highlighted in a recent WBIR news story, the project promises to honor the region's rich history, promote outdoor recreation, and bring new economic opportunities to the area.

4. Paddling Forward: Pellissippi Blueway Gains Momentum

Big news for the Pellissippi Blueway! Cities and counties are joining forces to make this 54-mile stretch of the Clinch River—from Norris Dam to Melton Hill Dam—a premier water trail. Anderson County and the City of Oak Ridge are the latest to sign onto the collaborative effort, with Explore Oak Ridge close behind and others waiting in the wings. This growing coalition is working together to improve access, enhance safety, and promote the conservation and recreational value of the river. It's an exciting time for this shared vision to become reality!

The Pellissippi Blueway is also a key element of TCWP's strategic plan for its Goal of Protection, which focuses on safeguarding wild places and waters for their ecological, recreational, and cultural value. As part of our strategic plan, we've set eight objectives for this goal, including one specifically for the Pellissippi Blueway. Between now and December 2026, TCWP will help plan and develop access points, educational signage, survey and tackle invasive plants at key locations, and assist in erosion prevention at boat ramps. We're also planning a public event that will bring the community out to explore access points, identify invasives, and imagine what's possible along this beautiful waterway. Stay tuned—there's more to come as we paddle forward together!

5. Building a Team to Monitor Nuclear Development in Oak Ridge

As Oak Ridge continues to evolve as a national hub for nuclear innovation, TCWP is assembling a dedicated team to help us better understand and respond to these developments. From uranium enrichment to small modular reactors, the nuclear landscape is complex, with wide-ranging opportunities and implications for our environment and community. This new group hopes to develop an understanding of issues such as uranium enrichment, the different types of reactors being built, and how might zoning, security buffers, and environmental monitoring adapt as the nuclear industry expands in Oak Ridge?

By fostering expertise and collaboration, this team will enable TCWP to evaluate projects and track any potential impacts to our wild places and waters. If you have experience, education, or interest that you are willing to share, please join our team by emailing nancymanning@tcwp.org. We'll keep you informed through future newsletters and invite you to check out the *OAK RIDGE* section in this issue for updates on several nuclear projects shaping our region.

6. Fighting for Tennessee's Wetlands: Advocacy in Action

This legislative session, TCWP stood shoulder to shoulder with environmental advocates across Tennessee in defense of our state's wetlands. Week after week, we joined legislative Zoom sessions, monitored bill amendments, and met directly with lawmakers in Nashville to urge opposition to a wetlands deregulation bill that would open the door to widespread development on isolated wetlands.

Through our website, social media, and newsletters, we rallied our members to take action—guiding them to contact their legislators and providing sample letters to make their voices heard. Together, we highlighted the critical role wetlands play in flood control, water purification, and aquifer recharge.

Despite these efforts, the bill passed both chambers of the Tennessee Legislature. What changed? This year, a representative from the powerful Pacific Legal Foundation—the same law firm that argued the Sackett v. EPA case before the U.S. Supreme Court—testified in Tennessee, advocating for deregulation under the banner of property rights. Their influence helped push the legislation across the finish line after last year's defeat in summer study.

While this battle may be over, TCWP remains committed. We know that wetlands are essential for protecting our waters, wildlife, and communities—and we will continue to fight for their future.

GUEST AUTHOR:

Tennessee's So-called Sound Science Bill

By George Nolan, Director of Tennessee Office of Southern Environmental Law Center

During this year's legislative session, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce promoted legislation (SB880/HB896 by Sen. Reeves/Rep. Todd) dubbed the so-called "Sound Science in Regulations Act." As originally proposed, the legislation was extremely broad and problematic. It would have applied to every rulemaking and health advisory issued by the Tennessee Department of Health, the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, as well as all other state boards, agencies, and commissions, and it would have severely restricted the types of evidence that agencies can rely on when issuing rules or warnings about substances, mixtures, or chemicals.

A central problem with the original legislation was that it would have imposed an insurmountable burden of proof on state agencies attempting to regulate or warn against harmful chemicals. For example, the original bill would have prohibited state agencies from relying on several types of scientific evidence, such as animal studies and studies published by leading peer-reviewed journals, as support for regulatory actions.

In response to the proposal, SELC (with help from friends and allies like TCWP) organized a large group of healthcare providers, scientists, college professors, and law professors who collectively wrote to legislators expressing their concerns. After receiving that correspondence, the Senate sponsor, Shane Reeves, agreed to give stakeholders an opportunity to wordsmith the legislation.

After a period of negotiations, an amendment emerged that, although far from perfect, is much better than the original bill. The amended language narrowed the law's scope to only rules issued by TDEC, and it broadened the type of evidence that TDEC can rely on when regulating toxic chemicals.

Although the amended legislation still makes it more difficult for TDEC to promulgate rules regulating toxic chemicals, it does not make it impossible. The amended legislation landed in a much better place than the original proposal, and we are grateful to all who helped us push back.

NEWS CAPSULES

OAK RIDGE

1. The Expanding Nuclear Landscape in Oak Ridge: What's Happening and Why It Matters

Oak Ridge is at the center of a new wave of nuclear development, bringing both opportunities and challenges to our community and environment. TCWP has not adopted a position on any of these developments. Instead, we are forming a team, described in the article on page 3 of people who will ultimately advise our Board of Directors. Below are brief updates on some key projects:

Kairos Power's Next-Generation Reactors

Kairos Power is spearheading the construction of advanced nuclear reactors at the historic K-33 site in Oak Ridge, once home to uranium enrichment facilities. These reactors, cooled by molten fluoride salt instead of water, represent a shift toward what the company calls safer, more efficient nuclear power. Excavation for the first Hermes test reactor is complete, and foundations for additional reactors are being laid. With plans to build three reactors on-site and a shared turbine system, Kairos aims to demonstrate its Generation IV reactor technology within the decade.

BWXT's Uranium Enrichment Facility

BWXT, a key player in nuclear defense, recently acquired 97 acres in Oak Ridge's Horizon Center to build a centrifuge manufacturing plant for uranium enrichment. Backed by a $715,000 state grant and part of the Department of Energy's Domestic Uranium Enrichment Centrifuge Experiment (DUECE) program, the facility will strengthen the U.S. supply of highly enriched uranium for defense needs. While still in the early stages, BWXT plans to invest $45 million initially and create 60 jobs, with future expansion on the horizon. This development underscores Oak Ridge's ongoing role in supporting national security missions.

Tennessee Valley Authority's (TVA) Clinch River Nuclear Site Expansion

TVA is moving forward with plans to expand its Clinch River Nuclear Site by constructing up to four small modular reactors (SMRs). These reactors, using the BWRX-300 design from General Electric, promise reliable power with a smaller footprint. TVA has already replaced critical infrastructure, like an access bridge capable of supporting reactor components, and expects to apply for a construction permit in 2025. The project is partially funded by TVA's board and could receive up to $800 million in federal grants.

TRISO-X Fuel Fabrication Plant

TRISO-X, an Amazon-backed subsidiary of X-energy, is building a $300 million nuclear fuel fabrication plant in Oak Ridge's Horizon Center Industrial Park. This facility will produce pebble-shaped fuel using TRISO particles—highly robust fuel that resists melting in advanced reactors. The Department of Energy will supply enriched uranium for this project, helping fill a critical gap in the domestic supply chain for advanced nuclear fuels. TRISO-X expects to employ about 400 people at its first plant, with a second plant planned that could increase the workforce to 1,000. These fuels will support X-energy's reactors, as well as other advanced nuclear companies.

STATE OF TENNESSEE

1. The Fight Over Wetlands: A Legislative History

Following the 2023 Sackett v. EPA Supreme Court decision—which stripped federal protections from "isolated" wetlands lacking surface connections to major waterways—Tennessee lawmakers seized the opportunity to reshape the state's wetland regulations. Rep. Kevin Vaughan, a developer from Collierville, and Sen. Brent Taylor led the charge, introducing legislation to deregulate up to 80% of Tennessee's wetlands.

Despite failing to pass similar legislation last year and having a summer study session where the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) presented alternative recommendations, this year's version came back more aggressive. The bill proposed removing protections for wetlands smaller than two acres, eliminating cumulative impact assessments, and granting broad authority to the TDEC Commissioner to adjust thresholds. Even "artificial" wetlands—formed by human or animal activity—would be exempt from oversight.

Environmental advocates, scientists, and the mitigation banking industry warned that the bill would devastate Tennessee's water resources. Wetlands, they argued, serve as natural sponges—soaking up floodwater, filtering pollutants, and recharging aquifers. The Harpeth Conservancy highlighted that Tennessee has approximately 460,000 isolated wetlands, 94% of which are smaller than two acres, making them highly vulnerable under the proposed legislation.

Mitigation bankers joined the opposition, noting that deregulating wetlands would not only harm ecosystems but also disrupt the $1 billion invested in Tennessee's mitigation banking industry. Without protection, demand for mitigation credits could collapse, raise costs for developers who still need them and destabilize a thriving sector built on environmental stewardship.

Adding fuel to the debate, the Pacific Legal Foundation, the same law firm that argued the Sackett case, sent a representative to Tennessee to testify in favor of the bill. Framing the issue as one of property rights, the firm's involvement underscored a national strategy to weaken wetlands protections at both federal and state levels.

Despite widespread public opposition, with lawmakers reporting that nearly every email they received opposed the bill, the power of special interests and property rights advocates prevailed. The bill advanced through committees and ultimately passed both the Tennessee House and Senate—leaving wetlands across the state more vulnerable than ever.

2. Roundup, Lawsuits, and Labels: Tennessee's Debate on Protecting Pesticide Makers

Tennessee lawmakers were considering controversial legislation that would shield pesticide manufacturers like Bayer (which owns Monsanto) from lawsuits related to their products, including Roundup. The bill would protect these companies from failure-to-warn claims if their product labels meet U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approval, despite evidence that Monsanto, and later Bayer, manipulated science and colluded with regulators to downplay health risks.

Monsanto introduced Roundup's key ingredient, glyphosate, in the 1970s, but it killed all vegetation—until the company developed genetically modified (GMO) seeds resistant to it. Today, over 90% of U.S. corn, soy, and cotton rely on these GMO crops, keeping Roundup the most widely used pesticide worldwide.

The human cost has been staggering. More than 300 Tennesseans, including farmers and landscapers, have filed lawsuits alleging illnesses such as non-Hodgkin's lymphoma from exposure to Roundup. Nationally, Bayer has faced over 170,000 claims, settling nearly 100,000 for more than $10 billion—one of the largest settlements in U.S. history. Yet cases continue, including a recent $2 billion jury verdict in Georgia. Despite this, Bayer and allies have pushed legislation in multiple states to limit future lawsuits. Critics argue these bills strip away individuals' rights to hold corporations accountable for harm, especially when product labeling has been based on compromised science.

In Tennessee, the bill passed the Senate but was recently delayed by the House Judiciary Committee until 2026, citing unanswered questions and concerns from lawmakers. While supporters, including the bill's sponsor Rep. Rusty Grills, argue it protects farmers' ability to use pesticides, opponents, including trial lawyers and public health advocates, warn it would gut legal protection for those harmed. TCWP will continue to monitor this bill closely, given its potential to limit accountability for companies whose products can cause lasting environmental and human harm.

3. Gaslighting the Grid: Tennessee Labels Natural Gas as Clean and Renewable

A recently passed Tennessee law (HB 1143) makes the state the first in the nation to legally define natural gas—a fossil fuel—as "renewable energy." Despite gas being responsible for nearly 40% of greenhouse gas emissions from fuel burning in the U.S., Tennessee expanded its classification to include not only "clean" and "green," but now "renewable" as well. This move aligns with a broader national trend where pro-fossil fuel interests, such as the American Legislative Exchange Council, have helped craft similar legislation in other states. The law, signed by Governor Bill Lee on April 11, 2025, is seen as a preemptive effort to block local governments from requiring truly renewable energy sources, such as wind or solar. This comes as the TVA continues a major gas expansion, proposing multiple new plants and pipelines despite criticism over cost, pollution, and transparency.

4. Amid Chaos, Conservation Wins One

Tennessee recently expanded its commitment to conservation with the passage of House Bill 126, signed into law on April 11, 2025. The legislation establishes four new state natural areas—including the Rocky Hill Road Glades and Versailles Knob in Rutherford County—and expands six existing ones. These areas protect critical habitats for rare and endangered species like the running glade clover and Braun's Rockcress. The bill also strengthens enforcement against habitat destruction and updates legal protections for state-owned lands within the Natural Areas System. All land acquisitions were made from willing sellers, with no eminent domain involved, highlighting a collaborative approach to safeguarding Tennessee's ecological treasures.

5. Scenic Rivers Protected (for Now): Landfill Threat Postponed

This session, TCWP once again mobilized to defend Tennessee's Scenic Rivers from legislative rollbacks. A bill introduced in the General Assembly sought to remove the two-mile buffer zone around designated Scenic Rivers—a critical safeguard that prevents hazardous developments, like landfills, from encroaching on these protected waterways. Recognizing the threat, TCWP launched a full-scale advocacy effort: we published blogs urging our members to contact their representatives, provided sample letters, and shared a detailed flyer explaining the bill's potential impacts. Through our website, social media, and direct outreach, we empowered supporters to raise their voices. Thanks to these combined efforts and strong public opposition, the bill has been deferred until 2026, giving us more time to strengthen protections for Tennessee's Scenic Rivers and the communities that depend on them.

NATIONAL / FEDERAL

1. A Challenging Landscape for Environmental Protections: Finding Hope.

At the federal level, it's difficult to keep up with the near-daily executive orders and regulatory rollbacks that chip away decades of environmental protections. From sweeping changes that threaten the Clean Water Act to efforts that could dismantle safeguards for endangered species, these actions create a challenging landscape for those working to preserve our natural resources. While TCWP primarily focuses on Tennessee, we know that federal decisions reverberate here at home—and despite these ongoing attacks, strong legal frameworks and public advocacy continue to provide important checks and balances.

Despite the Trump administration's declaration of a "national energy emergency" and its attempt to fast-track hundreds of energy projects, key environmental laws remain in place to limit unchecked development. Agencies like the Army Corps of Engineers must still follow permitting procedures under the Clean Water Act and Endangered Species Act, even during emergencies. Legal experts argue that this "emergency" declaration doesn't meet the threshold required for bypassing environmental reviews. This provides a measure of reassurance: any rushed approvals of energy infrastructure projects are likely to face legal scrutiny and public input requirements.

Another sweeping effort, through an executive order, seeks to "sunset" a wide array of environmental regulations by October 2026. This includes rules under the Endangered Species Act and potentially others like the Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act. While the order frames this as promoting innovation by eliminating outdated regulations, legal scholars and environmental advocates warn that it sidesteps established legal processes for revising or repealing regulations. Experts anticipate these tactics will spark court challenges, particularly because such sweeping changes require public notice, comment periods, and a demonstration of sound reasoning for any rollback.

Amid these troubling moves, there are signs of resilience in the system. Legal frameworks like the National Environmental Policy Act and judicial precedents ensure that changes to environmental protection cannot happen in a vacuum. Courts have historically struck down overreach attempts, and environmental organizations remain vigilant, prepared to challenge policies that threaten essential safeguards. While these federal actions create uncertainty, they also activate a strong legal and advocacy response—giving hope that critical environmental protection will endure.

THE WORLD

1. Global Energy Shift: Renewables Reach New Heights Amid Rising Demand

In 2024, renewable energy sources supplied a record 32% of global electricity, marking a rise from 30% in 2023, according to energy think tank Ember. This growth, driven largely by wind, solar, and hydro power, coincided with a 4% increase in global electricity demand fueled by extreme heatwaves and expanding data center operations. Emerging technologies like AI, electric vehicles, and heat pumps also contributed to this demand surge. Meanwhile, coal's share in electricity generation dropped slightly to 34%, gas remained steady at 22%, and nuclear declined marginally to 9%. Amid global economic uncertainty and energy security concerns, the momentum behind renewables is expected to continue.

TCWP Events

TCWP's Guidelines for Activities

- We ask that you stay home when you are sick.
- We ask that you know what you're capable of, and that you communicate that to the group leader.
- We recommend that you bring plenty of water and snacks.
- We ask that you not bring pets.

[NOTE: Times listed for all events are Eastern time unless specified otherwise.]

Upcoming Events

Norris Grist Mill to Observation Point Outing – Saturday, May 17

This is another joint outing for TCWP and TNPS. The moderate, 2.5-mile loop starts in a valley with spring wildflowers that usually bloom a little later. We will also go by some populations of pink lady's slippers before climbing to a nice view of Norris Dam. We will meet for carpooling in Oak Ridge at the Gold's Gym/Books-A-Million parking lot (meet at the end close to S. Illinois Avenue, near Salsarita's) in time to leave at 9:15 a.m. Eastern, or you can meet the group in the parking lot at the Norris Grist Mill (Lower Clear Creek Rd, Norris, TN) at 10 a.m. Eastern. Bring water, a lunch, and bug spray.

Hike leader will be Margaret Cumberland. If you RSVP, it will help with planning and allow contacting in case of cancellation. Phone/email: 919-339-0072, meshearin@gmail.com

Echoes and Ecosystems: A Worthington Cemetery Workday – Saturday, May 31

Join us for a special stewardship day at the Worthington Cemetery Ecological Study Area on Saturday, May 31, from 9 a.m. to noon. TCWP is partnering with TVA, the City of Oak Ridge, and AmeriCorps to continue our decades-long work protecting and restoring this unique natural and historical site.

Located near the Elza Gate on Melton Hill Reservoir, this area features rare cedar barrens, a wetland with a wildlife viewing deck, and a multigenerational family cemetery.

Volunteers will help with removal of invasive plants—including privet, marsh dayflower, and buckthorn—improving trails, and caring for the prairie wildflowers surrounding the cemetery.

We'll meet at the Elza Gate Park picnic area (near the intersection of Oak Ridge Turnpike and Melton Lake Drive), and wrap up the morning with a pizza lunch. Please wear sturdy shoes and bring gloves, water, and any tools like loppers or pruning saws. (Extras will be provided.) For more information, contact Jimmy Groton at groton87@comcast.net or 865-805-9908.

Worthington Cemetery holds deep historical and ecological significance. The land was first settled in 1795 by Samuel Worthington, a Revolutionary War veteran whose descendants remained until the family was displaced in 1942 for the Manhattan Project. The cemetery—now a TVA-designated Small Wild Area and ecological study site—includes 80 to 100 graves and a surrounding natural landscape rich with native species and wildlife. Family historian Ann Hewitt Worthington will be present to share stories about the site's past, including family legends of unmarked graves and insights into evolving burial customs. This event is a chance to honor both the cultural heritage and the ecological value of this rare green space in Oak Ridge.

National Trails Day Work on North Ridge Trail – Saturday, June 7

TCWP will be honoring National Trails Day on June 7 by cleaning up invasive English Ivy along the North Ridge Trail near the Delaware trail entrance. One of our many dedicated trail users sent TCWP the following request:

"This week I was wondering who to contact about English ivy that has invaded the North Ridge Trail and surrounding wilderness that's located just across the street from my home on Ogden Circle. I frequently hike the trails with my dog, and cherish what has remained of the native woodland. Now, ivy blankets entire slopes and other large areas throughout the woods, and nearly everywhere along the trail there are new sprouts establishing themselves. These are the woods where one area covered with hundreds of lemon yellow trilliums is dedicated to [TCWP co-founder] Lee Russell. In only a few short years, the entire wilderness area will be suffocated by English ivy. The thought is unbearably painful to me. I am appealing to you and your organization for help in restoring and preserving this rapidly dying piece of land and the inhabitants that depend on it for their survival."

TCWP volunteers will meet at the Delaware trail entrance at 9:00 a.m. Bring work gloves along with plenty of water, sunscreen, and insect repellant. A pizza lunch will be provided after the work is complete. For additional information, contact John Jaruzel, Trail Steward for the North Ridge Trail, at jmjaruzel@gmail.com.

Synchronous Fireflies Outing – Sunday, June 8th. $25 for non-members

This special evening event has been arranged for TCWP by Becky Charles and her son, Ezekiel, at their home between Oak Ridge and Clinton. Snappy Single Sync fireflies (*Photuris frontalis*) are a medium-sized synchronous species of firefly with a warm yellow flash that live in wooded environments. Their synchronous behavior is quite different from the more famous Smokies Synchronous firefly (*Photinus carolinus*). They produce continuous, quick, rhythmic flashes every half a second to one second . When viewed in small groups they may seem somewhat random, but when viewed in large numbers, it becomes apparent that they are receptive to their neighbors' flashing. Large clusters and occasionally whole hillsides may converge on the same rhythm, as if the forest has a heartbeat.

The viewing trail is relatively smooth and just wide enough to let a vehicle pass. Our walk leaders will use glow sticks at the front and rear of the group to help participants orient; however, it is a forested trail that will be dark. This event may not be suitable for anyone with particularly poor night vision or who is at all unsteady on their feet.

We will meet for carpooling in Oak Ridge at the Gold's Gym/Books-A-Million parking lot (meet at the end close to S. Illinois Avenue, near Salsarita's). The fireflies become active toward the end of dusk, so participants should be at the parking lot in time to leave at 7:45 p.m. Eastern. Bring a folding chair if you have one. **Participation in this outing will be limited; to register, contact TCWP Executive Director Nancy Manning at** nancymanning@tcwp.org.

East Fork Poplar Creek Greenway Cleanup with Clinch Valley Trails Alliance – Saturday, June 14

TCWP and partners Clinch Valley Trails Alliance and Greenways Oak Ridge are sponsoring the fifth annual trash cleanup and hike on the East Fork Poplar Creek Greenway. This wonderful, relatively new trail, developed by CVTA and Greenways Oak Ridge, follows along the banks of East Fork Poplar Creek in west Oak Ridge. The trail meanders through a nice riparian woodland along the creek.

This trail is subject to occasional flooding, and help is needed to remove litter left behind by the water. There are also a lot of old tires and other debris that have washed from places upstream. TCWP and CVTA will provide plastic bags and some pick-up tools for participants. Please bring gloves and wear mud/water-friendly shoes.

We plan to start at the Jefferson Avenue intersection with the Oak Ridge Turnpike at 9 a.m. We'll cover up to a mile downstream, and possibly some upstream if there is time. Park next to the Boys and Girls Club, a short distance from the Turnpike. For additional information, contact Jimmy Groton at 865-805-9908 or groton87@comcast.net or Hans Christen at hans_christen@yahoo.com.

TCWP table at Oak Ridge Lavender Festival – Saturday, June 21

TCWP will be present at the Lavender Festival in Oak Ridge's historic Jackson Square on Saturday, June 21, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.. Our volunteers will assist with recycling and be there to answer questions, talk about our activities, meet up with old friends, and get to know new faces. The annual Lavender Festival is free to the public and hosts 150 artisan vendors, live music, children's activities, and informative presentations. Stop by our table to say hello!

Recent Events

Obed River/Clear Creek Cleanup – Saturday, March 8

We had a great turnout and wonderful weather for the Obed/Clear Creek cleanup on March 8. The water level was lower than ideal, but enough for 14 paddlers (11 volunteers and 3 Obed WSR rangers) to spend nearly four hours picking up trash along the 2.5-mile stretch from Jett Bridge to Lilly Bridge. In addition, TCWP member Sue Havens picked up trash from the shore at the Jett Bridge access point. Volunteers included four TCWP members plus members of the East Tennessee Whitewater Club and Tennessee Scenic Rivers Association paddling clubs.
- *Mark Bevelhimer*

Whites Creek Workday– Saturday, March 8

On March 8, four TCWP volunteers (including Flora, a new recruit from the Chattanooga area) spent a beautiful late-winter day doing trail maintenance at TVA's Whites Creek Small Wild Area on Watts Bar Reservoir in Rhea County. This event was originally scheduled for early January, but we got snowed and iced out on January 11 and then rained out on January 18. This year we mostly brushed the trail, used handsaws to remove some small trees that had fallen across the trail, pulled up some invasive plants (tree-of-heaven saplings and Japanese honeysuckle vines), and picked up some trash along the trail. We had to leave a couple of larger trees for TVA to remove with chainsaws. We had a wonderful day in the woods with some wonderful friends. ATVs continue to access our property at the northwest corner and ride on the old road along the ridge on the west side.

TCWP has partnered with TVA since 1983 to enhance and protect natural resources at the Whites Creek SWA and many other places on public lands throughout East Tennessee as part of our ongoing stewardship efforts.
- *Jimmy Groton*

Wildflowers on N. Walker Access to North Ridge Trail – Saturday, March 22

On March 22, Margaret Cumberland, with help from Larry Pounds, led a hike at the N. Walker Lane Access to the North Ridge Trail in Oak Ridge. More than 30 people showed up ready to see some wildflowers! This area is excellent for early spring wildflowers, and it did not disappoint. We saw blooming twinleaf (*Jeffersonia diphylla*), bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*), the start of trout lilies (*Erythronium americanum*), peak spring beauties (*Claytonia virginica*), and the highlight of the trail, Dutchman's breeches (*Dicentra cucullaria*).

The wildflowers were about two weeks behind what they have been in many past years, so we had some harbinger-of-spring (*Erigenia bulbosa*) still around going to seed. The Solomon's seal (*Polygonatum biflorum*), celandine poppies (*Stylophorum diphyllum*), and fernleaf phacelia (*Phacelia bipinnatifida*) were just starting to come out. Hiking back, we noticed that even more flowers had opened as the day warmed up, making the hike out even better than the hike in! - *Margaret Cumberland*

Hike to Four Mile Creek Waterfall – Saturday, March 29

The Four Mile Creek waterfall is likely the most spectacular waterfall within the Obed Wild and Scenic River, but it's rarely visited because no established trail leads to it. Also, until TCWP facilitated the National Park Service's acquisition of a piece of property near Hall Cemetery, hiking to this waterfall wasn't easy without crossing private property or hiking up to the falls from the waters of Clear Creek. Showcasing this natural marvel and the benefit of the land acquisition, retired Obed park ranger Rick Ryan led a group of 14 participants on the short but strenuous off-trail hike to this spectacular 60-foot overhanging waterfall that drops into a rocky amphitheater plunge pool. Hiking to the falls along beautiful rock features, crossing a small creek in a deep ravine, and walking behind the waterfall provided a challenging and beautiful adventure. - *Hans Christen*

Garlic Mustard Pull/Wildflower Walk – Saturday, April 5

It was a beautiful day for the Garlic Mustard Pull and Wildflower Hike on April 5. Sixteen people came ready to tackle invasives. After a few hours of work, we collected 10 bags! Some people took a break to walk and see the beautiful wildflowers we are protecting, including squirrel corn *(Dicentra canadensis),* mayapple *(Podophyllum peltatum),* and dwarf larkspur *(Delphinium tricorne).* We ended with a pizza lunch to celebrate a job well done. Every year the garlic mustard gets pushed back more and more. - *Margaret Cumberland*

Frozen Head Wildflower Walk – Saturday, April 12

We had a large group, 27. Our early start gave us plenty of parking at the trailhead. We were there at a peak time for flowering. A week later, the large white trillium *(Trillium grandiflorum)* and the spotted mandarin *(Prosartes maculatum)* were in poor condition. Dwarf ginseng *(Panax trifolius)* stayed lovely throughout the period. We were early for showy orchis *(Galearis spectabilis),* which was just starting to flower. A week later it was at peak. The l esson is that if you want to see everything, particularly in prime condition, you need to visit often. - *Larry Pounds*

Exploring the World of Bats, and How You Can Help – Tuesday, April 15

On April 15, Erin Cord, Community Engagement Manager for Bat Conservation International presented "Exploring the World of Bats and How You Can Help" to a Zoom audience of more than 150 attendees. Erin discussed why bats are so important to our ecosystem: Even though mosquitoes are not their main source of their food, they consume countless pest insects every night. She discussed myths about bats, including the falseness of the old saying "blind as a bat," noting that bats see almost as well as humans. Homeowners can help bats by planting night-blooming and scented plants that will attract insects for bats to feed on. Erin added that all of Tennessee's bats are primarily insectivores. The program was cosponsored by TCWP and the University of Tennessee Arboretum Society. - *Michelle Campanis*

Kris Light Wildflower Walk at Haw Ridge – Saturday, April 26

Well-known environmental educator Kris Light led a group of more than 20 participants on a special late-spring wildflower walk at Oak Ridge's Haw Ridge Park on April 26. This event was a joint outing for TCWP and the UT Arboretum Society. Walking mainly along the Lake Road and West Shore trails around the western peninsula of the park, participants explored the various ecosystems including dense woodlands, cedar barrens, and open fields, each with different flowers in bloom. The abundant dwarf larkspurs and the numerous Jack-in-the-pulpits were a particular delight. Red columbine, whiteflower beardtongue, hoary puccoon, blue star, yellow horse-gentian, wild ginger, and little brown jugs were among the many other flowers encountered. - *Hans Christen*

TCWP Newsletter Reader Survey

We'd love your input! TCWP's newsletter has been a vital connection to our members since 1966. As we look to the future, we want your feedback to help us improve while staying true to our roots. Please take a few moments to complete this short survey.

Section 1: How You Engage

How do you receive the TCWP newsletter?

☐ Print Version (Mailed)
☐ Digital PDF (linked by email to the TCWP website)
☐ Both

2. If you receive the TCWP newsletter by mail, would you be willing to read the newsletter exclusively online to help save paper and postage?

☐ Yes
☐ No
If yes, please add your name here: _____

4. If we were to replace the current newsletter format with an electronic-only format, would you prefer:

☐ Full content on a bi-monthly basis (as with the current newsletter)
☐ Shorter email updates sent more frequently
☐ No preference

Section 2: Content & Style

5. How do you feel about the current length of the newsletter?

☐ Could be shorter
☐ Just right
☐ Could be longer

6. Do you find the language in the newsletter:

☐ Clear and easy to follow
☐ Sometimes too technical or dense
☐ Sometimes too simplified

7. Which sections do you enjoy the most? (Check up to 3)

☐ Inside TCWP (Board updates, awards, organization news)
☐ Our Work (Rails to Trails, Explore and Restore, Blueway etc.)
☐ State Conservation News Capsules
☐ National Conservation News Capsules
☐ Event Listings & Recaps
☐ Guest Authors
☐ Member Spotlights or Volunteer Features
☐ Other: _____

8. Would you like the newsletter to adopt a more newspaper-style layout (headlines, shorter stories, more visuals)?

☐ Yes, that would be easier to read
☐ No, I like the current format
☐ No preference

9. How satisfied are you with the current newsletter? (1 = Not satisfied, 5 = Very satisfied)

◯ ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯

1 5

Section 3: Improving Your Experience

10. What would you like to see more of in the newsletter? (Check all that apply)

☐ Stories about TCWP's history
☐ Volunteer opportunities
☐ Success stories / conservation wins
☐ Policy updates with calls to action
☐ Science summaries or environmental research
☐ Personal reflections / opinion pieces
☐ Photos and visual content
☐ Other: _____

11. What would make the newsletter easier to read or navigate?

☐ Larger font
☐ Shorter articles
☐ Summaries at the beginning of each section
☐ Better use of bold headers/subheadings
☐ More bullet points
☐ No changes needed
☐ Other: _____ _

Section 4: Open Feedback

12. What do you like most about the newsletter? _____

_____

13. What improvements would you suggest? _____

_____

14. Any additional comments? _____

_____

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Follow us on social for real-time updates, behind-the-scenes photos, event reminders, and ways to take action.

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Support Tennessee wild places—every month of the year.

Taking Care of Wild Places is a year-round pursuit, join our monthly giving program! When you join our Partners in Protection program, you become a vital part of our ongoing work to preserve, protect, and defend our natural spaces.

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TCWP NEWSLETTER 381 May 2025

TENNESEE CITIZENS FOR WILDERNESSS PLANNING

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Calendar

- **May 17** – Grist Mill to Observation Point Outing
- **May 31** – Echoes and Ecosystems: A Worthington Cemetery Workday
- **June 14** – East Fork Poplar Creek Greenway Cleanup
- **June 14** – Synchronous Fireflies Outing
- **June 21** – TCWP Table at Oak Ridge Lavender Festival

These events are subject to cancellation. Call ahead to verify the event will occur.

Tennessee Citizens of Wilderness Planning (TCWP)

The mission of TCWP is to: Preserve wild places and waters through protection, advocacy, stewardship, and education.

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