Tennessee Citizens FOR Wilderness Planning
Taking Care of Wild Places

January 19, 2022
Newsletter No. 361
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TCWP Newsletter

1. OAK RIDGE NEWS

1A. DOE is Transferring BORCE, Other Land to TWRA

Last month, the Oak Ridge Office of Environmental Management (OREM) signed an agreement with the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) that lays the groundwork to transfer more than 3,500 acres of scenic land to the state.

The properties in the agreement include: The Black Oak Ridge Conservation Easement (BORCE), the McKinney Ridge parcel including Blair Quarry, Clark Center Park, The Powerhouse area parcels (the area that formerly housed a coal-fired electrical powerhouse plant which supported K-25 site operations), and additional Wildlife management area connectors and corridors along Poplar Creek.

EM and TWRA will complete the transfer process under federal law, which requires regulatory approvals and generally takes one to three years to complete.

TCWP first became aware of the possibility of TWRA receiving some DOE property during the 2020 TCWP Annual Meeting (held virtually) when TWRA Director Bobby Wilson mentioned a meeting with DOE and Contractors responsible for the clean-up in the area (~45:50) and alluded to the possibility of this transfer. (See the video at https://youtu.be/JFK7KAWznGw?t=2741)

1B. City of Oak Ridge Seeking Board Member Applicants

The Environmental Quality Advisory Board and the Recreation and Parks Advisory Board to the city of Oak Ridge have vacancies. Those interested in serving on either Board must submit a completed 2021 Boards and Commissions Application to the City Clerk's Office in the Municipal Building by 5 p.m. on Friday, February 4, 2022. Applications can be completed online on the City's website: www.oakridgetn.gov/online/cityclerk/bcelections.

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Correction:
EPA Administrator Regan's name was misspelled in TCWP Newsletter No. 360. We regret the error.

People with an interest in learning more before they apply can contact City Council members, current board members, or city staff who work with the boards. Council member and TCWP member said, "I will be happy to talk with TCWP newsletter readers who want to know more. They can email ellen@ellensmith.org." She advised people who choose to apply for one of these slots to talk with members of Council some time before the Feb. 14th meeting, when appointments will be made. She noted that Council makes these appointments, and Council members are typically more inclined to support applicants with whom they have become acquainted.

If someone would like a paper copy of the application mailed to them or if they have any further questions, please call the City Clerk's Office at (865) 425-3411.

1C. Take action regarding DOE's Proposed "Environmental Management Disposal Facility" (EMDF)

The Department of Energy (DOE) plans to build a new landfill (EMDF) on a greenfield site on the Oak Ridge Reservation (ORR) for disposal of radioactive and hazardous waste from ongoing cleanup. There are known to be serious problems with the DOE proposal and public voices may still be effective in getting DOE to reconsider its plans, or (more likely) getting the regulatory agencies that have a say in this (U.S. EPA and the Tennessee Department of Environment & Conservation) to insist on major changes.
For several years, local government, environmental groups, and the public have been pressing DOE for information about what wastes would be put in the landfill ("waste acceptance criteria"), the DOE analysis of comparative costs and jobs for onsite versus offsite disposal, the environmental regulations that DOE wants to have waived, and how DOE expects to immobilize the mercury waste it intends to put in the landfill, but DOE has not answered.

Background information about this situation can be found at https://aforr.info/hazardous-waste-landfill-emdf/. Concerns about the EMDF should be submitted to Laura Wilkerson (DOE: Laura.Wilkerson@orem.doe.gov), Colby Morgan (TDEC: Colby.Morgan@tn.gov) Connie Jones (US EPA: jones.constance@epa.gov), and elected officials. *-AFORR Newsletter, Jan. 2022.*

2. OBED/BIG SOUTH FORK NEWS

2A. New! Parking Lot for Obed Junction

There is now a designated 10-15 car parking area at Obed Junction. The well-known and much used put-in for paddlers is a great site for such an improvement. Obed Junction, after a steep, downhill walk to the confluence of Obed River and Daddy's Creek, is a scenic spot to be riverside.

Signage is in the works. Until then, turn off of Genesis Road onto Potter's Chapel Road and in ~2.6 miles, the gravel parking area is on the right.

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Free Passage

As part of Russ Manning's exploring and writing a book on wildlife corridors in North America, he's just completed a chapter on the Cumberland Plateau that should be of special interest to TCWP members. The work of TCWP in protecting areas on the Plateau is one of the features.
Excerpts are posted on his website:

https://northamericancorridors.com/home/cumberland-plateau-tnc-ctc-tcwp/

https://northamericancorridors.com/home/cumberland-plateau-tnc-ctc-tcwp/creating-a-plateau-corridor/

The complete chapter with full references is available from amazon:
https://www.amazon.com/Cumberland-Plateau-Hatfield-Reestablishing-Corridors-ebook/dp/B09P8V9F4K/

2B. Big South Fork Acquires 60 Acres of Land

Earlier this month, the National Park Service announced the acquisition of approximately 60 acres of land within the boundaries of Big South Fork National River & Recreation Area. The property, located along North White Oak Creek, was owned by the Allardt Land Company and the Estate of Bruno Gernt. Later, the land was donated to TennGreen Land Conservancy.

In December 2021, TennGreen transferred the property to the National Park Service. "This tract provides essential protection for the south side of North White Oak Creek, a popular area in the southwest portion of the park. Park visitors will now forever be able to enjoy peaceful views across the creek of an oak-hickory and northern hardwood forest canopy," said Superintendent Niki Stephanie Nicholas.

2C. Vault Toilet Installation to Commence Throughout Obed Wild & Scenic River

The installation of four prefabricated concrete vault toilets will begin Monday, January 10, 2022. The current comfort facilities located at Barnett Bridge, Jett Bridge, Lily Bridge, and Nemo Day Use Area have surpassed their intended lifespan and will be removed and replaced by permanent structures. All areas will remain partially open, with the exception of Jett Bridge, which will remain closed to public access until construction is completed.

Traffic control measures will be in place in order to ensure safety. Minor delays should be anticipated when travelling through these areas. Work is expected to be completed this winter. *- Obed Wild & Scenic River Press Release - Christopher Derman*

2D. Calling All Photographers

The Obed Wild & Scenic River and the Big South Fork National River & Recreation Area have announced their annual photo contests encouraging you to use your photography skills to capture historic sites, recreational opportunities, and the spectacular views of both sites.

Photographs may be submitted into one of several categories including: Recreation, Dark Skies, Flora & Fauna, Landscapes (Kentucky Landscapes and Tennessee Landscapes in Big South Fork), Youth, and Human History (Big South Fork only).

The deadline for entries is 4:30 PM (ET) on July 31, 2022.

Entries will be judged on technical excellence, originality, creativity, visual impact, and artistic merit. Selected images will be printed and exhibited in their respective visitor centers. For more details check out the following news releases:

Obed: https://www.nps.gov/obed/learn/news/obed-wild-scenic-river-announces-eleventh-annual-photo-contest.htm

Big South Fork: https://www.nps.gov/biso/learn/news/big-south-fork-nrra-announces-eighth-annual-photo-contest.htm

3. CUMBERLANDS

3A. Ed Carter Unit of the N. Cumberland WMA Update

Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency has acquired a conservation easement on the Ed Carter Unit of the North Cumberland Wildlife Management Area. The easement, which permanently protects the land from development, is in an area known as Ataya and as Tackett Creek. The land includes 179 miles of streams and elk habitat.

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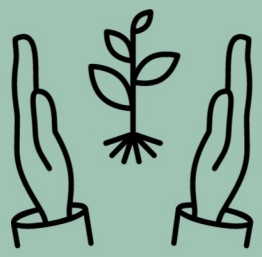

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The land will remain in private ownership and generate local property tax revenue. The easement is legally binding in perpetuity regardless of whether the property is sold or passed to heirs.

The terms of this easement allow TWRA to manage wildlife habitats and public recreation access, including multi-use trails. “Purchase of this easement is a major accomplishment for habitat conservation and public recreation,” said Tim Churchill, TWRA’s chief of federal aid and real estate. “Protecting the resources at the Ed Carter Unit has been considered one of our agency’s highest priorities for several decades.”

The Nature Conservancy will oversee daily operations as part of its Cumberland Forest Project. “Over the next decade, our primary goal is to manage these lands as working forests, space for people to play, and permanently protected, critical habitats for our region’s game and non-game species,” said Terry Cook, TNC’s Tennessee state director. “This transaction advances that goal—a win for forests, water, wildlife and people.”

4. TCWP NEWS

4A. Upcoming Activities

TCWP’s Guidelines for Activities during the COVID-19 Pandemic

In an effort to reduce the spread of COVID-19, TCWP will be conducting its activities following CDC guidelines:

- We ask that you not participate if you are sick or were recently exposed to someone who is.
- We ask that unvaccinated participants practice social distancing, maintain at least 6 feet of separation between themselves and other unvaccinated participants.
- We ask that unvaccinated participants continue to wear a mask especially when social distancing is not possible.
- We will organize activities into group of 20 or fewer.
- We recommend that you bring hand sanitizer or other ways to wash your hands.
- We recommend that everyone bring their own water, lunch, snacks, and sunscreen.
- We recommend caravanning for unvaccinated participants, rather than carpooling.
- Keep in mind that restrooms may be unavailable at activity locations.
- Activities are subject to change or cancellation as we monitor and react to local, state, and federal data and guidelines.

Thank you for your patience while we work through ways to serve our community.

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

Conservation Fisheries and Its Impact on East Tennessee’s Fish Populations - Tuesday, January 25

Join TCWP and the UT Arboretum Society for a virtual look at Conservation Fisheries, a non-profit whose mission is to preserve the Southeast's aquatic biodiversity. Our presenter, Pat Rakes, is co-director of Conservation Fisheries and has been studying rare fishes since he began his master’s degree project at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville in 1982, studying the distribution and life history of the Barrens Topminnow. He will discuss what CFI does and its history, with pictures of the hatchery and field work

and the fish and cooperators they work with. Pat says "Years of maintaining aquaria have led to an appreciation of the art and science involved in keeping fish alive and healthy (and interested in sex). The rewards of co-directing CFI have not been monetary, but rich in constant learning, studying the life history, ecology, reproductive biology, distribution, and taxonomy of rare fish."

The program is free, but please register to receive your Zoom link at www.utarboretumsociety.org. Contact Michelle Campanis at mcampani@utk.edu regarding any questions or registration issues.

OWCA Winter Hike – Saturday, February 5

TCWP Board Member Jimmy Groton will lead a winter hike along The Point Trail near Lilly Bluff Overlook at the Obed Wild and Scenic River for the Obed Watershed Community Association. The hike is an in-and-out four-mile moderate trek to the Point. Jimmy will give tips for identifying trees in winter as we hike and take in the spectacular view from the ridge between Clear Creek and the Obed River. Meet at 11 a.m. Eastern time at Lilly Bluff Overlook parking area. Bring water and a snack or lunch. Those interested can join together at the Lilly Hop Yard Brewery afterward. Space is limited, so email obedwatershed1@gmail.com to reserve a spot and to get information about carpooling from Crossville, if desired. Inclement weather date: Feb. 26. - Obed Watershed Community Association calendar

Alley Ford Workday - Saturday, February 12

A day of trail work and hiking will take place on the 2.5-mile section of the Cumberland Trail at the Obed Wild and Scenic River between Nemo Picnic Area and Alley Ford adopted by TCWP in 1998. Participants should dress appropriately for winter weather, wear sturdy shoes or boots, and bring work gloves, loppers, small bow saws or folding saws, shovels and grubbing tools, as well as a lunch and plenty of water. Cumberland Trail State Park personnel will provide some tools that will be available at the event.

Participants can meet for carpooling or caravanning 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 Oak Ridge at 9 a.m. Eastern, or can join the crew at Nemo Picnic Area or Rock Creek Campground at 10 a.m. We expect to return to the trailhead by around 3 p.m. (NOTE: If the weather is uncooperative--excessive rain or snow and ice—we will reschedule for February 19.)

Participants will need to sign a National Park Service volunteer form (parent's or guardian's signature required for minors). Forms can be requested in advance from TCWP, or NPS representatives will also have forms available at the event.

For additional information, contact Jimmy Groton at 865-805-9908 or at groton87@comcast.net.

American Chestnut Restoration Research in the Southern Appalachians – Tuesday, February 22

Prior to the arrival of the chestnut blight in the early 20th century, the American chestnut was one of the most important forest trees in the Eastern United States. Since the trees' near-eradication by the blight, a number of groups have been working to create blight-resistant American chestnuts. In a Zoom program on February 22 Stacy Clark, who has been a research forester with the USDA Forest Service's Southern Research Station since 2005 and is an adjunct assistant profession at the University of Tennessee, will discuss research projects she leads on American chestnut restoration and the artificial regeneration of the upland oak.

This program, which begins at 7 p.m., is co-sponsored by TCWP and the UT Arboretum Society. The program is free, but please register to receive your Zoom link at www.utarboretumsociety.org. Contact Michelle Campanis at mcampani@utk.edu regarding any questions or registration issues.

Spring Cedar Barren Cleanup/Weed Wrangle® - Saturday, March 5

The Oak Ridge Cedar Barren will again be the site of exotic invasive plant removal as we conduct our first cleanup of 2022. Located next to Jefferson Middle School in Oak Ridge, the Barren is a joint project of the City of Oak Ridge, State Natural

Areas Division, and TCWP. The area is one of just a few cedar barrens in East Tennessee, and is subject to invasion by bushy lespedeza, leatherleaf viburnum, privet, autumn olive, mimosa, Nepal grass, multiflora rose, and woody plants that threaten the system's prairie grasses. Our efforts help to eliminate invasives and other shade-producing plants that prevent the prairie grasses from getting needed sunlight.

Volunteers should meet in the Jefferson Middle School Parking lot at 9 a.m., with sturdy shoes, loppers, gloves, and water. For more information, contact Tim Bigelow at 865-607-6781 or Bigelowt2@mindspring.com.

4B. Recent Events

Fall Cedar Barren Cleanup/Weed Wrangle® – Saturday, November 6

On November 6 a group of 21 volunteers turned out to continue our work on exotic invasive plant removal at the Oak Ridge Cedar Barren, in our third and final cleanup of the year. The group cut and bagged bushy lespedeza with seed, and we showed people the special plants in the Triangle and Ellipse areas. There was a fair amount of prairie goldenrod still in flower, and we could identity few-leaf sunflower and Torrey's mountain mint.

Located next to Jefferson Middle School in Oak Ridge, the Barren is a joint project of the City of Oak Ridge, State Natural Areas Division, and TCWP. The area is one of just a few cedar barrens in East Tennessee, and is subject to invasion by a variety of invasive plants that threaten the system's prairie grasses. Our efforts help to eliminate these and other shade-producing plants that prevent the prairie grasses from getting needed sunlight. - *Jimmy Groton*

TCWP Holiday Party – Thursday, December 2

On December 2, TCWP hosted its first-ever outdoor holiday party, in the pavilion and around a bonfire on the grounds of the Oak Ridge Unitarian Universalist Church. The weather was in our favor, mild and dry, and more than 30 members and friends turned out to enjoy snacks and beverages and to socialize in a safe way. Many thanks to all who contributed food and drink, and who joined us in kicking off the holiday season! - *Carol Grametbauer*

Whites Creek Workday - Saturday, January 8

On January 8, 13 intrepid TCWP volunteers braved frigid temperatures to spend a beautiful winter day doing trail maintenance at TVA's Whites Creek Small Wild Area on Watts Bar Reservoir in Rhea County. Several new people helped, including folks from Spring City and Ozone. We mostly brushed the trail, removed some smaller trees with handsaws, and picked up several bags of trash around the parking lot and boat ramp. We were rewarded with the sights and sounds of loons, grebes, and sandhill cranes. 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*

4C. TCWP on Display at Wilderness Wildlife Week late January

TCWP will have a booth at the 2022 Wilderness Wildlife Week in Pigeon Forge. Scheduled for Tuesday through Saturday, January 25-29, the event will be at The Ramsey Hotel & Convention Center, 3230 Parkway.

Free and open to the public, Wilderness Wildlife Week is an annual celebration of the natural features, creatures and cultures of the Great Smoky Mountains. There will be informative programs led by leading wildlife experts, guided hikes from easy to challenging, activities for children.

Of course, there will be exhibits on photography, local art, handmade goods, and conservation. That's where one can find TCWP. If you're going to the WWW, we could use your help in checking the TCWP table, adding literature if needed, etc. Call Sandra at 865-583-3967 for more info on how to help.

4D. Conservation Education Day on the Hill Set for March 2

Everyone is encouraged to join the upcoming Conservation Day activities on Wednesday, March 2. Arranged by Tennessee Conservation Voters (of which TCWP is a member), Tennessee Environmental Council, Tennessee Interfaith Power and Light, and the Sierra Club, this is an opportunity to visit state legislators about important issues.

Talking points, a second person for the meeting, and the appointment will be provided to participants. The event may be held via Zoom or in person. Registration is required. To register, contact Sandra at sandra@sandrakgoss.com or 865-583-3967.

4E. Friends and Members in the Print Media

The October 29 Oak Ridger reported that Judy Roitman and Neil McBride were participants in a League of Women Voters forum.

Judy Roitman and Neil McBride participated in a virtual forum about expansion of Medicaid in Tennessee, as reported int November 15 Oak Ridger.

Chuck Nicholson's article about planting trees in fall appeared in the November 18 Norris Bulletin.

The November 18 Norris Bulletin also had a photo of Willa Reister in a report about the Appalachian Arts Craft Center 50th Anniversary Celebration.

Richard Norby is one of the most highly cited ORNL researchers, as published in the November 19 Oak Ridger and the November 27 News Sentinel.

A November 22 Oak Ridger column about a satellite project of Robertsville Middle School students and mentors quoted Peter Thornton extensively.

Note from the Editor of The Norris Bulletin of December 2 cited mentioned "…resident Norris Watershed expert…" Joe Feeman.

The December 3 News Sentinel had Anne Child's letter to the editor about the Build Back Better Act.

An oped column about the proposed site of a hazardous waste dump on the Oak Ridge Reservation appeared in the December 3 Oak Ridger. Mark Bevelhimer and Jimmy Groton were among the coauthors.

Chet Hunt's article about climate solutions in Appalachia appeared in the December 5 News Sentinel.

The December 10 Oak Ridger reported an authors signing event featuring Carol Grametbauer and Robert Kennedy, among others.

Will Skelton and Victor Ashe are pictured with others just after an Obed canoe trip in 1981 in the December 29 News Sentinel.

A letter advocating world-wide COVID vaccinations appeared in the January 5 News Sentinel. It was written by Anne Child.

TCWP (Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning) is dedicated to achieving and perpetuating protection of natural lands and waters by means of public ownership, legislation, or cooperation of the private sector. While our first focus is on the Cumberland and Appalachian regions of Tennessee, our efforts may extend to the rest of the state and the nation. TCWP's strength lies in researching information pertinent to an issue, informing and educating our membership and the public, interacting with groups having similar objectives, and working through the legislative, administrative, and judicial branches of government on the federal, state, and local levels.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

- January 25, Conservation Fisheries and It's Impact on East Tennessee's Fish Populations
- February 5, OWCA Winter Hike
- February 12, Alley Ford Workday
- February 22, American Chestnut Restoration Research in the Southern Appalachians
- March 5, Spring Cedar Barren Cleanup/Weed Wrangle®

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