

TCWP Newsletter

1. INSIDE TCWP

1A. TCWP Announces Its Annual Meeting of November 9 – Save The Date!

TCWP's annual meeting will be held on November 9 at Cumberland Mountain State Park. Registration will begin at 9:30 a.m. Central time (10:30 Eastern). The program, which will begin at 10, will feature Mark Thurman, the Tennessee Nature Conservancy's Director of Conservation Collaboration. President Mark Bevelhimer will give an overview of 2024 programs and you will elect the slate of board members for 2025. Following lunch, we'll offer a selection of hikes at the park.

RSVP needed: Breakfast items of coffee, chilled juice and an assortment of Danish and muffins will be provided at no cost to our members. If you would like lunch, it can be purchased upstairs at the restaurant for \$18. **YOU MUST RSVP no later than NOVEMBER 1st**, so the restaurant will serve the right number of breakfast items, and the kitchen will know what to expect for lunch. No need to give us food orders this year – easy peasy.

To RSVP you can fill in your name, contact information and number of attendees on the google form: <https://forms.gle/ErGo5Dwu1FENDNQL7>. Alternatively, you can email your information to Nancy Manning at nancymanning3@tcwp.org or you can mail in this information to TCWP, P.O. Box 6873, Oak Ridge, TN 37831 to arrive no later than November 1st.



Mark Thurman serves as The Nature Conservancy's Director of Conservation Collaboration in Tennessee. In this role, he oversees the strategic leadership of conservation, science and stewardship initiatives within the state program and how all of it feeds into TNC's conservation efforts throughout the Southeast U.S. Mark possesses a wealth of over 30 years of experience in conservation, gained notably through his tenure at the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, and extensive expertise in managing substantial budgets and leading cohesive, multifaceted teams. An ardent advocate for nature, Mark is an adept storyteller dedicated to bridging the connection between nature and people.

His commitment is evident in his leadership of educational programs such as immersive snorkeling trips, where both urban youth and members of the conservation community witness firsthand Tennessee's remarkable freshwater biodiversity.



Inside this issue

1. Inside TCWP.....1	
A. Tcwp Announces Its Annual Meeting Of November	
B. Membership – Why it Matters	
C. Governor Lee's Second Annual Tennessee Conservation Summit	
D. TCWP Opposes RV Campground at Frozen Head State Park	
GUEST AUTHOR SECTION.....4	
NEWS CAPSULES.....5	
1. OAK RIDGE.....5	
A. Oak Ridge is transforming the energy landscape with construction of nuclear reactor Hermes	
B. Type One Energy builds on fusion breakthroughs and the 82million invested by backers that include Bill Gates	
2. STATE.....6	
A. EPA study concludes that 60% of our state's rivers and streams are too polluted to swim in	
B. Will the State intervene to ban PFAS-contaminated sewage sludge?	
C. TVA raises power rates during fossil fuel spending spree	
D. TDEC says not enough funding for Coal Mine Cleanup	
E. The Endangered Tennessee Barrens Topminnow Fish waited 47 years for Protection	
3. NATIONAL NEWS.....8	
A. Kirkland's Snake still waiting for Protection	
B. Clean air, water and soil are on the ballot in November	
C. Tennessee Valley Authority faces a push to get greener and more transparent	
D. Utilities sue to avoid coal ash cleanup arguing that groundwater is not a liquid	
4. NATIONAL PARKS.....9	
A. Storytelling Festival is back at the Big South Fork	
B. Obed Wild and Scenic River Youth Conservation Corps	
5. TCWP NEWS.....10	
A. Upcoming Events	
B. Recent Events	

2. NL 377, September 2024

Mark will be providing an overview of the Nature Conservancy's updated conservation portfolio. Following his presentation, he will facilitate a discussion regarding how our organization's work intersects to explore partnership opportunities.

Slate of candidates for Board of Directors and Nominating Committee: Please see the back page

1B. Membership – Why it Matters

In 1976 – 1977 TCWP enjoyed a membership of over 650, many of whom served on a variety of committees. Our founders were ever mindful about the importance of our members to the success of efforts to protect wild lands and waters.

Today, our numbers are not as many, but we remain as committed. Our members today, as in earlier years, are critical to the capacity to do our work. Members often have expertise, experience or even a willingness to get their hands dirty and they all share a passion for the mission. Our members also provide the financial foundation for ensuring that our work continues.

TCWP is exploring ways to increase our membership and to better serve our membership. You are likely to notice our efforts such as when we expand our communications to reach a variety of networks, when we alert you that we are performing housekeeping on our database, or when we send out a request to engage more of our members in more of our work.



If you are interested in serving on a membership committee to help us to expand and engage our membership, please contact Nancy at nancymanning@tcwp.org

We can never rest on our laurels. Threats to our natural areas are as prevalent as always.

We will always need you, our members, and will always be grateful that you continue to be a part of this important work.

1C. Governor Lee's Second Annual Tennessee Conservation Summit

In early August for the second year, Tennessee Governor Bill Lee hosted a day-long meeting of about 90 participants representing a variety of nonprofit and governmental 'conservation' organizations. State agencies such as Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, Tennessee Department of Conservation (TDEC), Tennessee Department of Agriculture and others were encouraged to interact with nonprofit representatives like TCWP represented by board president Mark Bevelhimer. The meeting transitioned back and forth between short panel presentations highlighting conservation success stories and breakout table discussions that contributed to collective understandings of conservation challenges. The first 30 minutes was spent trying to understand what 'conservation' means from the various attendees' perspectives.

Governor Lee led off the morning session describing how his experiences as a young outdoorsman and farmer helped him see the value in natural resource conservation. He challenged those in the audience to find common ground with regards to conservation needs in Tennessee. The Governor believes that if common needs can be defined then common solutions should also be possible. Of course, those of us in organizations like TCWP know that agreeing to solutions is a lot easier said than done. However, it is certainly encouraging that the Governor is looking for answers to some of Tennessee's conservation issues. In a nutshell, the Governor is looking for projects that the state agencies in collaboration with outside groups like ours can bring to fruition during his last two years in office. To help achieve that, the Governor used the summit as a backdrop to announce the creation of a new office within TDEC called the Office of Outdoor Recreation.

Although it is understandable for TCWP members to be a little skeptical of this administration's somewhat sudden interest in conservation, this could be an opportunity for some of TCWP newest initiatives (such as the New River Rails to Trails Project, the Pellissippi Blueway creation, and the Explore and Restore educational program) to see real benefits in terms of funding and visibility. TCWP is working now to establish contacts within the state so that we can find ways to further our mission to Take Care of Wild Places throughout Tennessee.

1D. TCWP opposes RV Campground at Frozen Head State Park

Concerns about environmental damage, local community impacts, and questioned economic viability remain unaddressed

The picnic area, campground, and trailheads at Frozen Head State Park and Natural Area are tucked away in the woods at the end of a narrow, meandering road—far away from city lights and traffic noise. In the future, the first thing visitors might encounter upon entering the Park is a campground specifically designed for 20 large RVs—vehicles that the existing Big Cove campground with a 30-foot RV limit cannot accommodate. That, at least, is the vision articulated by the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) in their Strategic Management Plan for Frozen Head State Park and Natural Area. In fact, construction of new RV campgrounds or expansion of existing RV capacity are proposed in more than 10 of Tennessee's state parks.

While the Strategic Management Plan for Frozen Head includes numerous laudable goals, the proposal to convert Rocky Fork Field into an RV campground was met with strong opposition at a public hearing held at the Park on Nov. 16, 2023. In fact, all but one of the more than 25 individuals and organizations (including TCWP) who provided oral or written comments regarding the RV campground strongly opposed TDEC's proposal.

Concerns were raised on three main issues: environmental damage, the impact on residents and the local community who use Rocky Fork Field, and the economic impact of using state funds and state land to operate an RV campground that competes with local, privately owned and operated RV campground businesses and for which TDEC has provided no clear economic viability analysis.

Environmental concerns result from the proposed location near the banks of Flat Fork Creek, which is classified by the TDEC Division of Water Resources as "Exceptional Tennessee Waters" and worthy of the highest protection. In addition, a section of Flat Fork Creek adjacent to the Rocky Fork Field is a reference site with an associated sampling point representing near pristine conditions for aquatic life in the Cumberland Mountains Ecoregion; pollution from wastewater and sediment would imperil and could destroy the integrity of this reference site and sampling point, which are integral to characterization of critical parameters from which other waterways in the Cumberland Mountains and State of Tennessee are compared. Frequent flooding in the area, as well as shallow depths to the water table and to hard bedrock make the site unsuitable for in-ground sanitary facilities. There is no sewer line serving the area, and no analysis was presented on how to mitigate these issues to avoid runoff into Flat Fork Creek – and what such mitigation might cost.

Also of concern are the impacts on current activities at Rocky Fork Field and local residents. The Field is used for church gatherings, family reunions, volleyball games, the annual Christmas Drive-Through event, and as overflow parking for popular special events such as the Park's annual Heritage Day and other high-use holidays such as Memorial Day. The internationally recognized Barkley Marathons (100-mile ultramarathon trail race held in spring and 50-km Barkley Fall Classic held in fall) use the Rocky Fork Field as a staging area and would lose their uniqueness if forced to become more like other running events. The necessary widening of Flat Fork Road and increased traffic by large RVs and possibly wastewater vehicles would negatively impact local residents along the narrow Flat Fork Road.



Finally, this RV campground would compete with commercial RV campgrounds, both existing and in development, some of which are located in very close proximity to the State Park. Given Frozen Head State Park's lack of a sewage infrastructure and of an access road that can easily handle large vehicles, construction of such a campground would come at significant expense to Tennessee's taxpayers while at the same time making it harder for local businesses to succeed.

TDEC has published a revised Strategic Plan without addressing any of these concerns—in fact, not one word was changed regarding the RV campground despite the clarity of the input by private citizens and concerned organizations.

TCWP continues to oppose this short-sighted proposal. If you feel passionate about this issue and would like to participate in our effort, please let us know at nancymanning@tcwp.org so that we can reach you when we need you. – Hans Christen

GUEST AUTHOR

The Forest Service's National Old-Growth Amendments ("NOGA") Process: *A once-in-a-generation opportunity to protect and restore old-growth forests*

By Sam Evans

Senior Attorney and Leader of the National Forests and Parks Program for SELC

As Mary Byrd Davis wrote in *Eastern Old-Growth Forests* (1996), a groundbreaking book that showed the importance and rarity of old-growth forests and galvanized a generation of forest advocates to work toward its restoration:

We are between two forested worlds—the natural forest of pre-settlement North America and the recovered forest of the future. . . . The earlier forested world is not dead. We are studying and struggling to preserve its living remnant. And we do not believe that the future forest is powerless to be born. These remnants—with our help—will become the seeds from which a renewed forest spreads.

For the first time since those words were written, the Forest Service is taking meaningful steps toward protection of old growth, with a national-level proposal to amend every single forest plan across the country. At the same time, however, the Forest Service is commercially logging existing old-growth forests this summer in North Carolina, which shows just how far we still have to go. The stakes are high, and the agency will need encouragement from our community to get it right.

Some backstory first. In April 2022, President Biden issued Executive Order 14072, which told the Forest Service to define, inventory, assess the threats to, and develop policies to conserve mature and old-growth forests. For two years, the agency worked on its inventory and threat assessment, and it is now developing new policies, which it hopes to finalize this winter.

The inventory indicated that there are over 1 million acres of old growth in the national forests of the Southeast, mostly in the Southern Appalachian Mountains. For example, the Nantahala-Pisgah National Forest was estimated to contain 219,000 acres of old growth, while the Cherokee National Forest was estimated to contain 66,000. These figures are based on a statistical analysis of data from survey plots, and they are considerably higher than the acreage of old growth confirmed in field surveys, but it's exciting to know that old growth structural characteristics are developing in our aging second-growth forests.

On the heels of the inventory, the agency's threat assessment was problematic. It concluded that the biggest threats to old growth come from wildfire and insects and disease, and that logging isn't a serious threat to old growth anymore. Whether or not this is true at a national scale, it's certainly not true in the East. Logging remains the single biggest threat to old growth forests in our region, and it was disappointing to see the agency trying to dodge responsibility for those impacts.

Still, in its draft policy, the Forest Service does acknowledge the need for "constraints" on its own actions in order to protect and restore old growth. The proposed National Old Growth Amendments (or "NOGA" for short) would update each and every forest plan across the country with consistent guidance for old-growth forests. Under the proposal, management in existing old growth could occur only for the purpose of "proactive stewardship." This concept needs to be tightened up, and there are some big loopholes that need to be closed, but it's a good start.

Still, protecting existing old growth won't be enough, because there simply isn't much old growth left in the East. We desperately need to recruit more future old growth from our healthiest mature forests. Unfortunately, the proposal leaves this task, without guidance, to local agency staff, which simply won't change the status quo. We need to push the Forest Service harder to ensure that enough mature forests, and the right mature forests, are moving toward old-growth conditions.

The Forest Service is accepting public comments on its draft through September 20. If you'd like to comment, the process is easy. Just fill in your contact information and leave your comments in the box. Follow this link: <https://cara.fs2c.usda.gov/Public/CommentInput?Project=65356>. I'd suggest you focus on the following points:

- Thanking the Forest Service for starting this vitally important process;
- Saying why Eastern old-growth forests are important to you;
- Encouraging the agency to tighten the loopholes for management in existing old growth forests; and
- Asking for clear, mandatory requirements to prioritize mature forests for stewardship as future old growth, to ensure that old growth will one day again be abundant and resilient.

This is our best opportunity in a generation to protect and restore old-growth forests. Thank you for your help in pushing the Forest Service to take full advantage of it.

See the op-ed piece that Sam wrote for the Blue Ridge Outdoors Magazine here: Opinion: Return the Great Forest - Environment - Blue Ridge Outdoors Magazine.

URL: <https://www.blueridgeoutdoors.com/environment/opinion-return-the-great-forest/>

NEWS CAPSULES:

Note from editor: There is good news herein but much of it can be depressing as letters to my inbox indicate. I have been reading Liane Russell's old newsletters and she often began an issue by reminding folks not to be frustrated or depressed about the news but rather allow it to motivate us to act.

In the Russells' day TCWP hosted up to 15 committees and we would like to resurrect some of those committees. To that end, if you are interested in serving on a committee to address the gas pipeline and other of the gas build out issues, please contact me at nancymanning@tcwp.org. In this issue you may find other issues that personally motivate you to be involved. If so, please reach out. The more of you who are willing to raise your voice, or maybe quietly do some research, the more effective we will be.

– Nancy Manning



1. OAK RIDGE

1A. Oak Ridge is transforming the energy landscape with construction of nuclear reactor Hermes

Oak Ridge is playing a crucial role in the resurgence of nuclear power as a clean energy alternative, with the construction of the Hermes Low-Power Demonstration reactor by California-based Kairos Power. This \$100 million project at the Heritage Center Industrial Park, once part of the K-25 gaseous diffusion plant, is expected to create over 55 high-paying jobs locally. The Hermes reactor, which is set to become operational in 2027, aims to demonstrate the production of affordable nuclear heat, although it will not generate electricity. The project marks a significant step forward in deploying advanced reactor technology, with Kairos Power emphasizing its potential to transform the energy landscape and provide cost certainty to customers.

Hermes is the first non-light-water reactor to receive a construction permit in the U.S. in more than 50 years, utilizing a molten fluoride salt cooling system that offers a safer alternative to traditional high-pressure systems. The technology, along with its advanced TRISO pebble fuel, has roots in Oak Ridge's 1960s experiments. As part of the Gen IV reactors, Hermes represents a historic initiative with the potential to revolutionize power generation in the U.S. The project is supported by multiple partners, including Oak Ridge National Laboratory and the Department of Energy, which is investing up to \$303 million. The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) is also a key partner, providing engineering and licensing support, and potentially paving the way for future small modular reactors in the region.

1B. Type One Energy builds on fusion breakthroughs and the 82million invested by backers that include Bill Gates

Type One Energy, an Oak Ridge-based company, is capitalizing on growing private investment in nuclear fusion to build a prototype at the retired Bull Run coal plant. Backed by \$82.4 million in recent fundraising, including contributions from Bill Gates' Breakthrough Energy Ventures, Type One aims to commercialize fusion energy. The company is moving its headquarters to Hardin Valley and plans to create over 300 high-paying jobs in the region. This move highlights the region's emerging status as a hub for advanced nuclear technology, with companies like Kairos Power also investing in the area.

Type One Energy is working on a fusion device called a stellarator, which uses complex magnetic fields to contain plasma at temperatures over 180 million degrees Fahrenheit, generating electricity without carbon emissions or radioactive waste. The company's prototype, expected to begin construction by 2026, is a significant step toward launching a pilot power plant by 2030. This technology promises a nearly limitless supply of clean energy, with just one gram of fusion fuel potentially generating as much energy as 11 tons of coal.

Type One Energy's innovative approach is supported by a partnership with Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) and the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). The Bull Run site was chosen for its existing infrastructure, symbolizing a shift from coal to clean energy. Access to ORNL's supercomputers will enable the company to refine the complex models needed for their stellarator device, further advancing their goal of revolutionizing the energy grid through fusion technology.

2. STATE

2A. An EPA study concludes that 60% of our state's rivers and streams are too polluted to swim in.

A recent study based on Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) data reveals that approximately 60% of Tennessee's rivers and streams are too polluted for activities like swimming and fishing. Every 2 years, under the Clean Water Act, states are required to identify polluted waters and take actions to reduce the contamination. Despite Tennessee assessing nearly 94% of its lakes, ponds, and reservoirs, only 26.7% of its creeks, rivers, and streams have been tested for pollutants. This lack of comprehensive assessment is concerning given the increasing pollution levels in the state's waterways.

Dorie Bolze, President and CEO of the Harpeth Conservancy, pointed out two years ago that the pollution in Tennessee's waters was worsening. Much of the contamination stems from agricultural runoff, industrial waste, and sewage, leading to significant portions of the state's waters being deemed unsafe for recreational use. The study underscores the health risks associated with swimming in contaminated waters, including gastrointestinal illnesses and skin infections, which remain a public health concern in Tennessee.

In an article called "The Polluted Water in Tennessee," WPNS radio says, "According to data from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), over 70% of freshwater lakes, ponds, reservoirs, and wetlands (by acreage) and over 42% of creeks, rivers, and streams (by mileage) are considered too polluted for primary contact recreation, such as swimming."

2B. Will the State intervene to ban PFAS-contaminated sewage sludge?

PFAS-Contaminated Sewage Sludge in Tennessee: For decades, treated sewage, or "biosolids," has been used as fertilizer on Tennessee lands, but this practice is under increasing scrutiny due to the presence of toxic PFAS chemicals. A recent report by the Sierra Club revealed that soil, groundwater, and drinking water in Sullivan County, Tennessee, are contaminated with PFAS, a class of harmful chemical compounds. These findings underscore the urgency of halting the application of biosolids to protect water resources, as PFAS can leach into groundwater and contaminate drinking water supplies.

How Sewage Can Lead to PFAS-Contaminated Drinking Water: Wastewater treatment plants produce biosolids from sewage, which are then used as fertilizers by farmers and landowners. However, these biosolids can contain PFAS, which are not typically tested for by most states. When spread on fields, PFAS can wash into rivers, infiltrate groundwater, and enter the food chain. The Sierra Club's testing in Sullivan County detected PFAS at multiple sites, raising concerns about widespread contamination across Tennessee.

PFAS are Linked to Cancer, Reproductive Issues: PFAS, often called "forever chemicals" due to their persistence in the environment, are linked to various health issues, including cancer and reproductive problems. The Sierra Club's tests in Sullivan County found PFAS in soil, water, and even in products like Nashville's "Music City Gold" fertilizer. This highlights the broader issue of PFAS contamination in Tennessee, where the levels may be significantly higher than current tests show.

PFAS Levels in Tennessee May Be Higher Than Early Tests Show: Testing for PFAS typically only detects a small fraction of the estimated 15,000 compounds. The Sierra Club's recent analysis suggests that the actual levels of PFAS could be hundreds to thousands of times higher than what has been detected. This raises concerns about the long-term impact of PFAS contamination on Tennessee's environment and public health.

Some States Are Banning Biosolid Use on Land: In response to PFAS contamination, states like Maine and Connecticut have banned the use of sewage sludge as fertilizer. These bans aim to prevent further contamination and protect public health. The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation is considering similar measures, with a public hearing scheduled to discuss the issue. Advocates like the Sierra Club urge Tennessee to follow suit and ban the use of PFAS-contaminated biosolids to safeguard the state's land and water resource.

2C. TVA raises power rates during fossil fuel spending spree

Summarized from news release by Southern Environmental Law Center

The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) has approved a 5.25% increase in base power rates, marking the second hike in a year and resulting in nearly a 10% rise in power bills for residents across the Tennessee Valley. This increase comes as TVA plans to invest billions in new gas plants and pipelines, a move criticized for its potential to harm communities and exacerbate climate change. TVA should focus on clean energy alternatives, which could lower costs and create jobs, rather than pursuing expensive and outdated fossil fuel projects. The rate hikes are expected to further burden low-income families, particularly in areas like Memphis, where energy costs already consume a significant portion of household incomes.

2D. TDEC says not enough funding for Coal Mine Cleanup

A recent report from the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation reveals a significant funding shortfall for coal mine cleanup in the state, with available industry bonds falling \$34.4 million short of what's needed for reclamation. The report, which was delivered to state officials but only made public through an Open Records Act request, highlights that 67% of coal permits in Tennessee are in bond forfeiture, indicating that operators are unable or unwilling to complete the required reclamation work. Additionally, the report points out that no coal has been mined in Tennessee since June 2022, and there are no state or federal funds allocated to address the funding gap.

2E. The Endangered Tennessee Barrens Topminnow Fish waited 47 years for Protection

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has proposed protecting critical habitat for the endangered Barrens topminnow, a vibrant green fish native to central Tennessee, following decades of advocacy from the Center for Biological Diversity. The proposal includes designating 1.5 acres of spring pools and 11.4 miles of flowing springs across several counties, including Cannon, Coffee, and Franklin. This move marks a significant step in safeguarding the species, which has faced numerous challenges, including habitat loss and competition from invasive species, since it was first proposed for protection in 1977 but only gained endangered status in 2019.

The Barrens topminnow, which thrives in clear, cold streams, has seen its population dwindle to just six sites from an original 18, largely due to threats such as invasive mosquitofish, droughts, floods, and livestock intrusion. The species' critical habitat designation will add an essential layer of protection, ensuring that any federally funded or permitted activities do not harm the areas where these fish live. Conservation efforts include captive breeding programs at Conservation Fisheries Inc. in Knoxville and the Tennessee Aquarium Conservation Institute in Chattanooga, aiming to prevent the extinction of this species, which plays a vital role in its ecosystem by preying on mosquito larvae and other insects.

3. NATIONAL NEWS

3A. Kirtland's Snake still waiting for Protection

The Kirtland's snake, a small, nonvenomous species with a distinctive red-to-pink underside, is native to wetlands across seven states, including Tennessee. However, due to habitat destruction and other threats, this elusive snake has vanished from many areas where it once thrived, such as Wisconsin and Pennsylvania. Once found in 139 counties, the Kirtland's snake has now disappeared from 79 of them. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recently agreed to reconsider federal protections for the snake under the Endangered Species Act, following a legal victory for the Center for Biological Diversity and the Hoosier Environmental Council. This reconsideration is expected to be completed by June 2026.

The push for renewed protections highlights the ongoing threats to the Kirtland's snake, particularly from the loss of wetland habitats due to agriculture, urbanization, and climate change. Despite existing laws, wetlands continue to be destroyed, further endangering the species. Climate change models predict that by 2060, less than 25% of the snake's current habitat will remain suitable for its survival. Advocates, including those from the Abrams Environmental Law Clinic at the University of Chicago, emphasize that protecting the Kirtland's snake and its habitat is not only crucial for the species but also benefits the broader ecosystem. The snake is currently protected at the state level in several states, but additional federal protections are seen as vital to its survival.

3B. Clean air, water and soil are on the ballot in November

The following article is summarized from the People's World.

The upcoming election holds significant implications for the environment, as highlighted by Tennessee State Representative Justin Pearson. Speaking at the Democratic National Convention's Environmental and Climate Crisis Council, Pearson emphasized the urgency of addressing climate justice and the environmental policies that will be on the ballot. The Biden-Harris administration has made notable strides with legislation like the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), and CHIPS and Science Act, which collectively have spurred the creation of over 300,000 clean energy jobs and initiated numerous green energy projects across the nation. These achievements mark a critical step towards reducing U.S. carbon emissions, though more work is needed to meet the administration's ambitious climate goals.

In contrast, former President Trump's proposed policies under Project 2025 threaten to reverse this progress. "Trump famously demanded \$1 billion from fossil fuel corporations for his campaign in exchange for letting them write his administration's energy policies. He vows to repeal the Inflation Reduction Act and its environmental justice policies, even though the legislation directs significant funding for wind, solar, and manufacturing to red states where it's popular."

Trump has promised to repeal key environmental legislation and dismantle agencies like the EPA. The stark differences in environmental strategies between the two parties underscore the importance of the climate crisis as a pivotal issue in the 2024 election. About half of the electorate is more inclined to support a candidate who prioritizes substantial investments in renewable energy and infrastructure, promotes the creation of millions of union jobs in clean energy, and directs significant resources to communities that have been most affected by climate change.

3C. Tennessee Valley Authority faces a push to get greener and more transparent

The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), the nation's largest public power company, is facing growing pressure to become more transparent and environmentally conscious. In Cheatham County, Tennessee, local officials and residents were surprised by TVA's purchase of land, initially assumed to be for a solar farm, only to later learn it was for a proposed 900-megawatt natural gas plant. The project has sparked significant opposition, with many locals feeling powerless against the federal utility's decisions, which bypass local zoning laws. This controversy comes at a time when TVA is under scrutiny for its slow adoption of renewable energy compared to other utilities, despite its potential to lead in the clean energy transition. Environmental groups and lawmakers are pushing for greater transparency in TVA's planning processes and criticizing its continued investment in fossil fuels.

TVA's history as a transformative force in the Tennessee Valley during the Great Depression contrasts with its current challenges. While it played a crucial role in electrifying and developing one of the nation's poorest regions, its modern-day operations have been marred by controversies, including a massive coal ash spill and recent rolling blackouts during Winter Storm Elliott. Critics argue that TVA, despite being a federal entity with significant resources, lags behind in renewable energy development and has an "institutional bias" against clean energy solutions. Legislative efforts are underway to increase TVA's accountability and ensure its decisions align more closely with modern environmental and energy efficiency goals, reflecting the growing demand for a greener and more responsible power provider.



This is an opportunity for someone who would like to research any proposed legislation to increase TVA's accountability and alignment with energy efficiency goals. Contact Nancy if you can help nancyman-ning@tcwp.org

3D. Utilities sue to avoid coal ash cleanup arguing that groundwater is not a liquid! ---

Following disastrous coal ash spills in North Carolina and Tennessee, the EPA issued a 2015 rule requiring power companies to safely manage coal ash, a toxic byproduct of coal plants containing harmful substances like arsenic and mercury. The rule prohibits coal ash from being stored in contact with "free liquids" such as groundwater, and mandates protection against liquid infiltration. However, a group of utility companies sued the EPA, arguing that the rule should only apply to rainwater infiltration from above and that groundwater should not be classified as a "free liquid." The D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals rejected these claims in June 2023, affirming that the rule applies to all liquids, thus upholding the EPA's enforcement actions.

Despite the rule, under the Trump administration, enforcement was lax, allowing many power companies to ignore the requirement to prevent coal ash from contacting groundwater. With the Biden administration's renewed enforcement, there are now over 100 sites nationwide where utilities plan to permanently bury coal ash in ways that violate the rule. You can see a map of the 101 sites, including those in Tennessee, here: [101 Coal Plants With Toxic Sludge Threatening Our Drinking Water - Earthjustice](https://earthjustice.org/feature/map-coal-plants-failing-monitor-contaminated-water)

URL: <https://earthjustice.org/feature/map-coal-plants-failing-monitor-contaminated-water>

4. NATIONAL PARKS

1A. A Storytelling Festival is back at the Big South Fork ---

When: Saturday, September 21, from 11:00 AM to 10:00 PM (ET)

Where: Bandy Creek Visitor Center area.

What: 32nd Annual Haunting in the Hills Storytelling Festival Oneida, Tennessee.

Description: Immersive storytelling, stirring musical performances, vibrant craft displays; food options, and more.

For additional information on this special event as well as other events, call (423) 569-9778, or visit online: <https://www.nps.gov/biso/planyourvisit/storytelling.htm>.

2B. Obed Wild and Scenic River Youth Conservation Corps ---

The Youth Conservation Corps at Obed Wild and Scenic River engaged in a summer program focused on maintaining and enhancing the park's hiking trails. This program, designed for youth ages 15-18, provides participants with hands-on experience in conservation work, led by National Park Service staff. Through their efforts, the team not only extended the lifespan of the trails but also developed valuable trade skills and a deeper understanding of environmental stewardship. The program also offered educational activities and field trips, enriching the participants' knowledge of cultural and environmental topics while contributing to the preservation and safety of the park's resources.

5. TCWP NEWS

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.]

5A. UPCOMING EVENTS

Crab Orchard Mountain Power Line Fall Flowers – Saturday, September 21

In this joint outing with the Tennessee Native Plant Society, we will caravan from Crab Orchard to the power line, then walk along the power line right-of-way to see many species of goldenrods, asters, and other fall flowers. The walk will be less than four miles round-trip, with opportunities to return early.

We will meet for caravanning at the Gold's Gym/Books-A-Million parking lot in Oak Ridge (at the end close to S. Illinois Avenue, near Salsarita's) at 9 a.m. Eastern time, or meet at the Marathon station at I-40 Crab Orchard exit 329 east of Crossville at 10 a.m. Eastern time (9 a.m. Central).

An email or call to hike leader Margaret Cumberland (meshearin@gmail.com, cell 919-339-0072) saying you are likely to come is appreciated. This helps with planning and allows for participants to be contacted with any change of plans.

National Public Lands Day - Saturday, September 28

On September 28, TCWP and TVA will partner again for our annual National Public Lands Day celebration, to be held at TVA's Worthington Cemetery Cedar Barrens Small Wild Area on Melton Hill Reservoir in Oak Ridge. TCWP has for many years partnered with TVA to enhance and protect natural resources at Worthington Cemetery and other TVA lands throughout East Tennessee as part of our mutual stewardship efforts. Our yearly efforts in this area are helping to eradicate wisteria from the cemetery, and privet and other invasive exotics from the ESA.

We'll meet for the cleanup at 9 a.m. at the Elza Gate Park picnic area near the intersection of Oak Ridge Turnpike and Melton Lake Drive. At the completion of our work (around noon), TCWP will provide a pizza lunch. Participants should wear sturdy shoes and weather-appropriate clothes, and bring water, gloves, and clippers, loppers, or bow or pruning saws, if possible. Other tools and equipment will also be available at the worksite. For more information, contact Jimmy Groton at 865-805-9908 or groton87@comcast.net.

Hike in Norris Municipal Watershed – Saturday, October 5

For this hike, we will meet in front of Norris Middle School (across from the library) at 9 a.m. and carpool to the trailhead in the Norris Municipal Watershed. We'll begin the hike on Foresters Trail and travel to Belmont Trail, where we will hike to an old road that is not maintained but easily walked. This will take us up to Boundary Trail, over to Foresters Trail, and then down to East Trail. East Trail will take us up and over a moderate climb and down to Gooseneck Trail where we will go to Clear Creek Trail. From Clear Creek it is a short walk back to the trailhead.

The hike is about four miles on woods roads, and a single track on the short segment on Clear Creek Trail. We will talk about sustainable natural resource management in the watershed and see examples of forestry and wildlife activities. Although the roads are easily walked, they can still be difficult in places, and it is always a good idea to wear sturdy footwear. Bring water, a snack, and other items as needed for the weather. For more information, contact Joe Feeman at jcfeeman@comcast.net.

Fall Cedar Barren Cleanup/Weed Wrangle® - Saturday, November 2

The Oak Ridge Cedar Barren will again be the site of exotic invasive plant removal as we conduct our fall cleanup, our third and final cleanup of the barren this year. 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 many native woody plants that threaten the prairie community. Our efforts help to eliminate invasives and other shade-producing plants that prevent the prairie plants from getting much-needed sunlight, nutrients, and water.

Volunteers should meet in the Jefferson Middle School Parking lot at 9 a.m., with sturdy shoes, loppers, gloves, and water. The work session will conclude at noon with a pizza lunch. For more information, contact Jimmy Groton at 865-805-9908 or groton87@comcast.net.

November 9 - Save the date! TCWP's annual meeting will be held November 9 at Cumberland Mountain State Park. Registration will begin at 9:30 a.m. Central time (10:30 Eastern). The program, which will begin at 10, will feature Mark Thurman, the Tennessee Nature Conservancy's Director of Conservation Collaboration, along with an overview of 2024 programs by President Mark Bevelhimer and the election of the slate of officers/board members for 2025. Following lunch, we'll offer a selection of hikes at the park.

North Ridge Trail Invasive Species Removal - Saturday, November 16

One of the best wildflower spots in Oak Ridge is starting to be consumed by invasive species. To combat this encroachment, TCWP will lead an effort on Saturday, November 16, to clear out the invasives starting to cover this amazing spot on the North Ridge Trail. In the spring this area is covered in trout lilies, trilliums, spring beauties, and much more.

We'll meet for the cleanup at 9 a.m. at the entrance to the Walker Access to the North Ridge Trail, which is down N. Walker Lane off W Outer Drive. Parking is limited on the street, but there is more parking at the Oak Ridge Children's Museum. To get to the main area, there is a steep slope, so wear sturdy shoes and bring hiking poles if needed. At the completion of our work (around noon), TCWP will provide a pizza lunch.

Participants should wear weather-appropriate clothes, and bring water, gloves, and clippers, loppers, or bow or pruning saws, if possible. Other tools and equipment will also be available at the worksite. A pizza lunch will be provided. For more information, contact Margaret Cumberland at 919-339-0072 or mcumberland@battelleecology.org, or Jimmy Groton at 865-805-9908 or groton87@comcast.net.

December 12 - Mark your calendars for the annual TCWP Holiday Party and New Member Party. We hope our long-time members will help us to welcome our new members.

5B. RECENT EVENTS

Summer Cedar Barren Cleanup/Weed Wrangle® - Saturday, August 24

On August 24, TCWP hosted our second Weed Wrangle® of the year at the Oak Ridge Barrens State Natural Area. At least 18 volunteers worked to remove bushy lespedeza and other plants from the barrens. We had several new volunteers, including two families and two young, aspiring scientists. Margaret Cumberland led volunteers on a short walk through the barrens to introduce them to the unique habitat at the barren and to identify plants. This year all three rare plants—White Prairie-Goldenrod (State Endangered), Torrey's Mountain Mint (State Special Concern Species), and Naked-Stem Sunflower (State Special Concern Species)—and several other barrens plants were in flower (or just beginning to flower) and doing well. Waterbars on the trail near the triangle appear to be keeping erosion under control of the trail to the entrance.

After the morning's work, we had a nice lunch together by one of the Clinch River Environmental Studies Organization's (CRESO) wetlands. *Jimmy Groton*

Calendar:

- September 21 - Crab Orchard Mountain Power Line Fall Flowers
- September 28 - National Public Lands Day Workday
- October 5 - Norris Municipal Watershed Hike
- November 2 - Fall Cedar Barren Cleanup/Weed Wrangle®
- November 9 - TCWP Annual Meeting
- November 16 - North Ridge Trail Invasive Species Removal
- December 12 - Holiday Party

Slate of Candidates

Mark Bevelhimer - After 30 years as an aquatic ecologist/fish biologist in the Environmental Sciences Division of ORNL Mark retired in 2019. For years he researched stressors from hydropower stressors from hydropower dams, coal fired powerplants, and toxic contaminants on fish and aquatic ecosystems. He has been filling his retirement with lots of whitewater kayaking, hiking, camping, fishing, spending time at his cabin on Watts Bar, and TCWP!

Michele Thornton - GIS Analyst at ORNL with the Environmental Sciences Division. Master's degree in biology with an emphasis in stream ecology. BS in Biological Sciences. Taught secondary science in public schools in Michigan and natural science programs in Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho. Michele spends her free time hiking, biking, and shuttling and volunteering within her children's various interests.

Hans Christen has been living in Knoxville for the last 23 years. He just retired from Oak Ridge National Laboratory, where he most recently led the Neutron Scattering Division. Hans grew up in Switzerland, where he studied physics and enjoyed hiking in the alps. Through living, hiking, backpacking, biking, and beekeeping in East Tennessee, he has developed a deep appreciation of the area's natural beauty and a keen interest in preserving it. He is long-time TCWP member and current board member.

Joel Freund | MST, CPA, CFF, CVA, CFE -Joel graduated from Auburn University with a degree in accounting and graduated from the University of Central Florida with a master's in taxation. Joel has been a Certified Public Accountant for 28 years and is also a Certified Fraud Examiner, Certified Valuation Analysis, and Certified in Financial Forensics. Joel spent 10 years in public and private accounting before joining the FBI as a Special Agent for 16 years. Joel is currently working with HHM, CPAs in Chattanooga, Tennessee where he provides Business Valuation, Forensic, and Litigation Support services for a variety of clients. Joel has been married for 27 years and has twins, one boy and one girl. Joel also has one dog and four cats. Joel loves all things outdoors and has been camping in Gatlinburg since he was 10 years old. His favorite hike is Chimney Tops and Mt. Leconte. When he lived in California, he hiked Half Dome and is always looking for a new adventure. Joel is committed to helping preserve wildlife and making sure his kids and grandkids can continue enjoying the outdoors.

Larry Pounds - Botanical consultant, particularly for TVA and ORNL. Larry has a Ph.D. in plant ecology and is a member of the TCWP Program Committee and the Tennessee Native Plant Society.

Eva Myrth Robbins grew up in Oak Ridge walking the trails all over east Tennessee. After graduating from Indiana University, she began what would be 30 years living abroad from Hong Kong and Norway to Mexico. The last years in Mexico were in a very rural location with almost no state influence or budget. She worked with local residents to build roads, to bring in electrical lines and to encourage educational participation through a nonprofit organization started by Eva. Back in Tennessee for a new chapter she brings a growth-based approach to TCWP communications and branding.

Margaret Cumberland is the Flora Field Ecologist at the Appalachians and Cumberland Plateau Domain (D07), and has been part of Battelle's National Ecological Observatory Network (NEON) Program for 9 years. Her role involves leading a team of technicians to collect ecological data, and in particular ensures the accuracy and integrity of the flora-related data products. She has an M.S. in Conservation Ecology and Sustainable Development from the University of Georgia, and B.S.'s in Biological Sciences, Botany, and Zoology from NC State University. Outside of NEON, Margaret enjoys participating in environmental education and citizen science programs (particularly ones involving plants or birds), as well as camping in the local parks or doing various DIY projects.

Jimmy Groton - Works on environmental issues (wetlands, threatened and endangered species management and exotic species control) with a Knoxville environmental consulting firm. He worked for the National Park Service for six years. He has an M.S. in forestry and a B.S. in natural resources. He has been a TCWP Board member since 1993; President 1999-2002, 2006-2014; currently President of Emory River Watershed Association and board member of Tennessee Invasive Plant Council; served on O.R. EQAB for 18 years. Jimmy is active on trails, water, program, Obed, and Cherokee National Forest issues. He enjoys hiking, paddling, and being outdoors.

Kirk Eddlemon - A Native Knoxvilleian and East Tennessean, Kirk has been exploring Blue Ridge Mountains and Cumberland Plateau for most of his life. He met his wife, Laura, at an Oak Ridge roll practice over 20 years ago, and they began to explore rivers around the world together. After earning his B.S. in Geology from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Kirk worked for a seismic consulting firm, during which time he and his wife brought a son, Alex, into the world. Following his time spent as a geologist, and a brief stint as an adventure guide at Blackberry Farm, Kirk turned his passion into his life's work, by writing and publishing a comprehensive, two volume whitewater guide to the region titled Whitewater of the Southern Appalachians. From here he began a full time career as a whitewater kayaking instructor and guide, which he has been lucky enough to be doing for the last 10 years. Working mainly in the Obed and Big South Fork watersheds, as well as during the summer on the west coast, back home on the Ocoee, and elsewhere, Kirk shares his passion for the art of engaging moving water, and the special environs that rivers wind through. From this experience he has cultivated a desire to be involved in the effort to promote and protect our wilderness areas and is honored to be working with TCWP.

NOMINEES FOR NOMINATING COMMITTEE 2023-2024

Susan Prince Havens
Chuck Estes
Nancy Manning

**TENNESSEE CITIZENS FOR
WILDERNESS PLANNING**

P.O BOX 6873
OAK RIDGE, TENNESSEE 37831
ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



Tennessee
Citizens for
Wilderness
Planning

Taking Care of Wild Places

NONPROFIT ORG.
US POSTAGE
PAID
OAK RIDGE, TN
PERMIT NO. 178

Board of Directors

Mark Bevelhimer..... President
Michele Thornton V. Pres
Carol Grametbauer Secretary
Joel Freund Treasurer
Michelle Campanis.....Director
Hans Christen.....Director
Margaret Cumberland.....Director
Kirk Eddlemon.....Director
Jimmy Groton Director
Eva Robbins Director
Larry Pounds.....Director

UPCOMING EVENTS

- September 21 - Crab Orchard Mountain Power Line Fall Flowers
- September 28 - National Public Lands Day Workday
- October 5 - Norris Municipal Watershed Hike
- November 2 - Fall Cedar Barren Cleanup/Weed Wrangle®
- November 9 - TCWP Annual Meeting
- November 16 - North Ridge Trail Invasive Species Removal
- December 12 - Holiday Party

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.

TCWP: P.O. Box 6873., Oak Ridge, TN 37831

President: Mark Bevelhimer, mbevelhimer@gmail.com

Executive Director: Nancy Manning, nancymanning@tcwp.org

Outreach & Membership Coordinator: Peyton Sellers, sellerspeyten@gmail.com

TCWP website: <http://www.tcwp.org>