

TCWP Newsletter

1. OAK RIDGE NEWS

1A. Update on Environmental Management Disposal Facility Proposal

According to officials, in April a new Record of Decision will be released on the proposed hazardous waste dump that is to be located on Bear Creek. The draft ROD was released last summer.

EPA officials have indicated that there will be a time for the community to share their concerns about the EMDF. Stay tuned to the TCWP website or enroll in our alerts to learn about the comment opportunities.

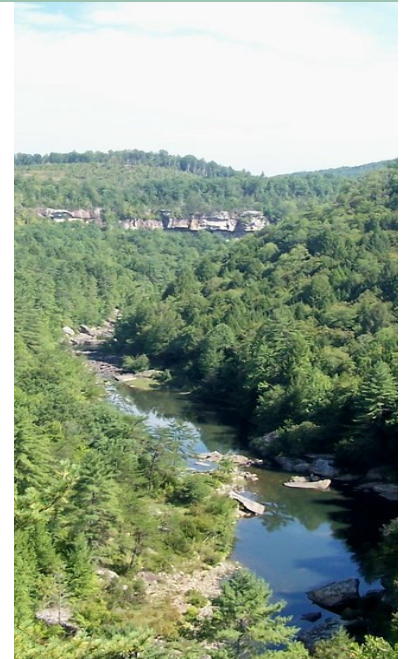
This dump site is precariously close to Bear Creek. Of particular concern are: waste acceptance criteria; offsite versus onsite costs; and realistic information on job opportunities connected to the EMDF. It would be good to learn more about fish consumption from Bear Creek and Poplar Creek, and include the angler stakeholders in comment opportunities.

Leachate from the hazardous waste will drain into Bear Creek, East Fork Poplar, Poplar and then Clinch. The public needs more information about this EMDF in order to assess properly the risks that are posed to the people and creatures downstream.

1B. Power Supply to Horizon Center is Center of Debate

The North Boundary Greenway Trail and adjacent closed forested canopy and protected wetlands are under threat to clear cutting and other destructive disturbance. Earlier this month, Oak Ridge City Council held a work session to hear staff to present for providing increased power to the Horizon Center.

It seems that the trail, the forest canopy, and wetlands have no value. Despite a high rate of usage and the recreational and environment values, this area is evidently valueless in the quest to provide electricity.



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Check out this website!

There's an archive of sounds from parks and protected areas in nearly 20 countries on the website sound-sofyourpark.com. One can hear the waves off North Carolina, caribou stampede in northwestern Canada, and many other things.

There are options that preserve the special areas in Horizon Center. Much effort should be exerted to ensure the environmentally sensitive areas within the Horizon Center are recognized and protected.

1C. Oak Ridge Airport Update

There is information circulating that the Airport's Environmental Assessment could be released in the next 2—3 months. It seems likely that the approach and takeoff zone over Blair Road will necessitate tree removal from the nearby cemetery and that T-1 Pond (southwest corner of site known as K-25) will be filled in. The late Mark Peterson restored the habitat at the pond that now attracts a variety of birds and provides wetlands.

2. OBED/BIG SOUTH FORK NEWS

2A. Colorado-based MPNHP Superintendent to speak April 5

The Oak Ridge League of Women Voters Lunch with the League will feature Kris Kirby, Superintendent of the Manhattan Project National Historic Park. Kirby is superintendent over all three parks in the Manhattan Project National Historic Park.

Lunch with the League is in the Zoom modality. League of Women Voters members and nonmembers are welcome to attend this informative presentation. Guests are welcome to participate. Request the link by contacting Mary Ann Reeves (maryannreeves1@att.net). A few days after the event, attendees may view the recorded session on the League's website (<https://my.lwv.org/tennessee/oak-ridge>).

2B. Opportunities for Trail Keepers Available

Interested in being a Trail Keeper for Big South Fork or Obed? Trail Keepers are expected to hike their adopted trail at least four times during the calendar year. They also report on overall trail conditions, pick up any trash, and submit a trail report after each visit. For more info contact the Volunteer Coordinator's Office at (423) 569-9778, or email effie_houston@nps.gov.

2C. Registration for BSF Oscar Blevins Trail Runs Open

Registration is Open for the 2022 Oscar Blevins Trail Runs on Saturday, April 30. The three-run event includes:

- 1-mile kids' fun-run.
- 4-mile run.
- 7-mile run.

Pre-register through April 28, 2022 and receive a shirt commemorating your participation at: <https://runsignup.com/Race/TN/Oneida/OscarBlevinsTrailRunsatBigSouthForkNRRRA>.

Runners can earn 5 points toward their GO BIG 2022 Challenge.

Friends and Members in the Print Media

The Summer 2021 issue of National Parks printed a letter written by Don Barkman about the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal.

Bob Richards authored an article about Fran Wallas in the September/October Tennessee Conservationist.

The January 6 and February 24 issues of Norris Bulletin "Norris Birdwatching" column cited Chuck Nicholson's book Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Tennessee.

Joe Feeman authored an article about Lynn Jackson, a fellow forester and ball player that appeared in the January 13 Norris Bulletin.

The Norris Woman Club had Joe Feeman as the main speaker at a January meeting, as reported in the January 13 Norris Bulletin.

Frances Lamberts authored a column about E. O. Wilson and his contributions that appeared in the January 15 Johnson City Press.

An article about the Great Backyard Bird Count, birds and how to attract them to your backyard, contributed by Chuck Nicholson, appeared in the January 20 Norris Bulletin.

Linda James and her new restaurant, 201 Café and Wine Bar, were featured in the January 21 Oak Ridger.

Michelle Campanis was the featured speaker in an AAUW virtual program on creating a landscape that supports the environment. This was announced in the January 21 Oak Ridger.

Joe Feeman wrote an article about our changing forests that appeared in the January 27 Norris Bulletin.

Chuck Nicholson wrote an article about native shrubs that appeared in the February 10 Norris Bulletin.

The February 17 Norris Bulletin featured an article about a volunteer effort to get rid of the big stump in the Commons. The article was written by Chuck Nicholson.

2D. Vaunted Vault Toilets Vanquish Port-a-Potties

The promised concrete vault toilets have been installed at Barnett Bridge, Jett Bridge, Lily Bridge, and Nemo Day Use Area. The new toilets require a fraction of the maintenance compared to the outdated +30-year-old port-o-potties that were replaced, and better serve visitors. Thank you, Obed staff!

3. CUMBERLANDS

3A. Flatrock USA Motorsports Park Information

The Motorsports Park was originally planned to be constructed in the Horizon Center business park in Oak Ridge, TN. It found a new home after being unwilling to satisfy DOE requirements for evaluating its impact on natural areas it wanted to use within the Horizon Center. It is now called Flatrock USA and has a group page on Facebook. There has been very little in the way of announcements from the developer, Mr. Bittle, since the track location was moved.

On Nov. 3, 2021, Mr. Bittle purchased 844 acres at 998 Pig Path Road in Cumberland County (near Crab Orchard) for \$2,052,800. It will be the new home for the racetrack and is located just off I-40 near an RV sales center. Mr. Bittle was able

to buy twice the land for half the price of his planned deal in Oak Ridge. In November, a team of track designers from Tilke Engineering was at the site taking measurements for the track.

Mr. Bittle has promoted an expanded view of the MSP complex he intends to construct to include amenities not mentioned with the Oak Ridge site. Since all of those plans are speculative at the present time, they are not listed here. - Don Barkman



Location of Flatrock USA. I-40 runs across the photo from 3:00 to 12:00.

3B. Piney River Bluffs are now part of Cumberland Trail State Park

More than 350 acres of land in Rhea County has been acquired by the State of Tennessee, with the help of TennGreen Land Conservancy and the Open Space Institute. The area is near Spring City, in Rhea County.

This high priority acquisition provides protection of the 11-mile trail section through Piney River Gorge. It also protects the connection to Soak Creek State Scenic River. The Cumberland Trail now extends nearly 300 miles through 11 counties.

The Bluffs lie within the Cradle of Southern Appalachia, a tri-state, collaborative landscape conservation blueprint created by the Thrive Regional Partnership.

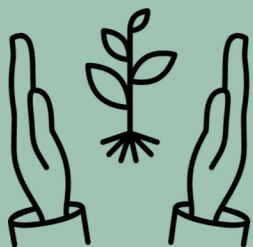
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4. TCWP NEWS

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.]

Obed River Cleanup from Kayaks – Saturday, March 26

Kayakers are encouraged to join TCWP, in cooperation with the National Park Service, for a whitewater clean-up trip on the Obed River on Saturday, March 26. The Park Service will staff a raft to be used for garbage collection.

Weather and river conditions are unpredictable, and decisions about the nature of the trip will likely be made the evening before the event. If water levels do not permit collecting trash from the river, there will be mini-cleanups at various put-ins. Participants should wear wicking fabric, not cotton clothes, and will need to bring lunch and water.

Participants will meet at 9 a.m. Eastern at the Obed Wild and Scenic River Visitors Center in Wartburg. For more information, contact Sandra Goss at 865-583-3967 or via email at Sandra@sandrakgoss.com.

Oak Ridge Hike with Sierra Club/AFORR/TCWP– Saturday, April 2

The Sierra Club Harvey Broome Chapter, Advocates for the Oak Ridge Reservation, and TCWP will cosponsor a hike to explore parts of Oak Ridge's North Boundary Greenway, the Horizon Center natural area, and Black Oak Ridge Conservation Easement on April 2.

We'll meet at 9 a.m. at one of the eastern trailheads for the North Boundary Greenway (coordinates are 35.976887°, -84.337905°). The parking area is about 0.1 mile southwest of the intersection of Wisconsin Avenue and Oak Ridge Turnpike. The trip will be an easy to moderate out-and-back walk, depending on how long folks want to walk. We'll enjoy

the beauty of the greenway and also explore and talk about the proposed power line that will directly affect parts of the Horizon Center natural area and indirectly affect parts of the Black Oak Ridge Conservation Easement.

Maximum roundtrip distance from the trailhead to the mouth of East Fork Polar Creek is about 7.3 miles, mostly on gravel roads. Participants are urged to wear sturdy shoes, carry plenty of water and snacks/lunch, and dress for the weather. - *Jimmy Groton*

Garlic Mustard Pull/Wildflower Walk – Saturday, April 9

The Greenway behind Oak Ridge's Rolling Hills Apartments (formerly known as the Garden Apartments) is one of the best wildflower trails in Anderson County, but it is threatened by garlic mustard, a very invasive exotic that crowds out native plants. TCWP and Greenways Oak Ridge have been making headway in recent years in ridding the trail of this harmful plant. Volunteers are needed to help with the effort again this year.

We will meet at 10 a.m. at the rear parking lot (near the woods) behind 101-135 West Vanderbilt Drive. Wear sturdy shoes and weather-appropriate clothes, and bring water, food/snacks, and a digging spike or similar tool if you own one. TCWP board members Jimmy Groton and Larry Pounds will help with wildflower identification.

Spring Wildflower Pilgrimage at Frozen Head State Park – Saturday, April 16

This joint outing for TCWP and the Tennessee Native Plant Society will provide an excellent opportunity to see spring wildflowers. This will be a switch from last year: we will start from Panther Branch Trailhead. The first half-mile is ideal for those with rather limited hiking capabilities; the trail is wide and flat. For those continuing, the next one mile along Panther Branch is steeper and rougher but still only moderate. Panther Branch is a place to see dwarf ginseng (*Panax trifolius*).

We'll meet at the Frozen Head State Park office parking area at 10 a.m. Eastern time. Bring water, a lunch, and bug spray. Your RSVP helps with planning and allows for notification in case of cancellation; contact Larry Pounds at 865-705-8516 or PoundsL471@aol.com. - *Larry Pounds*

Stinging Fork Falls to Piney Falls Walk – Saturday, April 23

For this joint TCWP/Tennessee Native Plant Society outing we will caravan from the Spring City Exxon station to the Lower Piney River Trailhead to start a shuttle, leaving some cars there. We'll then carpool to the Stinging Fork Falls Trailhead, and hike back from there to the Piney River Trailhead. (If COVID prevents a shuttle, we'll do an In-and-back-out.) This section of the Cumberland Trail was completed in the fall 2018. Which spring flowers we will see is hard to predict, but the route is truly scenic. This is the third time this outing has been scheduled. Weather has been a problem, but it is too good an outing for us not to keep trying.

Total walking distance will be about six miles, if you choose. The trail is up and down with many steps. As an alternative, participants are welcome to head back early to the Stinging Fork Trailhead. (They will need a car there or will have a wait till the afternoon, when the shuttle is completed.) With this alternative, participants could drive back from the Stinging Fork Trailhead to the Piney River Trail Head and walk in along the flat trail by Soak Creek to meet the rest of the group as they reach Soak Creek.

We'll meet for carpooling in Oak Ridge at the Gold's Gym/Books-A-Million parking lot (at the end close to S. Illinois Avenue, near Salsarita's) in time to leave Oak Ridge at 8:45 a.m. Eastern; or hikers can meet the group at the Rocky Top/ Exxon/ McDonald's on US 27 in Spring City at 10 a.m. Eastern. Bring water, a lunch, and bug spray. Your RSVP helps with planning and allows for notification in case of cancellation; contact Larry Pounds at 865-705-8516 or PoundsL471@aol.com. - *Larry Pounds*

Wildflower Greenway Walk – Saturday, April 30

TCWP will sponsor a wildflower walk on Oak Ridge's Wildflower Greenway on April 30. We'll meet at 9 a.m. at the eastern trailhead for the Wildflower Greenway Trail. The trailhead is located on East Vanderbilt Drive between the intersections with Valparaiso and Villanova Roads (<http://tnlandforms.us/greenways/maps03/wf.html>).

The Greenway trail is only 0.8 mile one way, but packs a lot of wildflower punch for such a short trail. We should see a lot of the same flowers we usually see earlier in the month at the Garlic Mustard Pull, but we should also see some other interesting flowers that bloom a little later in the spring. Last year we were intrigued to find an unusual white form of Vasey's trillium (normally red).

The trail is moderately difficult and can be muddy. There is at least one small stream crossing. Participants should dress accordingly, and it's always good to bring plenty of water and snacks in case you get hungry. - *Jimmy Groton*

Crab Orchard Mountain Walk – Saturday, May 21

This joint outing for TCWP and the Tennessee Native Plant Society is scheduled in hopes of catching spreading pogonia (*Cleistes bifaria*) and prairie lily (*Lilium philadelphicum*) in flower. They are both beautiful, the orchid in a subtle way and the lily in a very showy way. We should see a variety of flowers as we walk an open area, power line, and forested area with streams and rock formations. After the main walk there is a quality wetland that can be visited. Attendees can choose a shuttle or can walk the whole loop using a road-walk portion. As always, there is the option of turning back early. If COVID prevents a shuttle, we will do an In-and-back-out or complete the loop

Distance is estimated at 3 miles for those doing the shuttle and 4.5 for those walking the loop. The power line part of the walk is the same as some of us did last fall; the flowers, of course, will be totally different. The trail under the power line is steep in places.

We'll meet for carpooling in Oak Ridge at the Gold's Gym/Books-A-Million parking lot (at the end close to S. Illinois Avenue, near Salsarita's) in time to leave Oak Ridge at 8:45 a.m. Eastern; or meet the group at the Marathon gas station at the I-40 Crab Orchard exit east of Crossville at 10 a.m. Eastern. Bring water, a lunch, and bug spray. Your RSVP helps with planning and allows for notification in case of cancellation; contact Larry Pounds at 865-705-8516 or PoundsL471@aol.com. - *Larry Pounds*

Elza Gate Greenway Walk – Saturday, May 28

This joint Oak Ridge outing for TCWP and the Tennessee Native Plant Society will emphasize tree and shrub identification along the greenway. The outing, on a flattish paved trail, should work for those with limited walking ability. Wheelchairs are a possibility. Total out-and-back distance is about 1.5 miles. As usual, participants can turn back when they want.

We'll meet at Elza Gate Park on the Oak Ridge Turnpike near Melton Lake Drive at 9 a.m. Eastern time. Bring water, lunch, and bug spray. Your RSVP helps with planning and allows for notification in case of cancellation; contact Larry Pounds at 865-705-8516 or PoundsL471@aol.com. - *Larry Pounds*

4B. Recent Events

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

In a January 25 Zoom program cosponsored by TCWP and the UT Arboretum Society, Conservation Fisheries Inc. co-founder and co-director Pat Rakes gave an overview of the non-profit's history and current work to a Zoom audience of more than 100 people. CFI's mission is to preserve aquatic biodiversity, primarily rare freshwater fishes.

A large number of freshwater fish species in the Southeastern U.S. are in peril, Rakes said, particularly in the Tennessee and Cumberland River drainages. CFI has since 1992 been working with many federal, state, and non-governmental organizations to save them through capture, breeding, and propagating them for restocking. To date more than 70 species of darters, chubs, shiners, madtoms, and others have been propagated. Rakes described the process of feeding the fish in CFI's more than 800 aquariums, as well as provisions made for them to lay eggs. Information about CFI's work is available at www.conservationfisheries.org. – *Carol Grametbauer*

OWCA Hike – Identifying Trees in Winter– Saturday, February 5

On Saturday, February 5, TCWP board member Jimmy Groton led a walk along the Point Trail at the Obed Wild and Scenic River to help people learn to identify trees and other plants in winter. TCWP and the Obed Watershed Community Association were cosponsors for this event.

Eleven people braved cold weather to attend. Hikers enjoyed the beauty of Clear Creek and the Obed and learned to identify many native Cumberland Plateau trees, shrubs, and other plants. – *Jimmy Groton*

Alley Ford Workday - Saturday, February 12

On February 19, TCWP, the National Park Service, and the Cumberland Trail State Park sponsored a day of trail work and hiking on the Alley Ford segment of the Cumberland Trail State Park and Obed Wild and Scenic River. This year marked the 24th anniversary of TCWP's 1998 adoption of this section of the Cumberland Trail as part of our ongoing stewardship efforts.

We had 22 TCWP volunteers—along with State Park Rangers Seth Webster and Dalton Miller and Obed WSR Rangers Matt Hudson and Thomas Hall—who braved the threat of rain to clean out clogged water bars, brush the area along the trail, and work to regrade sections of the trail. This year we broke into three small groups to cover specific sections of the trail more efficiently. We covered the trail from Rock Creek Campground past Alley Ford to the Catoosa Wildlife Management area boundary. – *Jimmy Groton*

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

More than 100 people attended a February 22 Zoom program cosponsored by TCWP and the UT Arboretum Society to hear Stacy Clark, a research forester with the USDA Forest Service and an adjunct professor at the University of Tennessee, describe her work in connection with restoration of the American chestnut (*Castanea dentata*). Though a variety of non-native species had been impacting American chestnuts since the early 1800s, the chestnut blight, a “wound parasite” fungus, took out all adult trees in the Eastern U.S. by the 1940s.

Clark discussed the various approaches to blight resistance work, which has been going on for many years since trees mature slowly. Her work is done in connection with The American Chestnut Foundation's (TACF) breeding program, in which resistant genes are conferred into the chestnut genome. She and her associates put back-crossed chestnuts from ACF “into the real world” by planting them and studying their performance in national forests in Tennessee, North Carolina, and Virginia. Current blight resistance levels are intermediate, Clark said, partly due to other non-native pests including root rot caused by *Phytophthora cinnamomi*.

Clark told her audience that a free online course dealing with chestnut restoration is available at www.srs.fs.usda.gov/compass/2020/12/01/srs-releases-new-american-chestnut-course/. – *Carol Grametbauer*

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

- March 26, Obed River Cleanup from Kayaks
- April 2, Oak Ridge Hike with Sierra Club/AFORR/TCWP
- April 9, Garlic Mustard Pull/Wildflower Walk
- April 16, Spring Wildflower Pilgrimage at Frozen Head State Park
- April 23, Stinging Fork Falls to Piney Falls Walk
- April 30, Wildflower Greenway Walk
- May 21, Crab Orchard Mountain Walk
- May 28, Elza Gate Greenway Walk

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