Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning

Taking Care of Wild Places Since 1966

TCWP November 2025 Newsletter

Join us to celebrate a wonderful year at the Holiday & New Member Party

Date / Time: December 11, 2025, from 7:00 to 9:00 pm

Location: Room 102, First Presbyterian Church, 1051 Oak Ridge Turnpike in Oak Ridge

To bring: Please bring an hors d'oeuvre or dessert to share. Have a favorite eggnog recipe? Bring it along.

This is a great time for new members to meet long-term members. All TCWP members and friends are invited. We look forward to an evening of fun and fellowship to kick off the holiday season.

Check out the back page for a classic TCWP holiday gift idea!

INSIDE TCWP

1. Rails to Trails: Listening, Learning, and Moving Forward

TCWP began its work in Anderson County by helping to build community support for the proposed Rails to Trails project—a 41-mile corridor that could one day connect Oneida to Moore's Camp through some of East Tennessee's most scenic landscapes. We started by drafting resolutions of support for the cities of Norris, Clinton, and Oak Ridge, all of which were unanimously approved by their city councils.

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Support TCWP
by donating, joining, or renewing your membership

TCWP Board Meeting

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

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

This success would not have been possible without Don Barger's leadership in Norris and Johnny Cosgrove's outreach in Clinton, both of whom helped convey the project's potential for recreation, tourism, and community connection.

As interest grew, Commissioner Vowell reached out and encouraged us to hold a public meeting in the Rosedale area, located in the historic New River community. He introduced us to Scotty Phillips, owner of the old Rosedale Elementary School, who generously offered his facility and shared the community's deep history—rooted in coal mining, logging, and resilience. Through Scotty, we also met local craftsman and songwriter Jimmy Byrge, who has preserved the stories of the New River community through poems, short stories and songs. Learning about this history and meeting the people who carry it forward has been an honor and a reminder of what "place" truly means.

We held the public meeting on October 4th, where many voiced concerns. The opposition largely centers on two issues: some landowners believe that with the rails removed, their land reverts to them, and others worry that an open trail could invite more disruptive ATV use. These are valid concerns that deserve careful attention. We've learned that any county commission decision will likely follow the lead of the two commissioners representing this community, one of whom suggested a negative resolution based on the communities' opposition. TCWP presented a packet of information prior to Anderson County's October Operations meeting and then addressed the commission in person to request that they pause any action until the community has a chance to better understand the project. The Commission gave us until their December 8th meeting.

Our next step is to complete a limited title search to possibly demonstrate that most of the corridor will not revert to adjacent landowners and to share that information directly with residents. TCWP remains committed to listening, learning, and working with the New River community to ensure that any path forward honors both the land and the people who call it home.

2. TCWP Presses Ahead in Federal Fight Over Oak Ridge Waste Dump

**This article is summarized by TCWP and is not authored by our lawyers who filed this lawsuit.

DOE and EPA Seek Dismissal and Transfer in Oak Ridge Waste Lawsuit

In response to TCWP's federal lawsuit over the Environmental Management Disposal Facility (EMDF), the U.S. Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Agency filed a motion arguing that the case should largely be dismissed or moved to Tennessee. The agencies claim that TCWP's complaint doesn't show that they violated any *mandatory, nondiscretionary duties* under federal law. They say their cleanup decisions at the Oak Ridge Reservation, including how waste is treated and where it's stored, are discretionary choices allowed under the Superfund law (CERCLA), not legal obligations that can be challenged in court.

The agencies also argue that, even if the claims were valid, the lawsuit should be heard in the Eastern District of Tennessee, where the contamination and cleanup occur, rather than in Washington, D.C.

They assert that all required cleanup steps—such as public review, five-year evaluations, and treatment technology assessments—have been met, even if local groups disagree with the outcomes. In short, the DOE and EPA are asking the court to throw out part of TCWP's case and to transfer the rest back to Tennessee, saying that their cleanup approach already complies with federal law and existing agreements.

TCWP Challenges Federal Motion to Dismiss Oak Ridge Waste Lawsuit

In response to the Department of Energy (DOE) and Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) request to dismiss or transfer TCWP's lawsuit, TCWP and its partners filed a detailed 35-page reply arguing that the agencies cannot escape accountability for violating clear environmental laws. The filing contends that DOE and EPA had *mandatory duties* under the Superfund (CERCLA) and Clean Water Act to prevent the release of hazardous pollutants and to ensure the new Environmental Management Disposal Facility (EMDF) meets water-quality and treatment standards.

TCWP's reply disputes the agencies' claim that these were merely "discretionary" choices, pointing to years of contamination in Bear Creek and East Fork Poplar Creek as evidence that stronger safeguards are required. The plaintiffs also oppose moving the case to Tennessee, asserting that EPA's key regulatory decisions were made in Washington, D.C., making it the proper venue. In short, TCWP argues that federal agencies have repeatedly ignored legal obligations meant to protect East Tennessee's people and waterways—and that the court must require a cleanup plan that finally meets the law's intent.

3. TCWP Joins Call to Strengthen Tennessee's Haze Plan for Clearer Skies

Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning (TCWP) joined dozens of conservation and civic organizations in urging the EPA to reject Tennessee's proposed Regional Haze Plan, which fails to require meaningful pollution controls on major coal-fired power plants and industrial emitters. The plan, submitted by the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC), would allow more than 35,000 tons of haze-causing pollutants—including nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide, and particulate matter—to continue pouring into the air each year. These pollutants contribute to the smog and haze that obscure views in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and harm public health across East Tennessee. The coalition's letter points out that the plan ignores key sources of pollution such as TVA's Kingston Fossil Plant and Gallatin Plant, and fails to include proven control technologies that could sharply reduce emissions.

The letter also criticizes EPA's reliance on a new policy that weakens long-standing Clean Air Act protections and removes enforceable commitments to retire coal units, such as TVA's Cumberland Plant. Groups argued that Tennessee's plan represents a missed opportunity to make real progress toward cleaner air and clearer skies in some of the most visited and treasured national parks in the country. TCWP and its partners are calling on EPA to strengthen the plan by requiring emission reductions that would restore natural visibility in Class I areas like the Smokies and Big South Fork—protecting the health, scenic beauty, and environmental integrity of the region for future generations.

4. Crossville Water Supply Back in the Spotlight

We thank our friends at the Obed Watershed Community Association for keeping us informed about ongoing water-supply developments on the Cumberland Plateau. The issue first arose several years ago when the City of Crossville explored using water from the Obed Wild and Scenic River to address long-term supply challenges.

That proposal was ultimately rejected, and the city instead pursued raising the height of the Meadow Park Dam, though environmental mitigation costs between $50 and $100 million brought the project to a halt. Today, Crossville and surrounding communities—including BonDeCroft, West Cumberland, and South Cumberland utility districts—are again re-examining their options as they negotiate possible mergers under the Cumberland Plateau Water Authority.

During recent meetings, CPWA General Manager Jeff Dyer emphasized the need for a long-term regional solution to water shortages across the Plateau, even suggesting publicly that damming Daddy's Creek, a major tributary of the Obed, could be considered as part of that strategy. While these discussions remain preliminary, TCWP is deeply concerned about any proposal that could alter the Obed's free-flowing headwaters or threaten the river's federally protected status. We will continue to closely monitor this issue and, when the time comes, will call on our members to write letters, attend public hearings, and help ensure that the integrity of the Obed Wild and Scenic River is preserved.

NEWS CAPSULES

OAK RIDGE

1. $42 Million Plan Proposes Seven Projects to Restore Oak Ridge Natural Resources

The Natural Resources Trustees have released the draft of the first Restoration Plan for the Oak Ridge Reservation (ORR), proposing seven projects to restore resources damaged by contamination from the Manhattan Project-era nuclear operations. Funded by a $42 million settlement from the Department of Energy, the plan outlines restoration projects that include native vegetation planting on disturbed lands, invasive species removal, land conservation, stormwater improvements such as permeable pavements and septic conversions, and enhancements to public recreation areas like boat launches, trails, fishing piers, and wildlife viewing sites.

The Trustees—TDEC, TVA, DOE, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service—aim to restore natural resources in ways that replace what was lost due to contamination across the 37,000-acre Oak Ridge Reservation, about 15% of which remains affected by hazardous materials.

You can view the draft Restoration Plan here: https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/environment/remediation/documents/orr/rem_orr_restoration-plan.pdf

2. From Airport to Nuclear Site? Oak Ridge Council Delays Key Vote

The Oak Ridge City Council has postponed a vote on whether to transfer land originally designated for a municipal airport to Oklo, a private nuclear company proposing a $1.68 billion nuclear fuel recycling facility that could bring 800 jobs to the area. The project involves 247 acres at the Heritage Center, a portion of which—about 106 acres—was previously restricted by the U.S. General Services Administration for airport use. The city had earlier agreed to abandon airport plans near another proposed nuclear facility by Orano USA and to sell the land for nuclear industry use, with the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development expected to provide the purchase funds as an incentive.

During the meeting, Council member Ellen Smith, said she lacked sufficient details about Oklo's proposal to determine whether it was an appropriate fit for Oak Ridge. The council unanimously agreed to delay the vote until a meeting can be held with Oklo officials to learn more about the company's plans.

3. Pocket-Sized Power? Radiant Plans Portable Reactors in Oak Ridge

Radiant Nuclear, a California-based startup, has announced plans to build the world's first factory for portable nuclear generators at the historic K-27 and K-29 sites in Oak Ridge, marking a $280 million investment that will create about 175 jobs. The company's flagship product, the Kaleidos microreactor, is a 1-megawatt portable reactor designed to deliver clean, reliable power to remote areas, disaster zones, military operations, and other off-grid locations. Construction is expected to begin in 2026, with production launching by 2028. Radiant's decision to locate in Oak Ridge—a city whose nuclear roots stretch back to the Manhattan Project—reflects both the area's skilled workforce and its growing concentration of advanced nuclear ventures. In fact, Radiant becomes the sixth nuclear company to establish operations in the region, joining Oklo, Orano, Kairos Power, and others whose collective investments now exceed $10 billion.

The project underscores Oak Ridge's reemergence as a national hub for nuclear innovation while also raising new questions about oversight, safety, and sustainability. Radiant's technology could reduce reliance on fossil fuels and expand clean power access, but it also adds to the rapid nuclear buildout that some observers have dubbed a "second Manhattan Project." TCWP will continue to watch these developments carefully, advocating for responsible innovation that safeguards the region's environment and communities while honoring Oak Ridge's complex nuclear legacy.

4. Three Months Early — Because Nothing Says "What's the Rush?" Like Uranium Cleanup

The Oak Ridge Office of Environmental Management and its contractor, Isotek Systems, have surpassed a major cleanup milestone at Oak Ridge National Laboratory by processing 50 canisters of uranium-233 three months ahead of schedule, exceeding their 2025 goal with 77 canisters completed for the fiscal year. The project is part of the Department of Energy's effort to eliminate the nation's remaining uranium-233—radioactive material produced in the mid-20th century and stored for decades at ORNL—to reduce safety risks, cut long-term storage costs, and prepare the site for future redevelopment. Since beginning this phase of work in 2019, Isotek has processed over 40% of the remaining inventory and safely shipped nearly 490,000 pounds of waste off-site. In addition, workers are extracting thorium-229, a rare medical isotope vital for advanced cancer treatments, increasing the global supply by 1,700% and underscoring Oak Ridge's ongoing contribution to both environmental cleanup and medical innovation.

5. TCWP Monitors Oak Ridge's Expanding Role in Advanced Nuclear Development

Kairos Power is advancing its plans to construct two demonstration reactors on a 185-acre site in Oak Ridge as part of a $100 million investment to repurpose the former K-31 and K-33 gaseous diffusion plant area. The company's Hermes 2 Demonstration Plant, expected to generate 50 megawatts of power for the TVA grid by 2030, will support Google's AI data centers in Tennessee and Alabama. Working in partnership with Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL), Kairos is also using 3D-printed carbon-fiber molds to create complex concrete structures and radiation shielding for the reactors. The project, which has received NRC construction permits, represents a major step in what some describe as a new era of nuclear innovation in Oak Ridge.

As these projects accelerate, TCWP is closely monitoring the rapid resurgence of nuclear activity—a movement many have called the "second Manhattan Project." The reactors will use TRISO fuel, a next-generation uranium fuel containing thousands of microscopic particles encased in ceramic and graphite to withstand extreme heat and prevent radioactive release. With its long history of engagement in Oak Ridge and deep ties to the national laboratory community, TCWP aims to ensure that environmental transparency, safety accountability, and public involvement remain central to the region's expanding nuclear enterprise.

6. Citizen Science Birding Program Takes Flight at UT Arboretum

The American Museum of Science and Energy (AMSE) and the University of Tennessee Arboretum Society have launched a new Citizen Science Birding Program to engage the public in hands-on bird observation and conservation. The program began with a free guided bird walk on Oct. 15 at the UT Arboretum in Oak Ridge, led by AMSE educator Corky Witt, and will continue monthly with different birding experts.

Participants will learn bird identification, binocular use, and how to record sightings on eBird and iNaturalist, contributing valuable data to global biodiversity studies. AMSE is also seeking donations of binoculars to make the walks more accessible for youth and beginners. The collaboration celebrates both organizations' long-standing commitments to science education, conservation, and community engagement in Tennessee.

STATE OF TENNESSEE

1. Gov. Lee Expands Tennessee's State Parks, Emphasizing Land and Water Conservation

Governor Bill Lee highlighted his administration's record-setting efforts to expand Tennessee's state parks and preserve natural lands, with 14 new parks created so far and more in development. Planned additions include Fort Southwest Point in Kingston, Devil's Backbone, and Head of the Crow State Park, which will connect several protected natural areas in South Cumberland. Lee emphasized balancing the state's rapid growth with conservation, saying future generations should inherit a well-preserved Tennessee.

He also reaffirmed his commitment to protecting key ecosystems, particularly the Duck River, recognized as the most biologically diverse river in North America. Following a 2024 executive order on watershed protection, state agencies and local partners formed the Duck River Planning Partnership to safeguard the river's health—though some debate continues over proposals to rebuild the long-abandoned Columbia Dam as a preservation strategy.

2. Forced Reactor Outages Push TVA Back Toward Fossil Fuels

Over the past year, the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) faced significant reliability challenges as its seven nuclear reactors experienced 14 outages in 13 months, including 12 unplanned shutdowns, the highest in recent memory. The most severe occurred at the Sequoyah Nuclear Plant, where an equipment failure in July 2024 led to an 11-month outage, followed by a full-plant failure just one day after restarting due to a heat-related water shortage. These forced outages dropped nuclear generation to its lowest share of TVA's power mix since 2007, down to 31%, with more than 90% of the lost output replaced by fossil fuels—mainly natural gas and coal. The shift increased greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution, while also driving up fuel costs that may have raised consumer electric bills across the region. TVA's high number of forced shutdowns has raised concerns about grid reliability even as the utility pursues plans for new small modular reactors in Oak Ridge, with state leaders calling for rapid nuclear expansion amid ongoing maintenance and operational strains.

3. Landfills Filling Up, Task Force Seeks Solutions

Tennessee's new Solid Waste Advisory Task Force held its first meeting last month to address the state's growing waste crisis, as landfill capacity declines and disposal costs rise. The 15-member group of legislators and waste management experts aims to make Tennessee a national leader in waste handling by 2050. State data show that Tennesseans generate about 13 million tons of waste annually, with most of it ending up in the state's 29 landfills, many of which face expansion limits due to local opposition.

Recycling and composting remain underdeveloped—Tennessee ranks 48th nationally with a recycling rate of just 22%—and food waste makes up roughly one-quarter of landfill content. Officials cited inconsistent county policies, lack of public education, and limited funding as key barriers to improvement. Advocates, including the Tennessee Environmental Council, urged stronger state leadership, expanded recycling and composting infrastructure, and more investment in public awareness to reduce waste and extend landfill capacity.

4. TennGreen and Partners Secure Key Expansion for Cumberland Trail

In April 2025, TennGreen Land Conservancy acquired 58 acres near Wartburg to expand the Justin P. Wilson Cumberland Trail State Park and strengthen trail connectivity between the Morgan County Visitor Center and Frozen Head State Park. The property, located within the Catoosa, Frozen Head, and Upper Cumberland conservation areas and the Emory River watershed, provides important habitat for species such as green salamanders and cerulean warblers. Funded through a grant from The Nature Conservancy via Justin P. Wilson, the acquisition marks another milestone in a decades-long effort by TennGreen, Tennessee State Parks, and the Cumberland Trail Acquisition Task Force to complete the 300-mile Cumberland Trail, protecting Tennessee's ecological diversity and expanding public access to the state's natural heritage.

NATIONAL PARKS

1. Smokies Lose $8 Million a Day in Shutdown

During the ongoing federal government shutdown—the second-longest in U.S. history—America's national parks are losing millions in tourism and visitor spending each day, with the Great Smoky Mountains National Park suffering the greatest losses at more than $8 million daily. Straddling Tennessee and North Carolina, the Smokies draw over 12 million visitors a year, generating $2.8 billion in local economic benefit, making it the nation's most-visited and most economically significant park.

Despite severe National Park Service staff shortages, local leaders in Sevier County, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, and nearby towns have pooled roughly $85,000 per day to keep the park open through November 2, though those funds may not be reimbursed. Meanwhile, more than 450 former park officials and rangers have urged the Interior Department to close national parks until the shutdown ends, citing unsafe conditions and neglected maintenance. Local officials say they are trying to balance protecting the park's natural resources with sustaining the region's tourism-dependent economy.

REGIONAL AND NATIONAL

1. D.C. Circuit Ruling Limits Environmental Review in TVA Pipeline Case

Two recent D.C. Circuit decisions have major implications for environmental oversight of pipeline projects, including the Tennessee Gas Pipeline that will supply fuel to TVA's Cumberland Fossil Plant replacement. In Sierra Club and Appalachian Voices v. FERC, the court denied environmental groups' petition challenging FERC's approval of the pipeline, ruling that the agency had met its obligations under both the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Natural Gas Act. The court accepted FERC's view that replacing a coal unit with a gas plant would reduce emissions and concluded that the pipeline and plant did not need to be analyzed as connected actions. Citing the Supreme Court's recent *Seven County Infrastructure* decision, the panel declared that "the era of searching NEPA review is over," signaling a more deferential approach to agency decisions.

A companion analysis in *Legal Planet* criticized the ruling for stretching *Seven County* beyond its intended scope.

In Tennessee Pipeline v. FERC, the same case discussed more broadly, the court was faulted for effectively shielding agencies from meaningful judicial review by applying excessive deference under NEPA and even extending it to the Natural Gas Act, which has its own substantive requirements. The commentary warns that the decision could narrow opportunities for communities and advocates—like Sierra Club, Appalachian Voices, and SELC—to challenge fossil fuel infrastructure, potentially weakening oversight of pipelines, gas plants, and related environmental impacts across the Southeast.

2. EPA Moves to Weaken Coal Wastewater and Air Pollution Protections

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has proposed extending compliance deadlines for coal-fired power plants to meet wastewater discharge standards and is also considering revisions to the Regional Haze Rule, which limits air pollution that affects visibility in national parks and wilderness areas. The proposal would give utilities more time to meet effluent limitation guidelines, which restrict toxic pollutants such as mercury, cadmium, and arsenic in wastewater from coal plants. The agency claims the delay could save the energy sector $30 million to $200 million annually and help maintain electricity reliability amid growing power demand from data centers and industrial expansion. Critics, however, argue the move prioritizes industry profits over public health, warning that delaying implementation will expose communities to more toxic pollution.

In addition, the EPA is seeking public input on restructuring the Regional Haze Rule, asserting that the program has imposed excessive costs and needs "significant revisions." Environmental advocates, including the Sierra Club and NRDC, counter that weakening these safeguards would undermine decades of progress in protecting air and water quality. They note that current wastewater rules could eliminate over 300,000 tons of pollutants annually and that pollution from coal already costs the public up to $26 billion per year in health impacts. The proposal reflects the Trump administration's broader push to support the coal industry through regulatory rollbacks and new federal funding for plant retrofits.

3. EPA Cancels $156 Million Solar Program for Low-Income Tennesseans

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has terminated Tennessee's $156 million Solar for All grant, ending plans to help low-income households install solar panels across the state. The funding, part of a $7 billion national initiative created under the Inflation Reduction Act to expand clean energy access for about 900,000 families nationwide, had been on hold since President Donald Trump took office and froze disbursements for clean energy programs. Tennessee's Department of Environment and Conservation said its Office of Energy Programs had been developing implementation guidelines when the EPA canceled the award in early August. The agency thanked partners who contributed to the proposal, which now joins other halted climate and renewable energy efforts affected by the administration's suspension of Inflation Reduction Act funding.

4. Powering AI, Polluting Communities: The New Face of Environmental Racism

A new Media Justice report warns that Big Tech's rush to build massive data centers across the southern United States is reviving the region's legacy of environmental racism. Companies like Microsoft, Google, Amazon, and Meta have committed more than $200 billion to new facilities, often in Black and low-income communities with limited power to resist. The report draws parallels between today's "AI gold rush" and the industrial pollution of "Cancer Alley," arguing that the South is again being turned into a "sacrifice zone" of pollution, resource depletion, and rising energy costs. Since 2020, electricity rates in the region have climbed over 33%, while utilities expand fossil fuel infrastructure to meet tech demand and grant discounted rates to corporations.

Communities from Alabama to Tennessee are pushing back, citing threats to air, water, farmland, and democratic oversight.

Between May 2024 and March 2025, public opposition delayed or halted $64 billion in data center projects. Environmental advocates such as the Southern Environmental Law Center are also challenging new gas pipelines and plants being built to power these facilities, warning that they will lock the region into decades of pollution. Lawsuits and protests are emerging across the South, from Memphis—where the NAACP and SELC are suing Elon Musk's xAI for Clean Air Act violations—to Louisiana, where officials say Meta's $10-billion data center poses unacceptable risks to local residents and farmland. Critics argue that without stronger regulation and community benefit agreements, Big Tech's AI expansion could leave behind a "completely extracted South" marked by higher cancer rates, more fossil fuel dependency, and growing economic inequality.

TCWP Events

TCWP's Guidelines for Activities

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

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

1. Upcoming Events

Norris Watershed Hike – Saturday, November 22

The Norris Municipal Watershed, situated adjacent to Norris Dam State Park, is a 2,300-acre area that is the watershed of Clear Creek; it is managed for water quality protection, sustainable forest management, and public recreation. A network of about 30 miles of forest roads and single-track trails are managed by the Norris Watershed Board.

For this hike, we will meet in front of Norris Middle School at 9 a.m. (Those wishing to carpool from Oak Ridge can meet 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 for Norris no later than 8:15 a.m. Eastern.) After a short stroll across the commons through downtown Norris, by the elementary school, we will take Deer Ridge Trail to Observation Point Trail. We'll then walk a short distance to Observation Point, where we will have views of Norris Dam and the Cumberland Mountains in the distance. Back down the hill from Observation Point we'll take Eagle Trail, much of which was constructed by the CCC in the mid-30s. This trail parallels the Clinch River before climbing up to the city.

A short walk on Hickory Trail Road will lead to a trail that goes to Eric Harrold Park; then we'll walk down past the town center and back to the starting point. The hike, which passes through some nice old forest, is about 4 miles with some uphill sections. For more information, contact Joe Feeman at jcfeeman@comcast.net.

Sign up here: https://forms.gle/P7x58EZ4mMXsVoFG8

Holiday and New Member Party – Thursday, December 11

Join us to celebrate a wonderful year at the Holiday and New Member Party on December 11, 7 to 9 p.m., in Room 102 at First Presbyterian Church, 1051 Oak Ridge Turnpike in Oak Ridge. Please bring an hors d'oeuvre or dessert to share. Have a favorite eggnog recipe? Bring it along. This is a great time for new members to meet longtime members. All TCWP members and friends are invited. We look forward to an evening of fun and fellowship to kick off the holiday season!

Whites Creek Workday – Saturday, January 10

TCWP will sponsor a day of trail maintenance work at Whites Creek Small Wild Area in Rhea County at 10 a.m. January 10 as part of our ongoing stewardship activities for this TVA Small Wild Area trail. The trail loops onto land that TCWP purchased from Bowater several years ago, thanks to the generous support of our members. Participants should wear sturdy shoes or boots and bring work gloves, loppers, and small bow saws or folding saws. Some hand tools will be available at the event. Please be sure to bring clothing appropriate for weather conditions, as well as water, snacks, and/or a lunch.

Participants can meet for carpooling or caravanning in Oak Ridge at the Gold's Gym/Books-A-Million parking lot in Oak Ridge (at the end close to S. Illinois Avenue, near Salsarita's). We'll leave Oak Ridge at 9 a.m., or volunteers can join the crew at the trailhead at 10 a.m. We plan to spend three or four hours at the site, but volunteers may come and go as they wish. If the weather is uncooperative—excessive rain, or snow and ice—we will reschedule for the following Saturday.

Sign up here: https://forms.gle/P7x58EZ4mMXsVoFG8

If you RSVP it helps with planning and allows contacting in case of cancelation. Phone/email: Jimmy Groton, 865-805-9908, groton87@comcast.net.

Cumberland Trail Alley Ford Workday – Saturday, February 7

On February 7 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 also make some tools available at the event.

Participants can meet for carpooling in Oak Ridge at the Gold's Gym/Books-A-Million parking lot (meet at the end close to S. Illinois Avenue, near Salsarita's) in time to leave 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 the following Saturday.)

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 have forms available at the event. If you RSVP it helps with planning and allows contacting in case of cancelation, Phone/email: Jimmy Groton, 865-805-9908, groton87@comcast.net.

Recent Events

Van Buren County Power Line Outing – Saturday, September 6

We started out in rain, and it never stopped. The 13 of us walked into an area of yellow composites. Yellow came from many species. particularly tickseed sunflower (*Bidens polylepis*), tall coreopsis (*Coreopsis tripteris*), stiff-haired sunflower (*Helianthus hirsutus*) and Appalachian sunflower (*Helianthus atrorubens*). Less showy were three species of goldenrod, *Solidago odorata, S. nemoralis and S. rugosa*. What we saw was somewhat limited by extensive areas of controlled burn in the right-of-way. The prairie plants should benefit from the burn even next year. This powerline is known for its *Platanthera* orchids, but we only saw orchid fruit, due to the time of year. We found a dead glass lizard, which at first glance appeared to be a snake. This lizard has no legs, but does have visible ear openings which snakes do not. They are called glass lizards because they, like other lizards, can break. They can detach their tails to survive predator attacks on their tails. It was wonderful to enjoy the enthusiastic company of outdoor lovers even when we were dripping with rain. *Larry Pounds*

Point Trail at Obed Wild and Scenic River Saturday, September 13

An adventurous group of 17 people took advantage of the beautiful fall weather to hike the Point Trail at the Obed Wild and Scenic River. We first stopped at the overlook on Lily Bluff and enjoyed the view with the sourwoods and blueberries turning red. Then we all made our way the two miles to the point, the conjunction between the Obed River and Clear Creek. There the dwarf blazing star (*Liatris microcephala*) was blooming, along with a number of fall asters. In total we also found seven species of goldenrod (*Solidago spp.*) blooming. *Margaret Cumberland*

Summer Cedar Barrens Cleanup/Weed Wrangle® - Saturday, September 20

On Saturday, September 20, TCWP hosted our second Weed Wrangle® of the year at the Oak Ridge Barrens State Natural Area. This year we tried something a little different. We originally added the summer workday so volunteers could see the plants we are working to protect when they are flowering. Over the past few years, we've felt like our timing was off, and we were missing the best time to see our lovely prairie plants in full flower. This year we delayed our workday three weeks later in September.

This timing was good, and we caught most of the plants at their finest, 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 many other barrens plants were in full flower and doing well.

Twelve volunteers helped to remove bushy lespedeza and other plants from the barrens. Margaret and Flora Cumberland led volunteers on a short walk through the barrens to introduce them to our flowers and the unique habitat. After the morning's work and our look at the beautiful flowers, we had a nice lunch together by one of the Clinch River Environmental Studies Organization's (CRESO) wetlands. *Jimmy Groton*

National Public Lands Day - Saturday, September 27

Once again TCWP celebrated National Public Lands Day (NPLD) at TVA's Worthington Cemetery Ecological Study Area on Melton Hill Reservoir in Oak Ridge. NPLD is an annual event that focuses on both user enjoyment and celebrating volunteer conservation efforts on public lands. As in years past, TCWP partnered with TVA for a day of celebration, education, and stewardship, learning about the unique history of the Worthington family, the native plants and habitats in the study area, and the exotic invasive plants that also grow there.

In the spirit of NPLD, we continued our work to remove exotic invasive plants and trash and to restore the native cedar barren. This year 17 people helped with the NPLD event. We began the activities with an interpretive walk highlighting the unique historic and natural resources at the ESA. Ann Worthington did a great job sharing her knowledge of the Worthington family with us in unique ways, always highlighting some new aspect of the family's rich history.

Last year we had to skip our NPLD celebration because of Hurricane Helene. This year we were able to make up for that a bit by having two workdays at Worthington: one in May and one in September. City of Oak Ridge stormwater interns Mya Mosely and Cash Winn helped us organize a workday in May, and we got a lot of work accomplished in the cedar barren and the cemetery. In September we were able to expand the work we accomplished in May, and the cemetery and cedar barren habitat looked great. Matt Moore and Angela Sutton (both with TVA) and Shelby Lynn Sanders (Foothills Conservancy) also provided lots of help.

At the completion of our work, TCWP provided a pizza lunch for all volunteers. Like always, we got a lot accomplished, and everybody had a great time. *Jimmy Groton*

"Hidden Rivers of Southern Appalachia" Screening – Monday, September 29

An audience of 103 attended the September 29 screening of "Hidden Rivers of Southern Appalachia" at the Grove Theater in Oak Ridge, cosponsored by the UT Arboretum Society, University of Tennessee/TSU Extension, and TCWP. This special in-person screening of the film gave attendees a breathtaking one-hour journey through the secret rivers and streams of our Southern Appalachian region, home to North America's most biologically rich aquatic life. Staff from Conservation Fisheries joined the presentation for questions at the end of the program.

Secret City Pride Festival Table – Sunday, October 12

PFLAG Oak Ridge celebrated the first ever Secret City Pride on Sunday, October 12, in an event held at the Oak Ridge Unitarian Universalist Church. It was a great success, with more than 350 attendees. It featured live entertainment, vendors, community resource groups (including TCWP), a kids'' play area, food trucks and a dunk tank that a number of us took a bath in. PFLAG Oak Ridge is sponsored by six faith communities, quite unusual for an LGBTQ+ organization. Each of them helped in the planning and operation of Secret City Pride. As with environmental issues in these changing times, LGBTQ outreach is as important as ever. It was terrific to see such a large crowd of supportive neighbors.

PFLAG (formerly known as an acronym for Parents Family and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) is the United States' largest organization uniting families and allies with people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer (LGBTQ+). Its missions are to provide opportunities for dialogue about sexual orientation, gender identities, and to create a society that is healthy and respectful of human diversity.

Each of the six faith organizations are located in Oak Ridge. Meetings are open to LGBTQ + people and their allies/ supporters. Bring a Friend Oak Ridge has an active PFLAG group that meets monthly, rotating the venue among our faith communities, including the First Presbyterian, First Methodist, Saint Stephen's Episcopal, Oak Ridge Unitarian Universalist Churches, United Church - Chapel on the Hill, and the Jewish Congregation of Oak Ridge. *John Jaruzel, President, PFLAG Oak Ridge*

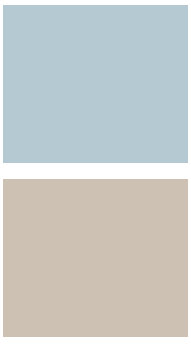
Share your love for wild places this season!

Our vintage TCWP t-shirts with the original ironwood leaf logo are available for $15–$20, perfect for gift-giving or keeping for yourself. Most sizes are M and L. Colors are blue or beige. Stop by the Dec. 11 Holiday Party or email Nancy to arrange pickup while supplies last.

Front

Back

Available colors:



TCWP NEWSLETTER 384 November 2025

TENNESEE CITIZENS FOR WILDERNESSS PLANNING

P.O BOX 6873
OAK RIDGE, TENNESSEE 37831

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Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning

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Calendar:

- November 22 – Norris Watershed Hike
- December 11 – Holiday and New Member Party
- January 10 – Whites Creek Workday
- February 7 – Cumberland Trail Alley Ford Workday

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

Tennessee Citizens of Wilderness Planning (TCWP)

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

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