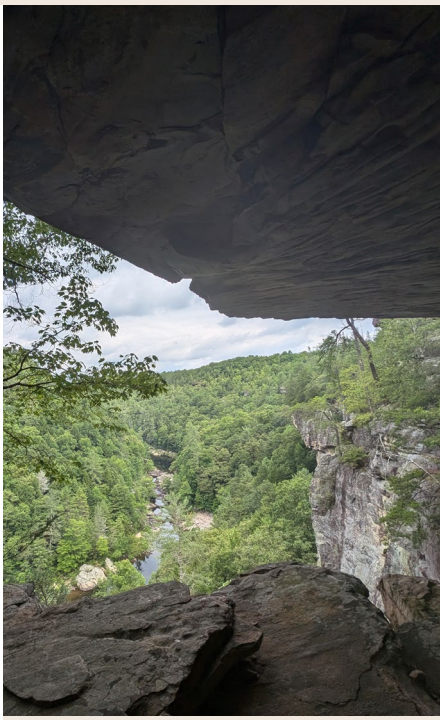
Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning

Taking Care of Wild Places Since 1966

TCWP September 2025 Newsletter



September 2025 - Newsletter No.383

INSIDE TCWP

1. Save the Date: TCWP Annual Meeting – November 8, 2025 at Frozen Head State Park

Mark your calendar! TCWP's Annual Meeting will be held on **Saturday, November 8, 2025,** in the Emory Room at Frozen Head State Park. Registration begins at 9:00 a.m. ET, and the program starts at 9:30 a.m.

Our featured speaker will be Jacob Ingram, Park Manager at Frozen Head, who will share: "Updates on the park, its natural areas, and resource management projects over the past year." TCWP President, Mark Bevelhimer, will also provide an overview of our 2025 programs. Members will have the opportunity to review the slate of board candidates (see the last page of this newsletter) and cast their votes. **Discover who the recipient of the TCWP Founder's Award will be!**

After lunch, attendees may join one of two guided hikes in the park (see the Events section for details).

RSVP by October 24

Breakfast items—including coffee, juice, hard-boiled eggs, and an assortment of breads and muffins—will be provided at no cost to members. Lunch will be catered by Chef Sarah Shanks at the Culinary Arts Program at Morgan County Career and Technical Center, featuring vegetarian soups, a sandwich with choice of breads, cookies and drinks. Your cost is $10 per person to be paid when you register on November 8th.

To RSVP, please submit your name, contact information, number of attendees, and food choices no later than **October 24**. You may:

- Complete the Google RSVP form: https://forms.gle/J3sVmJickXKY2Pcp7
- Email your information to Nancy Manning at nancymanning3@tcwp.org.
- Mail your RSVP to TCWP, P.O. Box 6873, Oak Ridge, TN 37831 (must arrive by October 24th).

Inside this issue

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.

Our Guest Speaker

Jacob Ingram is the Park Manager at Frozen Head State Park and Natural Area. A second-generation park professional, Jacob grew up at Cedars of Lebanon State Park, where his father served as ranger and manager for 45 years.

Jacob began his own career with Tennessee State Parks in 2005 at Henry Horton State Park while completing his bachelor's degree in Agricultural Business at Middle Tennessee State University.

In 2009, he became a park ranger at Tims Ford State Park, later serving at Frozen Head, Natchez Trace, and the Cumberland Trail. In 2018, Jacob returned to Frozen Head as Park Manager, where he continues to lead conservation and recreation efforts. He lives in Deer Lodge, TN, with his wife Chasity and their two children.

2. Liane and Bill Russell honored by City of Oak Ridge – by Dan Robbins

At its regular meeting August 11th, 2024, Oak Ridge City Council unanimously passed a resolution renaming the North Ridge Trail the Liane and Bill Russell North Ridge Trail.

This was a resolution forwarded to Council by the City's Recreation and Parks Advisory Board, where it had received only positive votes.

I introduced this resolution as a member of the Recreation and Parks Advisory Board some time ago. I felt it important to honor the Russells for their work in establishing this trail (together with TCWP) as well as their historic sponsorship of the Federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, which was the first law of its kind to be enacted in the Nation.

This was Oak Ridge's first greenway, which TCWP had created well before the Greenway's Oak Ridge organization was formed. After Green Ways Oak Ridge was formed in 1994, Liane/TCWP came to me as the Greenways Oak Rigge Chairman and asked if the North Ridge Trail could be incorporated into the new greenways system. Of course, I enthusiastically said "Yes." Thus, this trail became the oldest greenway in our system, which now has 12 greenways consisting of 85 miles.

3. Explore and Restore student presents petition signatures to state representative

In the July newsletter, we reported that because of the Explore and Restore program that TCWP initiated at Robertsville Middle School, one of the 7th grade students, Jayden Holbrook, took it upon himself to draft a petition stating opposition to Tennessee House Bill 809—a bill that would shield pesticide manufacturers from liability. In August, Jayden had the opportunity to present the 167 signatures opposing the bill that he collected to State Representative Rick Scarbrough (33rd District).

Jayden and Representative Scarbrough were joined by Jayden's mother Deb, his science teacher Stephanie Sluss, and TCWP President Mark Bevelhimer. Representative Scarbrough took the time to explain further the intricacies of the bill to Jayden and his position on different parts of the bill; the bill did not make it to the house floor for a vote in 2025 but could possibly be re-introduced in 2026.

Representative Scarbrough complimented Jayden on his hard work gathering the signatures, encouraged him to continue to stay involved in community affairs, and offered to let Jayden know if the bill was resurrected next year. Well done, Jayden!!

4. TCWP Launches Citizen Science Program to Monitor Pipeline Impacts

With Enbridge now holding one of the final state permits (from TDEC) to construct the Ridgeline gas pipeline, TCWP has moved quickly to ensure that impacts to the Obed Wild & Scenic River and its tributaries are closely watched and documented. The 122-mile pipeline will cross streams and wetlands hundreds of times, including 162 crossings within the Obed watershed. Recognizing the risks, TCWP has joined Ridgeline Voices, a coalition of groups working to stop the pipeline and address its threats. Within this coalition, TCWP leads a citizen science monitoring program focused on water quality impacts.

Over the past several months, TCWP volunteers and board members have designed a monitoring plan that combines science, stewardship, and education. The program will monitor water quality before, during, and after construction at stream crossings, using photos, turbidity meters, and water sampling to document impacts of pipeline installation. To date, TCWP has identified six priority crossings—including White Creek, Island Ford Road, Little Clear Creek, Nelson Road, Price Branch, and the Emory River—and is working with local landowners to secure legal access for sampling. More sites will likely be added as construction advances across East Tennessee.

This citizen science effort is designed not only to provide critical evidence if standards are violated, but also to engage and train volunteers. Participants will learn to use scientific tools, collect and store data, and understand how turbidity and sedimentation affect aquatic life. By combining conservation education with hands-on action, TCWP is building a team of advocates equipped to protect our waters today and in the future.

The Ridgeline Voices coalition has also established a parallel community safety subgroup. While TCWP focuses on waterways, this team is working with fire, health, and emergency officials to evaluate local infrastructure and preparedness in case of accidents or explosions. Together, these efforts ensure that both people and natural resources are not forgotten as the pipeline moves forward.

Through vigilance, science, and community partnerships, TCWP and its allies are making sure that the Obed watershed's streams, forests, and wildlife have strong defenders.

If you would like to volunteer to be trained as a citizen scientist or to help with community safety issues, please contact nancymanning@tcwp.org.

5. TCWP Joins Lawsuit Over Oak Ridge Waste Landfill

TCWP is one of six organizations that have filed a federal lawsuit challenging DOE and the EPA for approving the Environmental Management Disposal Facility (EMDF) at the Oak Ridge Reservation. The suit argues that the agencies violated the Clean Water Act, Superfund law, and their own regulations by allowing a new landfill that would discharge unsafe levels of radioactive and toxic waste into Tennessee waterways. For TCWP, this action reflects our long-standing commitment to protecting the Oak Ridge Reservation, the largest block of unfragmented forest in the Tennessee Valley and home to more than 1,500 species of plants and animals, including many that are threatened or endangered.

The EMDF would receive waste from the demolition of contaminated DOE structures, including long-lasting pollutants such as mercury and PCBs. Scientific analysis shows that these contaminants could accumulate in fish and wildlife, creating health risks for people and undermining the ecological integrity of the region. After years of ignored expert comments and community concerns, TCWP and its allies determined that legal action was the only option left to hold DOE and EPA accountable. By joining this case, TCWP seeks to ensure that cleanup of the Oak Ridge Reservation is conducted in compliance with federal law and in a way that safeguards both public health and the unique natural resources we have worked for decades to protect.

6. "Protecting the Legacy of Three Bends" by Virginia Dale

On August 18, 2025, the City of Oak Ridge held a public meeting where information about the draft Comprehensive Plan for the City was presented. Apparently, the draft plan and maps were prepared by City staff and a consultant and had not been reviewed by either City Council or the Planning Commission. The proposed plans for Three Bend Scenic and Wildlife Management Refuge Area are contradictory to current use of the land and agreements that have been in place for decades. Many were astounded to see the proposed land use map with Three Bends labeled as "high residential density/open space."

Three Bends supports a diverse mosaic of fields and woodland that provides important habitat and home for numerous threatened, endangered, and rare animal species, including endangered bats, bald eagles, ospreys, and migrant songbirds. Some of the Three Bends is accessible to the public – particularly Gallaher Bend Greenway has a beautiful 4 mile hike or bike (http://tnlandforms.us/greenways/maps03/gb.html).

In June 1999, former DOE Secretary Bill Richardson designated about 3000 acres to be the Three Bend Scenic and Wildlife Management Refuge Area managed by the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) for rare plants and animals. TWRA in consultation with the Department of Energy (which owns the property) and the Oak Ridge community, prepared a cooperative agreement to serve as a natural resources management plan for the Three Bend Area. The plan established guidelines for managing the area to preserve and enhance its natural attributes and to promote recreation and education. Since that time the Three Bends have been actively managed to support conservation, recreation and education.

Please contact City Council < citycouncil@oakridgetn.gov> and ask them to continue efforts to balance development with protection of the historical and natural assets of the City by maintaining protection of the Three Bends.

Others to contact include

- Randy Hemann, Oak Ridge City Manager: rhemann@oakridgetn.gov
- Jennifer Williams, Interim Planning & Development Director: jwilliams@oakridgetn.gov
- Stephen Whitson, Chair of the Planning Commission: stephen@whitsonconstruction.com

Information about the Comprehensive Plan can be found at
https://www.oakridgetn.gov/392/Comprehensive-Plan---Oak-Ridge-2045

7. Rails to Trails

This month we are launching the Campbell and Anderson County initiatives to ensure support for this project. There is much work requiring many hands to help. If you live in one of these two counties, we urge you to reach out to offer a hand. Email: nancymanning@tcwp.org.

Guest Author: Ralph Trieschmann

Stand with Scott County:
Support Cumberland Clear to Protect the Big South Fork / Cumberland River Watershed

A proposed landfill expansion in northern Scott County threatens the pristine waters that feed the Big South Fork and the Cumberland River. Local governments, residents, and a new grassroots group—**Cumberland Clear**—are standing together to fight this project. Learn why this battle matters for conservation, public health, and our region's future—and how you can help.

Read the full article on our website here: https://tcwp.org/cumberland-clear-protect-tennessee-waters/

NEWS CAPSULES

OAK RIDGE

1. Breakthrough in Legacy Waste Disposal

Through a partnership between DOE's Office of Environmental Management, UCOR, and Veolia Nuclear Solutions, the metals were converted into stable glass using the GeoMelt vitrification process. This milestone not only resolves a longstanding challenge but also establishes a safe pathway for addressing similar hazardous materials across the nation's nuclear complex.

Why it matters: While DOE highlights progress, the community is still grappling with disposal practices in Oak Ridge. Vigilant oversight will continue to be essential.

2. Oak Ridge Expands Power Grid for the Future

The City of Oak Ridge is embarking on a $68 million modernization of its electric grid to meet anticipated growth in energy demand from new businesses and facilities. Plans include replacing decades-old infrastructure, installing digital smart meters, and building a new solar farm near the Y-12 National Security Complex. The system upgrades will more than double current capacity by 2034, while also introducing electric vehicle fast charging stations and advanced monitoring through a SCADA system. City officials emphasize that Oak Ridge's rates remain competitive with neighboring utilities, but Oak Ridge residents will see a 2.75% rate increase.

Why it matters: These grid expansions are being driven largely by energy-hungry industries like AI data centers. The growth of fossil-fuel generation to meet demand can undermine clean energy goals and put new pressure on Tennessee's natural resources.

3. Oak Ridge Chosen for National AI Center

The U.S. Department of Energy has designated the Oak Ridge Reservation as one of four federal sites to host private partnerships for developing artificial intelligence centers. This decision is part of a broader federal initiative to expand data center capacity, reduce regulatory barriers, and accelerate the use of AI in areas like health research. At Oak Ridge and other designated sites, private industry will be invited to invest in and develop facilities, potentially positioning the region as a leader in cutting-edge AI infrastructure while raising questions about energy use and regulation.

Why it matters: AI centers may bring investment, but they also require massive amounts of electricity and water, straining TVA's system and contributing to rising rates.

STATE OF TENNESSEE

1. Tennessee Electricity Rates Rise Sharply

Tennessee households are facing one of the nation's steepest increases in electricity costs, with rates jumping 12.1% from 2024 to 2025. Analysts attribute the spike to extreme summer heat driving demand, combined with the rapid expansion of energy-intensive data centers, including Musk's Memphis projects and new facilities in Nashville and Gallatin. Although Tennessee's average residential rate of 13.88 cents per kilowatt-hour remains below the national average, residents are feeling the pinch as AI development collides with infrastructure and climate pressures.

Why it matters: Rising rates reflect the true cost of unchecked fossil fuel and data center expansion. Tennesseans are paying more while sustainable energy solutions remain underfunded.

2. Bull Run Smokestacks Fall as TVA Shifts Energy Future

The implosion of Bull Run Fossil Plant's smokestack and scrubber marked the symbolic end of an era for coal in East Tennessee. TVA has committed to retiring all coal plants by 2035, though federal policy shifts under the Trump administration encourage coal expansion, leaving TVA caught between clean energy goals and political pressure. The utility is replacing coal with natural gas, nuclear, and solar projects, but TVA may delay closures.

Why it matters: TVA's reliance on gas and nuclear to replace coal could prolong fossil fuel dependence, delay clean energy, and leave unresolved coal ash risks in East Tennessee.

3. Logging Threatens Tennessee's Cherokee Forest

Recent executive orders from the Trump administration could open more than 500,000 acres of Tennessee's Cherokee National Forest to increased logging, rolling back protections for old-growth and roadless areas. Such actions would fragment habitat, accelerate climate risks, and undermine decades of fire management practices already in place.

Why it matters: While logging in Cherokee National Park has long supplied timber, expedited projects without public oversight will endanger biodiversity, pollute waterways, reduce recreational opportunities and the resilience of these Appalachian ecosystems.

4. Duck River Conservation Funding Revoked

Chattanooga has earned the designation of America's first National Park City, highlighting its commitment to weaving nature into urban life. Led by Mayor Tim Kelly, the city used GIS technology to map and quantify its natural assets, integrating conservation into economic development strategies. The initiative reflects a vision of "a park with a city in it," elevating Chattanooga's appeal as a hub for biodiversity, outdoor recreation, and green investment while attracting federal funding and new talent.

Why it matters: Chattanooga proves that protecting natural assets can drive growth. This model could inspire other Tennessee communities to put conservation at the center of their economic future.

NATIONAL PARKS

1. Restoring Nature at Big South Fork

Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area, spanning 125,000 acres on the Cumberland Plateau, is not only a popular recreation destination but also a landscape marked by decades-old oil and gas wells. Many of these are orphaned sites, abandoned after drilling in the 1970s and '80s. To protect water quality, wildlife, and visitor safety, the National Park Service recently plugged six wells, removed old equipment, and restored the land to a natural state—part of a nationwide effort to address oil and gas legacies in public lands. With 146 orphaned wells already plugged and more work underway, these efforts safeguard ecosystems, enhance recreation, and help ensure clean water for communities far downstream.

2 Haunting in the Hills Returns to Big South Fork

Big South Fork National River & Recreation Area will host the 33rd Annual *Haunting in the Hills Storytelling Festival* on Saturday, September 20, from 10 AM to 10 PM ET at the Bandy Creek Visitor Center. This free, family-friendly event will feature an array of storytellers, music, crafts, and activities that celebrate Appalachian tradition and imagination against the stunning Big South Fork backdrop. Guests are encouraged to bring a blanket or chair and enjoy stories that inspire, entertain, and connect across cultures and generations. Learn more at nps.gov/biso/planyourvisit/storytelling.htm.

FEDERAL

1. Roadless Rule Repeal Threatens Tennessee Forests

The Trump administration has moved to rescind the federal "roadless rule," a policy that has protected 59 million acres of national forests since 2001. In Tennessee, about 85,000 acres—including areas within the Cherokee National Forest and Land Between the Lakes—could now be opened to logging, mining, and road building. Officials justify the change as a wildfire management measure, but it will damage water quality, wildlife habitat, and recreation opportunities, while fast-tracking industrial development on some of the state's most pristine public lands.

Why it matters: Removing these protections would open pristine areas to industrial exploitation, threatening clean water, biodiversity, and outdoor recreation across Tennessee.

2. FERC Streamlines Gas Project Reviews

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) has revised how it implements the National Environmental Policy Act, narrowing environmental reviews to accelerate permitting for pipelines and other natural gas projects. The updates follow a Supreme Court ruling that gave agencies broader discretion in weighing environmental impacts and are part of the Trump administration's push for "energy dominance." Supporters say the reforms cut red tape and spur investment, but reducing public oversight will weaken environmental protections that once took years to assess.

Why it matters: Gutting environmental review means pipelines and plants can be fast-tracked with minimal scrutiny, putting rivers, forests, and communities at greater risk.

3. EPA Places Whistleblowers on Leave

The EPA has placed 139 employees on administrative leave after they signed a public declaration opposing the Trump administration's environmental policies. The letter accused EPA leadership of undermining its mission to protect public health and the environment. Agency officials defended the suspensions as necessary to prevent "sabotage" of administration priorities. Critics argue the move represents political retaliation against career scientists and could erode trust in the agency's independence and integrity.

Why it matters: Silencing scientists erodes protections for air, water, and climate — weakening the federal oversight Tennessee communities depend on.

4. Controversial Nominee for TVA Board

Nashville businessman and major GOP donor Lee Beaman has been nominated to the Tennessee Valley Authority board, despite his lack of utility experience and a history of personal and political controversies. With most TVA board seats vacant, his confirmation could significantly shape the direction of the nation's largest public utility at a time of mounting questions about governance, fossil fuel reliance, and transparency.

Why it matters: Installing politically connected, unqualified board members threaten TVA's mission as a public utility, risking decisions that favor fossil fuels over people and ecosystems.

5. Privatization Speculation Clouds TVA's Future

Mounting tensions between the Trump administration and the Tennessee Valley Authority have fueled speculation that TVA may be privatized. Recent conflicts include White House threats to fire TVA's new CEO, concerns over fossil fuel expansion, and criticism of high executive salaries. Advocates of privatization suggest TVA could be sold to private utilities or restructured to open its transmission system, while opponents warn it would raise electricity rates, harm employees, and undermine public accountability. Environmental groups fear privatization would entrench fossil fuels at the expense of clean energy.

Why it matters: Selling off TVA could shift power to private interests, raising rates, accelerating fossil fuel expansion, and reducing public accountability in Tennessee's energy future.

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.

Upcoming Events

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

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

This will be the second of our three annual workdays at the Oak Ridge Cedar Barrens. Located next to Jefferson Middle School in Oak Ridge, the barrens is a joint project of the City of Oak Ridge, the State Natural Areas Division, and TCWP. One of just a few cedar barrens in East Tennessee, the area is subject to invasion by Chinese lespedeza, Japanese privet, autumn olive, mimosa, Nepal grass, multiflora rose, and woody plants that threaten the system's prairie grasses. Our spring, summer, and fall cleanups help to eliminate invasives and other shade-producing plants that prevent the prairie grasses from getting needed sun. The late-summer workday is optimum for viewing prairie wildflowers that flourish at the barrens.

Volunteers should meet in the Jefferson Middle School parking lot at 9 a.m.; wear sturdy shoes, and bring loppers, gloves, and water. A pizza lunch will be provided.

Jimmy Groton will lead the outing. If you **RSVP, it helps with planning and allows contacting in case of cancellation.** Contact Jimmy at 865-805-9908 or groton87@comcast.net.

Sign up here: https://forms.gle/s5VmEw2MJUrEMeH58

National Public Lands Day - Saturday, September 27

On September 27, TCWP and TVA will partner again for our annual National Public Lands Day celebration, to be held at TVA's Worthington Cemetery Cedar Barrens Ecological Study 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.

Jimmy Groton will lead the outing. If you **RSVP, it helps with planning and allows contacting in case of cancellation.** Contact Jimmy at 865-805-9908 or groton87@comcast.net.

Sign up here: https://forms.gle/rfdyXyEaQGsbKeLo6

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

At 6 p.m. on September 29, TCWP will join with the UT Arboretum Society and UT Extension to host a screening of "Hidden Rivers of Southern Appalachia" at the Grove Theater in Oak Ridge. "Hidden Rivers" is a one-hour film that explores the rivers and streams of the Southern Appalachian region, North America's most biologically rich waters. This beautiful film follows the work of conservation biologists and explorers throughout the region, revealing both the beauty and vulnerability of the aquatic life and how many people are finding ways to protect these ecosystems.

This event is free, but donations to the sponsoring organizations are welcome! Register for tickets at: https://www.simpletix.com/e/hidden-rivers-of-southern-appalachia-film-tickets-229474. For more information, contact Michelle Campanis at mcampani@utk.edu.

10. NL 383, September

Secret City Pride Festival Table – Sunday, October 12

PFLAG Oak Ridge is proud to have a TCWP table at our first annual Secret City Pride event, to be held at the Oak Ridge Unitarian Universalist Church, 809 Oak Ridge Turnpike, on Sunday, October 12, from noon to 4 p.m. All are welcome to attend and enjoy a fun afternoon of comradeship with the wide diversity of folks from our community. There will be entertainment, a kids' play area, community connections, and a Make Your Own Pride Sign for our parade! Hope to see you all there. *John Jaruzel*

Celebrate the Win – Sunday, October 19

Join us at the Lilly Pad Hopyard Brewery on Sunday, October 19, as we celebrate TCWP's successful campaign to permanently protect new property along the Obed Wild and Scenic River corridor. This family-friendly event will feature live music by Elza Gate from 2–4 p.m. and an afternoon of fun in honor of this exciting conservation victory. Several of our business sponsors will be on hand—including one who plans to film the festivities—so it's a great chance to celebrate together and show support for Tennessee's wild places. For more information, contact Nancy Manning at nancymanning@tcwp.org.

Hike at Obed Wild and Scenic River's Ramsey Branch – Saturday, October 25

This hike will explore TCWP's newly acquired 30-acre property on Ramsey Branch at the Obed Wild and Scenic River. We will meet at the Obed Wild and Scenic River office at 208 Maiden Street, Wartburg. at 9 a.m. Eastern (8 a.m. Central) and carpool from the office to the parking area near the property. Those wishing to carpool from Oak Ridge to the Obed office 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 Wartburg no later than 8:30 a.m. Eastern.

Our hike will explore the beautiful Ramsey Branch property, including a mature hardwood forest, small waterfall, and stream. If we have time, we'll also walk to an overlook of the Obed watershed on the property. Please bring sturdy hiking shoes, hiking poles (as needed), water, sunscreen, insect repellent, and snacks. Expect the hike to end by 1 p.m. Eastern.

Chuck Estes will lead the outing. If you **RSVP, it helps with planning and allows contacting in case of cancellation.** Contact Chuck Estes at 865-207-0143 or chucklola@bellsouth.net

Sign up here: https://forms.gle/78SLAPivAZ9QNjQu8

Fall Cedar Barrens Cleanup/ Weed Wrangle® - Saturday, November 1

The Oak Ridge Cedar Barrens will again be the site of exotic invasive plant removal as we conduct our fall cleanup, our third and final cleanup of the barrens this year. Located next to Jefferson Middle School in Oak Ridge, the Cedar Barrens 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. We will also have some Uprooters, loppers, and gloves to share. The work session will conclude at noon with a free pizza lunch for volunteers.

Jimmy Groton will lead the outing. If you **RSVP, it helps with planning and allows contacting in case of cancellation.** Contact Jimmy at 865-805-9908 or groton87@comcast.net.

Sign up here: https://forms.gle/fYFXN9hVokJGZRWe9

Owl Ridge Raptor Center Program - Saturday, November 1

On Saturday, November 1, Lisa Thomison, co-founder of the Owl Ridge Raptor Center, and the Raptor Center staff will provide an introduction to the work of this federal- and state-licensed raptor rehabilitation center at the UT Arboretum Auditorium, 901 S. Illinois Avenue in Oak Ridge. The program, cosponsored by TCWP, the UT Arboretum Society, and The American Museum of Science and Energy, will run from 10 a.m. until noon.

Owl Ridge will bring some very special winged "ambassadors" for us to meet. The Owl Ridge Raptor center is a nonprofit organization that takes care of injured and orphaned birds of prey, including owls, hawks, falcons, vultures, and eagles. The goal with each bird is full recovery and re-release back into their native habitat whenever possible.

The program is free, but registration is required to confirm your seat. Please make sure to register for all members of your group so that seats will be available. Seating is limited to 100. We will have a donation box available to benefit the work at Owl Ridge Raptor Center.

Register at: https://www.simpletix.com/e/meet-owl-ridge-raptor-center-tickets-234031. Parking will be available at the auditorium. Please follow the signs to the auditorium, which is .5 miles from the arboretum's main entrance. For additional information, contact mcampani@utk.edu.

TCWP Annual Meeting Hikes – Saturday, November 8

After lunch at TCWP's annual meeting (see meeting announcement in this newsletter) we will have a choice of two hikes in Frozen Head State Park, one moderately easy and the other a bit more moderately steep and rugged. Both hikes will start at the Old Mac Trailhead near Shelter C. We will walk over to the trailhead from the Visitor Center parking lot. We should get to hike through the beautiful fall colors of the park. Hike leaders will include Margaret Cumberland (maybe with her baby daughter Flora Cumberland!), Larry Pounds, and Jimmy Groton.

The less strenuous hike will be the Judge Branch and Interpretive Trails. This beautiful trail loops around the bottom of the Judge Branch valley. It is generally pretty low-gradient, but there are some moderately hilly parts along a section of South Old Mac Trail. There is also a stream crossing on the upper part of Judge Branch. The total distance will be less than 3 miles. Participants can turn back whenever they wish. This is a wonderful wildflower trail in the spring.

The more strenuous hike will be part of the Spicewood Trail. This trail follows Judge Branch and Spicewood Branch along the lower flanks of Chimney Top Mountain. The Spicewood Trail passes through some beautiful forest in the heart of Frozen Head. This will be an out-and-back excursion. The total distance will depend on the wishes of our fellow hikers and how much time we have available. The trail is moderately steep with several shallow, ephemeral stream crossings.

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. 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.

Joe Feeman will lead the outing. If you **RSVP, it helps with planning and allows contacting in case of cancellation.** Contact Joe at jcfeeman@comcast.net.

Sign up here: https://forms.gle/dreCWhijpSxbRsou5

Recent Events

Pellissippi Blueway Paddle – Saturday, July 12

On Saturday, July 12, 28 people in 25 boats participated in our Pellissippi Blueway Coalition paddling outing. We met at the River Run Outfitters dock at Melton Lake Park in Oak Ridge. Chad Ward, an old friend of TCWP, recently purchased the business (https://riverrunoutfitterstn.com/) and helped host the event.

We spent approximately three hours paddling around the coves and islands downstream from the park. This was the first time a number of these folks had learned about the Blueway and visited the area. We paddled into the Emory Valley Creek embayment through the box culvert at Melton Lake Drive, and were able to see several natural areas, such as the mature forests and marshes in the coves and among the islands in the TVA Parcel 98 along the lake. We saw several bird species, including osprey, cormorants, ducks, and herons. We had a mild, sunny day to enjoy, and will plan to do another Blueway paddling trip this fall.

Special thanks to Chad and River Run Outfitters for making his space and equipment available to everyone. Stop in and visit Chad when you have a chance. His business deserves our support. Jimmy Groton/Chuck Estes

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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.

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 Knoxvillian 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.

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.

Erin Cunningham is a Data Scientist at Tombras and a former Geophysicist at ORNL. She earned her PhD in Geology from the University of Maryland in 2019, where she spent her time imaging the subsurface geologic structures beneath the southeastern United States. Along the way, she's also worked with community leaders on groundwater contamination projects and has a passion for using science to solve real-world problems. Originally from northern Illinois, Erin grew up camping, hiking, and generally getting muddy outside. She's led invasive plant pulls, guided geode-hunting field trips, and is always up for a good outdoor adventure. Now based in eastern Tennessee, she's excited to dive into the work with TCWP and explore all the wild places the region has to offer!"

Tim Partridge - Tim is a Certified Public Accountant and works as a senior manager at PYA, P.C. where he provides audit and accounting services to companies in a variety of specialized industries including governmental and not-for-profit organizations. Tim earned a Master of Accountancy degree and a Bachelor of Business Administration degree from the University of New Mexico. He is a member of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants and the Tennessee Society of Certified Public Accountants. Tim grew up in the southwest and relocated to east Tennessee in 2018. He enjoys spending free time with his family exploring the wonderful outdoor spaces that east Tennessee has to offer through activities including hiking, camping, paddling, mountain biking and horseback riding. Tim is interested in making sure that the natural beauty and recreational opportunities he shares with his family are available for generations to come.

NOMINEES FOR NOMINATING COMMITTEE 2025-2026: Susan Prince Havens, Chuck Estes, Nancy Manning

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TENNESEE CITIZENS FOR WILDERNESSS PLANNING

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Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning

Taking Care of Wild Places Since 1966

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Calendar:

- **September 20** – Summer Cedar Barrens Cleanup/Weed Wrangle®
- **September 27** – National Public Lands Day at Worthington Cemetery
- **September 29** – "Hidden Rivers of Southern Appalachia" screening
- **October 12** – Secret City Pride Festival Table
- **October 19** – Celebrate the Win
- **October 25** – Hike at Obed Wild and Scenic River's Ramsey Branch
- **November 1** – Fall Cedar Barrens Cleanup/ Weed Wrangle®
- **November 1** – Owl Ridge Raptor Center Program
- **November 8** –TCWP Annual Meeting Hikes
- **November 22** – Norris Watershed Hike

[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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