Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning

Taking Care of Wild Places Since 1966

Newsletter – November 2026 – No. 390



Contents

INSIDE TCWP 1
1. TCWP Annual Meeting 1
2. TCWP Launches Conservation Leadership Academy with ORNL Support 2
3. Crossville's Water Future: TCWP and Coalition Partners Press for Answers and Responsible Solutions 2
4. Volunteer Monitoring and Impacts of TVA's Ridgeline Gas Pipeline 3

CONSERVATION PARTNERS IN ACTION 5
1. Clark Center Park: A Vision for Tennessee's Next State Park 5

NUCLEAR NEWS 5
1. TCWP Compiles Nuclear Factsheet 5

NEWS CAPSULES – OAK RIDGE 6
1. NRC Approves Construction of First Commercial Small Modular Reactor 6
2. Tennessee Approves Nuclear Fusion Research Facility at Bull Run 6
3. New Initiative to Train Workers for Tennessee's Growing Nuclear Industry 6
4. Oak Ridge Turns Nuclear Waste into Hope for Cancer Treatment 6
5. Oak Ridge and Idaho Labs Explore 3D Printing for Nuclear Reactors 6
6. ORNL Study Identifies Untapped Hydropower Potential at Existing Dams 7
7. Oak Ridge's Radioactive Legacy Could Power Underwater Technology 7

NEWS CAPSULES – STATE OF TENNESSEE 7
1. Court Battle Over TVA's Kingston Gas Plant ... 7
2. TVA Faces Lawsuit Over Cumberland Coal and Gas Plants 7
3. Who Pays for TVA's Data Center Demand? 8

NEWS CAPSULES – FEDERAL 8
1. EPA Rolls Back Climate Pollution Limits for Power Plants 8
2. EPA Proposes Further Reductions in Federal Wetlands Protections 8

EVENTS 8
1. TCWP's Guidelines for Activities 8
2. Upcoming Events 9
3. Recent Events 10

Calendar of Events 12

INSIDE TCWP

1. TCWP Annual Meeting Celebrates a Year of Progress and an Exciting Future for Rails to Trails

Forty-three TCWP members gathered on October 31 for our 2026 Annual Meeting, celebrating another busy year of protecting wild places and waters. Board President Mark Bevelhimer highlighted accomplishments across our four program areas—Protection, Advocacy, Stewardship, and Education. Members also received a financial report and elected members of the Board of Directors.

A special highlight was the presentation of TCWP's Founder's Award to Larry Pounds, recognizing his more than 20 years of service and lifelong dedication to conservation, education, and stewardship. Larry's extraordinary knowledge of East Tennessee's natural world, his generosity in sharing that knowledge, and his tireless efforts to protect wild places exemplify the founding principles of TCWP.



The morning's featured program brought together four enthusiastic leaders of the Echoes of the Rail Foundation: Oneida Mayor Lori Phillips-Jones, Echoes President John McCracken, Vice President Virginia Bruce, and board member Jimmy Byrge. In a lively, informal conversation, they shared how each became involved in the proposed 42-mile rail trail and steps they took to move the project forward. Their passion was contagious! Mayor Phillips-Jones spoke of restoring pride to communities that have

seen their coal and timber industries disappear, while Jimmy described the opportunity to preserve the stories and history of the people who once lived along the railroad. Together, the speakers painted a compelling picture of a trail that will connect communities, preserve history, encourage outdoor recreation, and bring new economic opportunities to the region.

Perhaps the most remarkable part of the morning was the response from our members. The discussion generated an extraordinary level of engagement, with question after question, enthusiastic applause, and expressions of amazement at how far the project has come in such a short time. It was a wonderful reminder of what can happen when committed people and communities come together around a shared vision.

The meeting concluded with lunch and an opportunity to continue conversations. Special thanks to Bob Richards of Bob's Trails, Trees & Gardens, whose generous sponsorship made our lunch possible, and to everyone who joined us for such a memorable annual meeting!

2. TCWP Launches Conservation Leadership Academy with ORNL Support

Thanks to a generous $3,200 grant from Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL), TCWP is launching its new Conservation Leadership Academy: Mentoring the Next Generation of Conservation Leaders. For nearly 60 years, TCWP has relied on dedicated naturalists, botanists, ecologists, and conservationists to lead our nature outings, stewardship projects, and educational programs. Now, we're working to ensure their extraordinary knowledge and experience are passed along to a new generation. Through hands-on mentoring participants will have the opportunity to work alongside our experienced leaders, gaining hands-on experience to lead nature outings that focus on native plants and aquatic ecology, stewardship projects including invasive species management and habitat restoration, and environmental education activities. Among our mentors will be renowned naturalist Larry Pounds, who has spent decades introducing people to the wonders of East Tennessee's natural world.

Interested in becoming one of our next conservation leaders? We're recruiting an initial group of five or six individuals who love nature, enjoy learning, and want to help protect our wild places and waters. Join us for a virtual informational session on Thursday, December 3, at 6:00 p.m. Eastern, when our experienced leaders will introduce themselves and explain the mentoring opportunities available. Click here to register for the December 3 informational session. (https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/li-cM2a-SKuBtc4oAVeRUQ). We are deeply grateful to ORNL for making this exciting new initiative possible!

3. Crossville's Water Future: TCWP and Coalition Partners Press for Answers and Responsible Solutions

Since our September newsletter, TCWP and its coalition partners have continued working to protect the waters of the Cumberland Plateau while encouraging greater transparency and public participation in decisions about the region's future water supply. The immediate focus has been the November 3 referendum on whether Crossville should authorize the possible transfer of its municipal water system to the Cumberland Plateau Water Authority (CPWA). Our concerns extend well beyond the proposed merger to the longstanding possibility of constructing a dam on Clear Creek or Daddy's Creek, both important tributaries of the Obed Wild and Scenic River.

Working alongside the Obed Watershed Community Association, Concerned Citizens of Cumberland County, and Statewide Organizing for Community Empowerment (SOCM), TCWP helped inform residents about the referendum and the questions surrounding it. We especially appreciate the work of Jenna Walz, whose careful examination of water-loss figures, financial projections, and other information has helped identify important questions that deserve answers. Coalition members also worked together to develop and present questions at a candidate forum, helping bring water supply, public accountability, and environmental protection into the local election discussion.

As the referendum approached, the debate became increasingly contentious. CPWA mounted an extensive public information campaign promoting the potential benefits of regionalization, while Crossville and Cumberland County officials publicly advocated for a yes vote. Supporters emphasized economies of scale and the possibility of avoiding substantial future rate increases. Our coalition, however, continued to question the financial assumptions underlying those claims, the lack of an independently verified analysis, and the potential loss of local control over water resources. Coalition representatives raised these concerns at public meetings, including questions about projected rates, debt, infrastructure needs, and alternatives to developing new water sources. We have also emphasized the importance of reducing water losses within existing systems before considering costly new infrastructure that could threaten protected waterways.

Meanwhile, an important new development may shape the region's water future for years to come. On October 20, the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) announced the creation of the Plateau Water Planning Partnership, a regional initiative intended to evaluate water supply needs, improve drought resilience, reduce water losses, and protect the ecological health of the Plateau's rivers and streams. The partnership is modeled on a similar initiative in the Duck River watershed and will develop recommendations for state and local decisionmakers.

Although the partnership's stated goals include conservation and community participation, TCWP was not among the organizations initially identified for membership. Given our decades of work protecting the Obed watershed and our longstanding involvement in regional water supply issues, we believe TCWP and our coalition partners have valuable experience and perspectives to contribute. We are seeking an opportunity to participate so that the protection of Clear Creek, Daddy's Creek, and the Obed watershed remains central to future planning.

Our coalition's hard work paid off on November 3rd when the voters of Crossville defeated the referendum. However, the work is far from finished. TCWP will continue advocating for sound science, transparent decision-making, water conservation, and solutions that meet the region's needs without sacrificing its extraordinary rivers and streams. We are grateful to Jenna Walz, our coalition partners, and the many concerned residents who have devoted their time and energy to this important effort.

Wild places need your help!

Support TCWP by volunteering, donating, joining, or renewing your membership.



Because defending wild places isn't a one-time effort, please consider joining the people who are protecting East Tennessee's wild places one month at a time. Your monthly giving makes you a year-round **Partner in Protection.**

4. Protecting the Obed: A year of Volunteer Monitoring and Impacts of TVA's Ridgeline Gas Pipeline – by Advisory Board member, Bill Chandler

TCWP volunteers have regularly measured the water quality effects of construction of the Ridgeline natural gas pipeline on the Obed Wild and Scenic River. The pipeline, commissioned by the Tennessee Valley Authority, cuts through the tributaries of the Obed more than 150 times. We also closely follow weekly reports provided by the Enbridge pipeline company which have revealed a steady stream of violations of the construction permit as issued by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC).

The two approaches have provided actionable information that TCWP has used to minimize violations and to require mitigation. We initially helped persuade authorities to require independent environmental monitors to conduct daily oversight of construction activities and to include their findings in required weekly reports. We engaged directly or indirectly with FERC, the National Park Service (NPS), the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC).

TCWP President Mark Bevelhimer and board member Jimmy Groton established water quality monitoring methods, obtained equipment, and trained volunteers to take samples from the Obed's tributaries. When Bevelhimer consulted with TDEC, its staff requested that we report high levels of turbidity (sediment) found in flowing water. Volunteers sampled "cloudiness" using an index recommended by EPA and NPS.[1]

The index ranges from zero—basically clear water—to over 1,000. EPA suggests a goal of about 2 on the index for our region's wild waters and TDEC asked TCWP to report increases in the index of more than 5 units. Our volunteers, in particular Sue and Keith

[1] The index is the "Formazin Turbidity Index." A reading of zero would indicate exceptionally clean water, a reading of 5-10 indicates noticeable cloudiness, 100 likely follows rain, and 1,000 indicates extreme turbidity, possibly associated with a flood. The units represent an index indicating the degree of deflection of light in a sample in comparison with a formal standard defined by the International Standards Organization (ISO). For more information on the standards and this context, see for "standards" and context www.nps.gov/im/aphn/biso-wq-2024.htm.

Havens, took over three dozen samples and some of those samples were 50 times the EPA recommended level. (See Table 1 for a selected set of measurements taken by the Havens.)

TCWP's samples and the presence of monitors in the field contributed, we believe, to better compliance by the pipeline construction company. They also prompted TDEC to contact the construction company directly to discuss violations and potential violations. Our samplers also partially provided a basis for Delaney King, an attorney for the Southern Environmental Law Center, to make a detailed request to FERC for a "Stop Work Order" on pipeline construction, which King filed on behalf of TCWP, Appalachian Voices, and the Sierra Club.[2]

Table 1: Selected TCWP Samples of Turbidity, February-April 2026

Date	Location	Measurement	Comment
02/15/26	White Creek	3.07-3.47	Suspended solids too low to send to lab
02/16/25	White Creek	20-23	Day after rain
02/26/26	White Creek	~ 100	
04/05/26	White Creek	~2	
04/28/26	White Creek	45-80	
01/27/26	Little Clear Creek	6-7	
02/26/26	Little Clear Creek	28-61	
04/28/26	Little Clear Creek	125-140	
04/28/26	Gordon Branch	~75	

TCWP's water monitors, however, were hampered by several problems. These, according to Sue Havens, included:

- lack of permission from some landowners to take samples
- excessive distance of sampling sites from construction
- inability to cross the pipeline right of way
- absence of advance indication of when workers would be cutting through streams.

Table 2: Selected Ridgeline Violations Reported by Environmental Monitors

Date	Location	Comment
01/12/2026	Multiple, MP 87-119	Sediment overwhelmed erosion control devices
02/18/2026	Little Emory River	3,000 gallons of drilling mud spill into river
02/20/2026	Little Emory River	Sediment fr. horizontal drilling near Harriman
02/27/2026	Little Emory River	Plume of turbid water near milepost 116
02/28/2026	Price Brancy trib.	Sediment entered water near milepost 99
03/03/2026	Emory River	300 gallons of drilling mud into River, milepost 122.15
03/03/2026	Little Emory River	Heavy sediment after 3 inches of rain

Note: MP = milepost. Mileposts start near Gallatin, TN and run 123 miles to Kingston, TN

For those reasons, the mandatory reporting of independent monitors, who did not have those limitations, was vital. The weekly reports highlighted a regular parade of violations, including overwhelmed or non-existent silt fences and "drilling mud" spilled directly into streams (see Table 2.)

A very serious violation reported by a monitor on April 26 resulted in a "Stop Work" order. The pipeline's permit stipulated that it identify and move endangered species from the area around an Emory River crossing. But the company bulldozed the banks of the Emory and built a bridge in the water with no prior mitigation and no notification. The Stop Work order required the company to mitigate the damage, complete all the required steps to protect endangered species, and obtain approval of those measures the Fish and Wildlife service. In the month or more those steps required, construction was suspended.

Enbridge has shown that its construction of the Ridgeline Pipeline must be continuously monitored. TCWP will continue to monitor that company's work to protect the Obed River and its tributaries.

[2] See Request for Stop-Work Order on Ridgeline Expansion Project (Dkt. Nos. CP23-516-000, -001), Delaney King, Southern Environmental Law Center, May 13, 2026, on behalf of Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning, Appalachian Voices, Ridgeline Voices, and Sierra Club, addressed to Debbie-Anne A. Reese, Secretary, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

CONSERVATION PARTNERS IN ACTION

1. Clark Center Park: A Vision for Tennessee's Next State Park

Taken from an article by Virginia Dale

Advocates for the Oak Ridge Reservation (AFORR) is a longtime sister organization of Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning (TCWP). The two organizations share a commitment to protecting the natural resources of the Oak Ridge Reservation and have worked together on numerous conservation issues. Our close relationship is reflected in shared leadership, including Jimmy Groton, who serves on both organizations' boards.

Founded in 1999, AFORR is a nonprofit organization dedicated to encouraging responsible stewardship of the Oak Ridge Reservation and its resources. Its work recognizes the Reservation's importance for conservation, scientific research, history, education, recreation, and public health and safety.

One of AFORR's current priorities is securing a permanent future for Clark Center Park, a 40-acre recreation area on Melton Hill Lake owned by the U.S. Department of Energy. The park offers swimming, fishing, boating, picnicking, hiking, and wildlife viewing, along with access to the Gallaher Bend Greenway and the Pellissippi Blueway.

An exciting opportunity has emerged to transform Clark Center Park into a Tennessee state park. In 2026, the Tennessee legislature approved $10 million toward establishing the park, contingent upon transferring the property from DOE to the state and Anderson County providing $6.25 million in matching funds. Both requirements must be met by June 30, 2031.

AFORR has helped advance this vision by working with community partners to develop a conceptual design for the park's future. On October 24, AFORR hosted the Clark Center Conservation Cèilidh, where visitors explored the proposed improvements, enjoyed outdoor activities, and shared their thoughts about the park's future. Lieutenant Governor Randy McNally attended and offered supportive comments.

AFORR's next priority is identifying a fiscal agent to receive contributions and launching a campaign to raise the required local matching funds. Community input will also help shape the vision for this treasured public space.

Learn more about Clark Center Park: https://aforr.info/clark-center-park/

Share your thoughts about this future state park at https://tinyurl.com/2nwawasj or by using the QR code.

NUCLEAR NEWS

1. TCWP Compiles Nuclear Factsheet

In our September issue, we mentioned the letter TCWP sent to U.S. Secretary of Energy Chris Wright asking the Department of Energy (DOE) to to engage the public *before* finalizing where DOE's Nuclear Lifecycle Innovation Campus and the nuclear waste depository should be located.

Since then, we have summarized the developments and described what is proposed for our area – from enrichment to reprocessing to geological storage. You can find our two-page fact sheet at https://tcwp.org/faq-nuclearenergyintennessee/ or by using the QR code.

NEWS CAPSULES – OAK RIDGE

1. NRC Approves Construction of First Commercial Small Modular Reactor

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) has approved TVA's construction permit for a 300-megawatt small modular nuclear reactor at its Clinch River site in Oak Ridge, marking the nation's first approval for construction of a commercial small modular reactor. The NRC completed its review in just 14 months, four months ahead of schedule, following a safety evaluation and public hearing in Oak Ridge. The GE Vernova Hitachi boiling-water reactor is intended to help meet growing regional electricity demand. Although the permit allows construction to proceed, TVA must obtain a separate operating license before the reactor can begin generating electricity.

2. Tennessee Approves Nuclear Fusion Research Facility at Bull Run

The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation has approved a permit for Type One Energy to develop a nuclear fusion research facility at TVA's former Bull Run coal plant site in Anderson County, across the river from Oak Ridge. The company plans to begin construction this year and complete the research campus by 2034, working with Oak Ridge National Laboratory, TVA, and the University of Tennessee. A second phase could include a 400-megawatt fusion power plant. Unlike conventional nuclear fission, fusion does not produce high-level radioactive waste and carries substantially lower meltdown risks, although its commercial viability remains unproven. The project is part of Tennessee's broader effort to attract nuclear energy development through state incentives and a more favorable regulatory environment.

3. New Initiative to Train Workers for Tennessee's Growing Nuclear Industry

Kairos Power, which is developing advanced nuclear reactors in Oak Ridge, has announced a new initiative to strengthen Tennessee's nuclear workforce and develop more efficient construction and manufacturing techniques. The Nuclear Center for Advanced Manufacturing and Precast (NuCAMP) will bring together Kairos Power, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, the University of Tennessee, and other partners to explore new approaches to building nuclear facilities. The University of Tennessee will consider specialized master's degree programs in nuclear manufacturing and precast concrete construction, while Chattanooga State and Roane State community colleges will explore training programs for welders and other skilled workers. The initiative reflects Tennessee's growing investment in nuclear energy development. Supporters emphasize the potential for economic growth and high-paying jobs as the state positions itself as a center for next-generation nuclear technology.

4. Oak Ridge Turns Nuclear Waste into Hope for Cancer Treatment

A new analytical laboratory at Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) is helping accelerate the cleanup of uranium-233 left from early nuclear research while supporting the development of promising cancer treatments. The U.S. Department of Energy and contractor Isotek Systems are processing the radioactive material for safe disposal, but first extracting thorium-229, a rare isotope used to produce actinium-225, which is essential for emerging targeted cancer therapies. Through a partnership with TerraPower Isotopes, the recovered material is being supplied for clinical trials worldwide. The new laboratory reduces testing time from approximately four months to just two weeks, speeding both cleanup operations and delivery of valuable medical isotopes. The project has already increased the global supply of thorium-229 by more than 2,000%, with the first commercial cancer treatments using this material expected in 2028. While the challenges of safely managing Oak Ridge's nuclear legacy remain, this project offers a promising medical benefit from materials originally produced for an entirely different purpose.

5. Oak Ridge and Idaho Labs Explore 3D Printing for Nuclear Reactors

Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) and Idaho National Laboratory (INL) have announced a research partnership to develop new ways of manufacturing critical nuclear reactor components using 3D printing and artificial intelligence (AI). The collaboration aims to address a shortage of U.S. manufacturing capacity for large nuclear pressure vessels, which must withstand extreme temperatures, pressure, and radiation. Researchers are using advanced robotic systems to build metal components layer by layer, while developing AI technology to evaluate their structural integrity during production rather than relying solely on inspections afterward. ORNL has already produced a prototype pressure vessel measuring approximately three by five feet, as well as components for a microreactor. Although the technology remains under development, researchers believe it could reduce manufacturing delays and strengthen domestic supply chains for nuclear energy, with potential applications in aerospace, defense, and other industries.

6. ORNL Study Identifies Untapped Hydropower Potential at Existing Dams

Researchers at Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) and Idaho National Laboratory have identified significant opportunities to generate additional electricity from existing U.S. dams that currently do not produce power. Their updated assessment examined more than 2,600 dams and found the technical potential to generate approximately 15.2 terawatt-hours of electricity annually—enough to power more than 1.4 million homes. Only about 3% of U.S. dams currently generate electricity, with most serving purposes such as flood control, navigation, and water storage. Using advanced modeling and detailed streamflow data, researchers identified locations where adding hydropower equipment might be feasible without constructing new dams. The study also considers operational limitations and provides tools to help decision-makers evaluate potential projects. While further assessments would be needed to determine economic feasibility and environmental impacts at individual sites, the research highlights opportunities to expand renewable energy production using infrastructure already in place.

7. Oak Ridge's Radioactive Legacy Could Power Underwater Technology

Radioactive material produced at Oak Ridge National Laboratory nearly 40 years ago could find a new use powering equipment on the ocean floor. Zeno Power, a nuclear technology company awarded a $7.5 million Department of Defense contract, is developing an underwater power system that would use strontium-90 from an unused generator built at ORNL in the 1980s. The radioactive isotope produces heat as it decays, which can be converted into electricity to power underwater sensors and charging stations for autonomous vehicles without frequent battery replacement or external power connections. The technology remains in development, with additional testing and regulatory approvals required before deployment. Although repurposing this material could provide a useful alternative to long-term storage, strontium-90 poses serious health and environmental risks if released, making safe containment and oversight essential, particularly in marine environments.

NEWS CAPSULES – STATE OF TENNESSEE

1. Court Battle Over TVA's Kingston Gas Plant Continues

In a significant victory for environmental advocates, a federal district court ruled in August that the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) violated the National Environmental Policy Act when it approved construction of its $2.5 billion natural gas plant in Kingston. The lawsuit, brought by the Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC) on behalf of Appalachian Voices, the Sierra Club, and the Center for Biological Diversity, challenged TVA's failure to adequately consider cleaner, less expensive energy alternatives before committing to the gas plant and associated pipeline infrastructure. The court set aside TVA's environmental impact statement and decision approving the project, raising the possibility that construction could be halted.

However, in October, the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals granted TVA's request to allow construction to continue while its appeal proceeds. The appellate judges indicated that TVA was likely to prevail, questioning the district court's interpretation of federal environmental law. The decision is not a final resolution of the lawsuit, but it allows work on the Kingston plant to move forward, with completion now projected for late 2028. Meanwhile, TVA has also decided to continue operating its existing Kingston coal plant. The outcome is particularly relevant to East Tennessee because the new gas plant is connected to the Enbridge pipeline infrastructure that TCWP and other organizations have been monitoring and challenging over concerns about impacts to waterways, wildlife habitat, and surrounding communities.

2. TVA Faces Lawsuit Over Cumberland Coal and Gas Plants

The Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC), representing Appalachian Voices and the Sierra Club, has filed a federal lawsuit against the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) for allegedly violating the Clean Air Act at its Cumberland Fossil Plant in Middle Tennessee. TVA originally planned to retire the coal plant by 2028 and replace it with a new natural gas facility, but reversed course in February 2026, deciding to operate both plants simultaneously. Plaintiffs argue that the resulting increase in air pollution requires a more stringent federal permit, which TVA failed to obtain. Although the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation acknowledged permitting violations and imposed approximately $200,000 in penalties, advocates say the action fails to adequately protect nearby communities. SELC also warns that keeping the aging coal plant operating will cost ratepayers more than $730 million while exposing residents to additional harmful air pollution. TVA maintains that continued coal operations are necessary to meet growing electricity demand and ensure reliability.

3. Who Pays for TVA's Growing Data Center Demand?

The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) has approved a new rate structure for data centers and other large electricity users, including an approximately 10% rate increase phased in over three years, beginning October 1, 2026. The move comes as TVA anticipates substantial growth in electricity demand, driven partly by expanding data centers, which already accounted for 10% of its electricity load last year. Meanwhile, TVA's Integrated Resource Plan through 2050 eliminates all planned investment in wind energy, sharply reduces its already limited investment in solar power, and instead emphasizes coal, natural gas, and nuclear power. TVA maintains these decisions are necessary to ensure reliable electricity and accommodate economic growth. However, the new rate structure likely does not adequately protect residential customers from the costs of serving large data centers, particularly if facilities close or demand projections fail to materialize.

NEWS CAPSULES – FEDERAL

1. EPA Rolls Back Climate Pollution Limits for Power Plants

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has announced the repeal of federal limits on greenhouse gas emissions from coal- and natural gas-fired power plants, reversing regulations intended to reduce climate pollution. The agency is also proposing a separate rule that could prevent future administrations from regulating these emissions under the Clean Air Act. The Trump administration argues that eliminating the restrictions will reduce costs for utilities, strengthen energy reliability, and support domestic energy production. However, environmental and public health organizations warn that the rollbacks will accelerate climate change and increase risks to communities already experiencing extreme heat, flooding, and other climate-related impacts. Fossil fuel power plants account for approximately one-quarter of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions, making them a major contributor to climate change. Environmental organizations have pledged to challenge the regulatory changes in court, arguing that the EPA is abandoning its responsibility to protect public health and the environment.

2. EPA Proposes Further Reductions in Federal Wetlands Protections

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is seeking additional public comments on a proposed rule that would significantly narrow federal protections for wetlands and waterways under the Clean Water Act. The proposal follows the 2023 Supreme Court decision in *Sackett v. EPA*, which limited federal authority over certain wetlands. Under the proposed definition of “waters of the United States” (WOTUS), federal protections would generally apply to relatively permanent bodies of water and wetlands directly connected to them, potentially leaving many other wetlands and streams without federal oversight. EPA argues that the changes will reduce regulatory uncertainty and give states and tribes greater responsibility for protecting their water resources. Environmental organizations warn that the proposal could expose thousands of miles of streams and extensive wetland areas to development and pollution, threatening wildlife habitat, water quality, and natural flood protection.

EVENTS

1. 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:** Events advertised as cleanups or workdays could involve a brisk pace, steep grades, and/or uneven terrain, and might not be appropriate for inexperienced hikers or those with physical limitations. For more information or if you have specific questions, contact the TCWP event leader.
- We encourage participants to sign up for these events at tcwp.org/events so that we can contact you in case of rescheduling or cancellation.

NOTE: Times listed for all events are Eastern time unless secified otherwise.

2. Upcoming Events

Owl Ridge Raptor Center In-person Program – Saturday, November 21

On Saturday, November 21, 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: www.utarboretumsociety.org/programs. 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 Holiday/New Member Party – Thursday, December 10

Join us to celebrate a wonderful year at the Holiday and New Member Party on December 10, 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 9

TCWP will sponsor a day of trail maintenance work at Whites Creek Small Wild Area in Rhea County at 10 a.m. on Saturday, January 9, 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 the end of Roddy Lane 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.

Participants will need to sign a TVA volunteer form (parent's or guardian's signature required for minors). Forms can be requested in advance from TCWP.

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 6

On February 6 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 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. National Park Service and 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 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 Saturday. February 20)

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*.

3. Recent Events

Ramsey Creek-Obed River Outing – Saturday, September 5

More than 20 TCWP and Tennessee Native Plant Society people gathered at the lovely Morgan County Visitor Center in Wartburg on September 5 and caravaned to the Obed Junction parking area, where there is an ATV road to the Obed River. On the west side of the ATV road is land recently purchased by TCWP. Such purchases normally end up being transferred to the Obed National Wild and Scenic River (National Park Service). The final planning of this outing was difficult because of rough routes and high temperatures. We focused on the special habitats along the Obed River. There is a lot more to see in this area on future outings.



Obed River at Ramsey Creek

We saw many plants of particular interest, including wafer ash (*Ptelea trifolia*), smooth carrion flower (*Smilax herbacea*), and yellow-eyed grass (*Xyris torta*), but our ultimate goal was a rare sand prairie habitat. Though tiny, it contains three very rare species. Cumberland rosemary (*Conradina verticillata*) is found only in river scour areas along the Obed, Big South Fork and Caney Fork Rivers' watersheds. It is federally protected as Threatened by the Endangered Species Act. American jointweed (*Polygonella americana*) is known only from Morgan County in Tennessee. It is state-protected as Endangered. Doubleform snout-bean *(Rhynchosia difformis*) is very rare in Tennessee, though not currently state-protected. The latter two species are more common on the coastal plain. *Larry Pounds/Chuck Estes*

Summer Cedar Barrens Cleanup/Weed Wrangle – Saturday, September 19

On September 19, TCWP hosted our summer Weed Wrangle® at the Oak Ridge Barrens State Natural Area. At least 13 volunteers worked to remove invasive plants like bushy lespedeza and bush honeysuckle, and some other native woody plants from the barrens. We had several new volunteers, including a good mix of young and older people. We took a break for a short walk with Larry Pounds and Margaret and Flora Cumberland through the barrens, to introduce volunteers to the unique habitat and to identify various plants.

We were able to see all three rare plants at our barrens—white prairie goldenrod (State Endangered), Torrey's mountain mint (State Special Concern Species), and naked-stem sunflower (State Special Concern Species,) along with several other barrens plants. We were lucky to find several of the prairie goldenrods still in flower and doing well, and the sunflowers really put on a show for us. After the morning's work and wildflower walk, we had a nice lunch together by one of the Clinch River Environmental Studies Organization's (CRESO) wetlands. *Jimmy Groton*

Bioblitz Events with Discover Life in America – Friday-Saturday, September 25-26

On September 25 and 26 TCWP celebrated National Public Lands Day with Discover Life in America and the Tennessee Valley Authority with a free, family-friendly BioBlitz in two of Oak Ridge's cedar barrens. A BioBlitz is an opportunity for people of all ages and skill levels to learn about local animals and plants while contributing to science. We explored what lives along the Worthington Cemetery Trail at Melton Hill Reservoir and in the Oak Ridge Barrens State Natural Area.

On Friday, September 25, from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. 25 BioBlitzers met at the Oak Ridge Barrens beside Jefferson Middle School. Throughout the evening, we looked for plants, insects, and more. At dusk, DLIA set up black lights to monitor insect populations, and we were able to listen to bats with our echolocation detector. The black lights were a big hit!

On Saturday, September 26, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. 30 BioBlitzers met at Elza Gate Park to explore around Worthington Cemetery. We started by looking and listening for birds; then we looked for other flora and fauna throughout the morning. Ann Hewitt Worthing also shared some of the rich history of the people buried in the cemetery. We also Weed Wrangled a bit to remove invasive species to expand the cedar barren habitat along the trail. *Jimmy Groton*

Norris Municipal Watershed hike – Saturday, October 3

It was a rainy Saturday morning when we met in front of Norris Middle School on October 3. Five of us were ready to hike regardless of the weather. We weren't alone, as a soccer game was getting ready to start on the Norris Commons. A short carpool took us to the trailhead off Upper Clear Creek Road. We started off on Arnie's Trail and soon met Benny's Trail, which took us up the hill to Boundary Trail. This two-track woods road took us out past an area that was burned two years ago and to a persimmon tree that had a scant fruit but was still tasty. Then we hiked down Forester's Trail, where we passed the first clearcut in the watershed, implemented in 1971. The rain had petered out and raincoats were being removed. We then took Belmont Trail up by a clearcut that was harvested in 2014 and another that was cut in 1975.

A short side trip took us to a wildlife opening where a pond had just been refurbished. We hiked down the hill to meet Benny's Trail, which took us back to Arnie's Trail and back to the trailhead. Despite the rain at the beginning, we all had a nice hike. *Joe Feeman*

TCWP Festival at Secret City Pride Festival – Sunday, October 11

PFLAG Oak Ridge celebrated the second annual Secret City Pride on Sunday, October 11, 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 and food trucks. PFLAG Oak Ridge is sponsored by seven 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 seven faith organizations are located in or near Oak Ridge. Oak Ridge has an active PFLAG group that meets monthly on the second Monday evening from September to June, rotating the venue among our faith communities, including First Presbyterian, First Methodist, Saint Stephen's Episcopal, Oak Ridge Unitarian Universalist Churches, United Church - Chapel on the Hill, the Jewish Congregation of Oak Ridge, and Powell Presbyterian Church. Our monthly meetings are open to LGBTQ + people as well as their allies/ supporters. Bring a friend. *John Jaruzel, President, PFLAG Oak Ridge*

"Let's Botanize" Zoom Program – Thursday, October 29

More than 125 people signed up for an October 29 Zoom program cosponsored by TCWP and the UT Arboretum Society titled "Let's Botanize," featuring Ben Goulet-Scott, Ph.D., and Jacob Suissa, Ph.D. Scott and Suissa are the cofounders and directors of Let's Botanize, an educational non-profit that promotes the hobby of botanizing by sharing plant stories. Their motto is "A care for plants is a care for the planet."

Goulet-Scott and Suissa earned their doctorate degrees in evolutionary biology at Harvard University. Goulet-Scott currently designs and manages higher education programming at Harvard Forest, the ecology-focused research station of Harvard University in Massachusetts. Suissa is currently an Assistant Professor of evolutionary biology at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Anyone who missed the program can find them on social media @letsbotanize.

Your Opinion Matters!

Please let us know what you think by contacting us at contact.tcwp@gmail.com.

You can also attend one of our board meetings to raise issues that TCWP needs to address. These meetings are open to the public and take place the third Thursday of each month in Oak Ridge. Email us to confirm time and location.

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Calendar of Events

See pages 8-9 to learn more about these events:

- November 21 – Oak Ridge Raptor Center
- December 10 – TCWP Holida and New Member Party
- January 9 – Whites Creek Workday
- February 6 – Cumberland Trail Alley Ford Workday

Note that we encourage participants to sign up for these events at tcwp.org/events so that we can contact you in case of rescheduling or cancellation.

Our Mission is to preserve wild places and waters through protection, advocacy, stewardship, and education.
Visit us at tcwp.org

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