



Tennessee
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Planning

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8. Lee Russell Memorial Set

Lee Russell Celebration of Life Scheduled for Oct. 19

A community celebration of the life of TCWP cofounder and long-time board member Liane Russell has been scheduled for 2 p.m. on Saturday, October 19, at the Pollard Center in Oak Ridge. In announcing the event, Lee's daughter Evelyn Russell said, "Lee was a wonderful person in many ways, not the least of which was her ability to bring together the people she loved. We hope to do her proud."

As reported in the July newsletter, Lee died July 20 at the age of 95. She built her career at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, and her scientific research in mammalian genetics is world-renowned. Born in Vienna, Austria, she fled her home country with her family at the age of 14 when it was invaded by Nazi Germany, and came to the U.S. in 1941. She began her career at the Jackson Laboratory in Bar Harbor, Maine, where she met her future husband, Bill. She and Bill pursued their careers together at ORNL, and worked together to found TCWP in 1966, when the Obed River was threatened by a proposed dam.

As an indication of Lee's national and international stature, her obituary appeared in *The New York Times* on August 18, and she was the subject of a "A Life Well Lived" segment on NBC's "Sunday TODAY with Willie Geist" program on August 25.

The family has requested that donations in honor of Lee be made to Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning (Tim Bigelow, Treasurer; 10626 Forest Crest Rd., Knoxville, TN 37922) and marked as a memorial to Lee Russell.

HOW TO REACH ELECTED OFFICIALS

Sen. Marsha Blackburn
Ph: 202-224-3344; FAX: 202-228-0566
e-mail: senator@blackburn.senate.gov
Local: 865-637-4180 (FAX 637-9886)
800 Market St., Suite 121, Knoxville 37902

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Ph: 202-224-4944; FAX: 202-228-3398
e-mail: lamar@alexander.senate.gov
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800 Market St., Suite 112, Knoxville 37902

Rep. Chuck Fleischmann:
Phone: 202-225-3271
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Local (O.R.): 865-576-1976
<https://fleischmann.house.gov/contact-me>

To call any rep. or senator, dial Congressional switchboard, 202-224-3121. To find out about the status of bills, call 202-225-1772.
General contact info: <http://www.lcv.org>

With mail to Congress still slow following the anthrax scare, consider faxing, phoning, and other modes of communication.

You can find contact information in our Political Guide. It's on TCWP's website (<http://www.tcwp.org>), as are some current "take action" alerts

You can also choose to receive e-letters by contacting Sandra Goss (see below).

WHAT IS TCWP?

TCWP (Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning) is dedicated to achieving and perpetuating protection of natural lands and waters by means of public ownership, legislation, or cooperation of the private sector. While our first focus is on the Cumberland and Appalachian regions of Tennessee, our efforts may extend to the rest of the state and the nation. TCWP's strength lies in researching information pertinent to an issue, informing and educating our membership and the public, interacting with groups having similar objectives, and working through the legislative, administrative, and judicial branches of government on the federal, state, and local levels.

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

1. LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Last weekend I took advantage of the late summer heat wave to visit one of my favorite places in East Tennessee – Clear Creek (Obed Wild and Scenic River). I'm usually there in spring in my kayak enjoying the rapids, but in summer when the flows are just a trickle nothing is finer on a hot afternoon than a dip in the pools downstream of Lilly Bridge. As I floated in the cool water, I took a minute from watching the tangerine darters below me and the turkey vultures circling the bluffs above me to be thankful for those folks who 50 years ago had the wisdom to fight to save this beautiful wilderness for generations to come. Of course, one of those folks was recently departed Lee Russell, one of the founders of TCWP and, up until the week she passed, the editor of the TCWP newsletter. We (the TCWP board) are already missing Lee's presence at our monthly meetings, but we will never forget her rational, passionate, dogged approach to wilderness conservation. And we will never forget what a wonderful loving friend she was to so many of us.

And now it is hitting us that we have some really big shoes to fill, especially with respect to producing a quality newsletter. Thanks to Lee (and many others who have helped her over the years), our newsletter has a reputation throughout the state of Tennessee and beyond as a reliable source of information on conservation issues near and far. We are committed to continuing the legacy that Lee built while at the same time adding some new flare and personal touches from new contributors. For the foreseeable future we plan to produce the newsletter by committee with Executive Director Sandra Goss as editor. You will likely see changes in the coming months as we slowly try out new things. As you read the newsletter during the coming months, we would love to hear from you if there are things you like or don't like, and if anyone wants to contribute by helping us track issues or writing short columns, we would love to hear from you.

We have a wonderful TCWP board who are anxious to honor Lee's memory by continuing what she and Bill and others started many years ago. As always, we are grateful for the support of the TCWP membership. Thank you all!

-Mark Bevelhimer

2. OAK RIDGE AND OAK RIDGE RESERVATION

2A. *Continuing Saga of DOE's Proposed Oak Ridge Landfill*

[contributed by Ellen Smith]

The Department of Energy (DOE) continues its effort to site the proposed Environmental Management Disposal Facility (a landfill for mixed radioactive and hazardous waste from CERCLA cleanup activities) in Bear Creek Valley on the Oak Ridge Reservation (see NL342 ¶6B and NL343 ¶7). Several dates were announced for release of a draft Record of Decision, but release of the ROD is delayed

by disputes between DOE and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, which have sign-off authority for DOE's CERCLA actions. September 30 is the date most recently announced for the draft ROD.

When public meetings were held last year, DOE had not finished characterizing its current proposed site for this landfill. Reports now available (see TDEC's website at <https://www.tn.gov/content/tn/environment/program-areas/rem-remediation/rem-oak-ridge-reservation-clean-up/emdf/emdfdocuments.html> for copies of documents and letters about this proposal) add to the earlier list of concerns about this proposal (see NL342 ¶6B). There is shallow and upwelling groundwater on the site (not a good setting for waste disposal) and also wetlands, rare plants, contiguous interior forest habitat, and habitat actively used by endangered or threatened bats.

Now the U.S. Congress is weighing in. The Senate's FY 2020 Energy and Water Development Appropriations bill (drafted by the Appropriations subcommittee that Senator Lamar Alexander chairs and approved by the full Appropriation Committee September 12) recommends no new funding for the landfill, stating that nothing more should be spent "to continue the preliminary design until agreement is reached on the [ROD]." DOE would also be required to "perform an evaluation of the cost of onsite disposal compared to offsite disposal, including the economic impact to the local community," and brief the Senate and House Appropriations on the study within 90 days after the bill is enacted. Overall, CERCLA cleanup activities in Oak Ridge would be funded at levels above the FY2019 budget; money not spent on landfill design could be used for cleanup.

The Senate bill also would cut \$3 million from the DOE Oak Ridge Environmental Management budget for Community and Regulatory Support, leaving \$2.7 million, none of which could be used for the grant to the state to support activities related to CERCLA cleanup. This would eliminate most (possibly all) of the funding for the TDEC Division of Remediation office in Oak Ridge and likely also most or all of the funding for the Oak Ridge Reservation Communities Alliance (the organization of local governments concerned about DOE activities in the region).

While the proposed prohibition on new spending for the landfill might suggest that the Senate is listening to local residents who are opposed to the DOE proposal, the proposed elimination of funding for TDEC oversight of DOE cleanup activities is clearly aimed at ensuring that Tennessee's environmental regulators will no longer be able to prevent DOE from building this landfill – or doing whatever else DOE wants to do in the name of CERCLA cleanup. TDEC's Oak Ridge office is fully supported by DOE grants; it gets no state funding.

What you can do:

Contact your Senators and Congressman to (1) express your views on the EMDF landfill and (2) tell them that continued federal financial support for TDEC and community oversight of DOE cleanup activities is vitally important for ensuring that DOE's activities are protective of the health of

Tennesseans and for maintaining public confidence regarding health and safety aspects of DOE's operations in Oak Ridge. Ask them to continue the past levels of funding for Community and Regulatory Support and to continue authorization of the Federal Facilities Agreement grant to the state of Tennessee that would be zeroed out by the Senate Appropriations bill.

Contact your state legislators with a similar message. Ask them to (1) seek continuation of full federal funding for TDEC and community oversight efforts related to DOE Environmental Management, including Federal Facilities Agreement activities, and (2) commit to fully funding these efforts from state sources if federal funding is withdrawn.

[Send additional comments about the EMDF proposal to John Japp at DOE: john.japp@orem.doe.gov, or John Japp, DOE Oak Ridge Operations, P.O. Box 2001, Oak Ridge, TN 37831-2001, with copies to EPA and TDEC [need addresses]. The official comment period is over, and we can expect that DOE's not-yet-released ROD for the landfill contains a positive finding regarding "community acceptance" for the plan, but it doesn't hurt to continue reminding the agency of community members' views.]

2B. California Ave. Mtn. Bike Trail Proposal Suspended

[contributed by Melanie Mayes]

In the last two newsletters (NL 345 and 346) we reported on a proposal by Clinch Valley Trail Alliance (CVTA) to construct new mountain bike trails on a Greenbelt near California Avenue. During a previous presentation to the TCWP Board, a CVTA member noted the group's preference for expanding mountain bike usage to other existing Greenbelt trails. Such usage is not compatible with the ordinance establishing and maintaining the Greenbelts in Oak Ridge. TCWP believes that making changes to the ordinance, or building trails in the east Oak Ridge greenbelt, should involve well-publicized opportunities for public input, particularly for residents directly affected by the change in management. TCWP communicated these concerns in a letter to the Oak Ridge Recreation and Parks Advisory Board in mid-August.

This issue was before the Oak Ridge Recreation and Parks Advisory Board in their meeting on August 16. Around 15 citizen observers, including 4 members from TCWP, also attended the meeting. The Recreation and Parks Board stated that they had voted in favor of the trail construction by CVTA and had drafted a letter to City Council. The meeting was led by Oak Ridge Recreation and Parks Advisory Board member Mr. Bradley Spears, who also serves as the President of the CVTA. Mr. Spears informed the attendees about CVTA's efforts in building new trails in the city's Haw Ridge park, and in the floodplain of East Fork Poplar Creek, both under the behest of Oak Ridge Recreation and Parks Department Director Jon Hetrick. In a courtesy to the citizen attendees, Mr. Spears allowed comments for nearly an hour after the meeting adjourned. Citizens and TCWP members expressed concerns about traffic,

parking, wildlife, privacy, and other issues. Although the position of the Recreation and Parks Advisory Board was clearly in favor, support from the attending public for the proposal was not apparent.

The latest newsletter from the CVTA acknowledges the lack of support from the community and states that CVTA is temporarily suspending its plan for new mountain bike trails in the California Greenbelt. The newsletter states that CVTA will revisit the project idea in 2020 and will provide an update thereafter.

2C. Natural Areas Pros Visit Cedar Barren

TCWP has been stewarding the Oak Ridge Barrens State Natural Area near Jefferson Middle School for many years, under an agreement with property owner City of Oak Ridge and the Tennessee Division of Natural Areas. Under the leadership of Cedar Barren Steward Tim Bigelow with plant expertise from Jimmy Groton and Larry Pounds, there are three Weed Wrangles® annually at the barrens.

Thanks to TCWP's work, the Cedar Barren area has expanded and features desirable prairie grasses and other native prairie plants.

Earlier this month, Roger McCoy, Lisa Huff, and Jason Miller from the State Division of Natural Areas visited the Barren. The timing was very good to see a host of blooms and the prairie grasses at peak viewing. Among the blooms that were seen fewleaf sunflower, Torrey's mountain mint, prairie goldenrod, blazing star, big bluestem, Indian grass, and many other prairie plants.

There was discussion about steps that could improve the Cedar Barren, including removing cedars and other trees removal to increase sunlight and better promote the growth of native wildflowers. Removal of dead and dying tree removal near trails and Fairbanks Road will improve safety.

3. OBED WSR ADDS TO AUTHORIZED ACREAGE

Obed Wild and Scenic River Superintendent Niki Nicholas reports that the NPS unit recently acquired two new parcels totaling 37.5 acres within its authorized boundary. These two tracts are in the Norris Ford vicinity of the park, at the end of Luke Hall Road. The smaller tract is a 25 foot strip along the western half of the road running into Norris Ford and provides uninterrupted legal access into the park's larger property holding near Norris Ford. The larger tract is adjacent to Four Mile Creek and one of the largest of waterfalls in the park.

One of TCWP's main goals is to help with protection from development for the dramatic Obed River gorge. The surest protection is for the park to own the property that lies inside the boundaries that are described in the legislation that authorized the formation of the Park. This latest acquisition is a great step!

4. TENNESSEE NEWS

4A. *Ken Dubke Gets Highest State Conservation Award*

[Information from *Chattanooga Times Free Press*]

Longtime TCWP member Ken Dubke has received the 2019 Robert Sparks Walker Lifetime Achievement Award from the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation for his study and protection of birds. In announcing the award, TDEC Commissioner David Salyers said "Ken Dubke has been a champion for the study and protection of the avian species across Tennessee for more than 60 years. His passion for birds and their future on the planet has been extraordinary, and Tennessee is indebted to his lifelong commitment to nature."

Dubke, 88, is known as "The Birdman." He was a National Park Service district ranger at Point Park on Lookout Mountain until his retirement in 1991. He has been instrumental in the preservation of golden eagles, osprey, and whooping cranes, and his work led to a network of wildlife viewing areas across the state. He and his wife, Lil, allowed placement of one of Tennessee's first osprey hacking platforms in their backyard on Savannah Bay of the Chickamauga Reservoir, a property they purchased to provide habitat for ospreys and sandhill cranes.

Dubke has the largest private ornithological library in the state, and officials say his passion for wildlife continues unabated.

4B. *Rocky Fork S.P. Update*

[Contributed by Melanie Mayes]

There is positive news out of Lamar Alexander Rocky Fork State Park, located near Erwin, TN. As reported in previous newsletters and in a Feb 25 2019 article in the magazine *Blue Ridge Outdoors*, TDEC has proposed a 25-foot-wide road up the side of Flint Mountain for a campground and overlook, and a visitor's center adjacent to wetlands harboring rare synchronous and Blue Ghost fireflies. The proposal seems inconsistent with the minimalist development approach advocated for by early park proponents. More importantly, the relatively new park still lacks a comprehensive management plan and concomitant opportunities for public input. In early May it was discovered that consultants had been awarded a \$300,000 contract to clear the right of way along the proposed route, effectively making an end run around public concerns with the road and the development scheme. The work involved clearing trees and using a bulldozer to facilitate access by a drill rig needed for geotechnical surveys, which caused an outcry from local residents and park supporters. As explained in the *Blue Ridge Outdoors* article, the steep topography, biodiversity, and excellent water quality must be considered in the development plans. New TDEC commissioner David Salyers has since appointed Jim Bryson as Deputy Commissioner of Parks and Conservation, and the surveying plans appear to be on hold for now. Additionally, the park added 88 acres near the highway access, which may provide a better location for the

campground. Park proponents also point to the potential for a campground by private developers, which would better enhance economic development in the area.

TCWP encourages hikers to visit the park and to be prepared to comment on development and management plans when opportunities arise. TCWP Board member Tim Bigelow obliged and led a TCWP field trip to Rocky Fork on July 27. TCWP member Johnny Cosgrove has been particularly active and is quoted in the *Blue Ridge Outdoors* article. TCWP would like to thank Johnny and local resident John Beaudet for his tireless efforts to preserve the wild character of Rocky Fork.

4C. *Grants to Conserve S. Cumberlands*

[Information from the *Chattanooga Times Free Press*]

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation has granted \$1.3 million to a number of nonprofits and a state agency for projects focused on restoring areas in the Cumberland Plateau, including restoration, enhancement, and protection of shortleaf pine and riparian forests and in-stream habitats in Alabama, Kentucky and Tennessee. The grants will engage more than 1,400 private landowners through outreach and assistance, and will be matched to bring the total to \$2.6 million. The groups will largely work to teach landowners of large properties proper land management skills.

The projects will focus on restoring shortleaf pine and oak communities on the plateau, where ecosystems have dwindled due to forest conversion, a lack of prescribed fire, disease, and pest infestation. That loss has converted much of the land to heavily forested area, contributing to the decline of bird species such as Bachman's sparrow, the brown-headed nuthatch, and the prairie warbler.

Grants were made to the Tennessee Department of Agriculture's Division of Forestry, the Alabama Forestry Association, The Nature Conservancy, and The Forest Stewards Guild. In addition to restoration projects, they will include projects to enhance riparian forest and in-stream habitats.

5. OTHER NEWS

5A. *Meet David Lamfrom with NPCA*

Recently Appointed Southeast Regional Director David Lamfrom is enjoying his return to the Southeast and his first few weeks in Knoxville. Having spent over a decade working policy and building community around national parks issues in the beautiful and arid California desert, his gills are re-emerging and he is in the process of purchasing an umbrella. The one he brought to the desert shriveled up and turned to dust years ago.

David is interested in deep partnership with sister groups such as TCWP. NPCA is a great partner on issues that concern Obed Wild and Scenic River, the Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area, and the Smokies. Welcome, David!

5B. *North Carolina Corr. K Update*

[contributed by Melanie Mayes]

North Carolina's Department of Transportation's (NCDOT) proposal to build "Corridor K" between Robbinsville and Stecoah Valley involving upgrading NC143 and NC28 as well as completely new sections continues to attract attention. As last reported in newsletter 346, the rural Stecoah Heights community is directly in the path of a proposed new section. Graham County Commission held an open meeting on August 20 at the Robbinsville Community Building to hear residents' concerns, and to allow NCDOT to respond. The residents expressed concerns about losing their homes and their water supply, which is a community-maintained spring piped from the mountain. Graham County Commission seeks faster and better transportation eastward, but shares the residents' concerns about substantial losses of homes and tax base proposed for this rural valley. The next year or two is likely to bring a resolution to this proposal.

5C. *Endangered Species Act Weakened*

[contributed by Jimmy Groton]

On August 12 U.S. Secretary of the Interior David Bernhardt announced revisions to the Endangered Species Act (ESA) that will greatly weaken the nation's most important conservation law. The changes finalized by Interior's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Commerce's National Marine Fisheries Service apply to ESA sections 4 and 7. Section 4, among other things, deals with adding species to or removing species from the Act's protections and designating critical habitat; section 7 covers consultations with other federal agencies.

The new rules would make it easier to remove a species from the endangered list and weaken protections for threatened species, the classification one step below endangered. Regulators would now be allowed to conduct economic assessments, estimating lost revenues from prohibitions related to the presence of a listed species or critical habitat, when deciding whether a species warrants protection.

When designating critical habitat, the new regulations require that areas currently inhabited by threatened or endangered species be evaluated first before unoccupied areas are considered. In addition, the new regulations impose a heightened standard for unoccupied areas to be designated as critical habitat. On top of the existing standard that the designated unoccupied habitat is essential to the conservation of the species, it must also, at the time of designation, contain one or more of the physical or biological features essential to the species' conservation.

The changes are also expected to make it more difficult for regulators to factor in the effects of climate change on wildlife when making those decisions because those threats tend to be decades away, not immediate. The new rules give the government significant discretion in deciding what is meant by the term "foreseeable future." This will enable regulators to disregard the effects of temperature extremes, changing precipitation patterns, rising sea levels, and other consequences of climate change that may occur incrementally over the next few decades.

Over all, the revised rules seem to be consistent with other efforts by the current administration to make it easier for new mining, oil and gas drilling, and development in areas where protected species live. The new rules are expected to go into effect in September.

5D. *Trump administration continues to weaken Clean Water Act protections*

[Contributed by Jimmy Groton]

On September 12 the Trump administration completed its repeal of the 2015 Clean Water Rule, part of its multi-phase effort to weaken Clean Water Act protections across the nation. This move undermines the definition of which waters are protected by the Clean Water Act, putting the streams, wetlands, and rivers that our communities depend on in danger.

With the repeal of the 2015 Clean Water Rule, the many streams and wetlands have no safeguards against pollution, threatening the larger bodies of water they flow into. The administration plans to go even further by drastically restricting what waters are protected by the act. The Environmental Protection Agency and Army Corps of Engineers plan to adopt a new rule by the end of the year that is expected to define protected waterways more narrowly than the 2015 Waters of the US definition.

The Clean Water Act requires anyone discharging pollutants into the nation's waters to seek a permit that sets

limits on allowable pollution and protects water quality standards. The repeal of the Clean Water Rule and the planned next steps will give polluters carte blanche to contaminate or completely destroy wetlands and smaller streams that would no longer fall under the Clean Water Act umbrella.

The administration's moves will strip federal protection from waters that supply the drinking water for more than 200 million Americans. The new rules also will make it harder to protect the wetlands that help prevent flooding, filter pollutants and recharge groundwater reserves.

The administration plans to strip safeguards from headwaters and ephemeral streams. As most Americans know, our waters are interconnected. You can't dump contaminants into a small, ephemeral stream without risking contamination downstream. For the Clean Water Act to fulfill its purpose of ensuring every American has safe water to drink, and swim in, and fish from, all streams and wetlands must remain protected. The only way to do that is to stop pollution at the source.

6. CLIMATE CHANGE CAPSULES

6A. *Uninsurable Coal Mines*

[contributed by Carol Grametbauer]

The Australian company Suncorp has announced it will no longer insure new thermal coal projects, bringing Australia into line with Europe, where most major insurers have broken with coal. The withdrawal of insurance has the potential to make coal mining and coal-fired power genera-

tion businesses unsustainable. A factor in the insurers' decision is that they would find it very difficult to avoid paying up if courts were to find the firms they insured liable for their contributions to climate-related wildfires or floods.

6B. Mount Rainier Glacier Outburst

[contributed by Cindy Kendrick]

On August 5th a glacial outburst from the South Tahoma Glacier in Mt. Rainier National Park produced a massive debris flow, sending pickup-truck-sized boulders roaring down the mountainside and churning Tahoma Creek into a muddy flood for more than eight miles. The event registered on seismic monitors and closed a road in the park. The Tahoma Creek trail was significantly damaged and as of this writing is still deemed impassable due to repeated flooding and debris flows. Geologists say warm weather likely played a role in the glacial outburst. The Park has recorded 32 outburst floods and debris flows since 1967. Video at KIRO News. Other sources include Seattle Times and The Coalition to Protect America's National Parks.

7. TCWP NEWS

7A. Upcoming activities

[compiled by Carol Grametbauer]

Times listed are Eastern Time unless specified otherwise.

National Public Lands Day Cleanup/Weed Wrangle® at Worthington Cemetery - Saturday, September 28

On September 28, TCWP and TVA will partner again for our annual National Public Lands Day (NPLD) celebration, to be held at TVA's Worthington Cemetery 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. For more information, contact Jimmy Groton at (865) 805-9908 or at groton87@comcast.net.

Hike on Kirkland Creek Trail, Upper Bald River Wilderness - Sunday, October 6

(Contributed by Tim Bigelow)

This hike follows a scenic creek through the middle of the newly-designated Upper Bald River Wilderness in the Cherokee National Forest. Join with hikers from Smoky Mountains Hiking Club and possibly the Harvey Broome Group of Sierra Club to celebrate this long-awaited addition to the designated wilderness system in the Tellico River watershed. The trail has a gentle grade for the first several miles, then heads uphill toward the end, where it intersects with the Benton MacKaye trail near the NC state line.

We'll hike out and back up to eight miles; however, those wishing a shorter hike can turn around earlier. There will be several creek crossings including the Bald River which is gentle and shallow. Bring water shoes, or plan on just hiking with wet boots on a pleasant early-fall day. If water levels are high due to unseasonable fall rain, we'll consider an alternate nearby hike with fewer creek crossings. The trail has recently been maintained by the Cherokee Hiking Club trail volunteer group, so it should be quite open.

We'll meet for carpooling at 8 a.m. at Ruby Tuesday just off Exit 81 on I-75 south at Lenoir City. We will also stop at Cherohala Skyway visitor center in Tellico Plains at about 9 a.m. The trailhead is another hour of scenic driving, the last five miles on a gravel road.

TCWP Annual Meeting - Saturday, October 12

(Contributed by Sandra Goss)

The details of our Annual Meeting have been set, and everyone is encouraged to send in their registrations to hear our new Tennessee Department of Conservation and Environment Commissioner David Slayers, enjoy a delicious buffet lunch at the Cumberland Mountain State Park, and choose either an easy or moderate hike if you like. See the enclosed flyer for information about TCWP's nominees for the 202 Officers and Directors, as well as the contact info for registering.

Norris Watershed Hike - Saturday, October 26

(Contributed by Joe Feeman)

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 year's hike, we'll meet in front of Norris Middle School at 9 a.m. After a short stroll through downtown Norris to the Eric Harold Park, we will take a short trail to Hickory Trail Road, and then hike Eagle Trail all the way to Observation Point. After climbing up to take in the view, we'll hike over to Deer Ridge Trail and then to Deer Ridge Road, where we will continue down by the elementary school, around the commons, and back up to the starting point. Much of Eagle Trail was constructed by the CCC in the mid-1930s, and a shelter was also constructed on Observation Point. The hike, which passes through some nice old forest, meanders down a hollow and travels along the contour above the Clinch River before climbing up a ridge. It is about four miles, with one climb of about a half-mile.

Participants can meet for carpooling in Oak Ridge in the Gold's Gym/Books-a-Million parking lot in Oak Ridge (at the end close to S. Illinois Avenue, near Salsarita's), to leave at 8:15 a.m.; or meet the group at Norris Middle School at 9 a.m. Wear sturdy shoes or boots, and bring water and snacks or a lunch. For more information, call Joe Feeman at (865) 457-8191.

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

The Oak Ridge Cedar Barren will again be the site of exotic invasive plant removal as we conduct our fall cleanup, our third and final cleanup of the year. Located next to Jefferson Middle School in Oak Ridge, the Barren is a joint project of the City of Oak Ridge, State Natural Areas Division, and TCWP. The area is one of just a few cedar barrens in East Tennessee, and is subject to invasion by bushy lespedeza, leatherleaf viburnum, privet, autumn olive, mimosa, Nepal grass, multiflora rose, and woody plants that threaten the system's prairie grasses. Our efforts help to eliminate invasive and other shade-producing plants that prevent the prairie grasses from getting needed sunlight.

Volunteers should meet in the Jefferson Middle School Parking lot at 9 a.m., with sturdy shoes, loppers, gloves, and water. The work session will conclude at noon with a pizza lunch. For more information, contact Tim Bigelow at 865-607-6781 or Bigelowt2@mindspring.com.

Additional information on all TCWP activities may be obtained from TCWP Executive Director Sandra K. Goss at Sandra@sandrakgoss.com or at 865-583-3967.

7B. *Recent events*

Rocky Fork State Park hike - Saturday, July 27

(Contributed by Tim Bigelow)

Rocky Fork State Park is a bit of a drive, but well worth the effort, especially on a nice day like we had for this hike. There were 13 hikers in the group—some representing TCWP, some the Smoky Mountains Hiking Club, and some the Defenders of Wildlife groups. One visitor was John Beaudet, an excellent local host and hike leader who has been active in preserving the wilderness nature of the park and also in efforts to maintain and improve trails with the state park staff.

The hike began with a short talk in the campfire ring by John Beaudet and the RFSP rangers on the staff. They discussed the history of the park (now named for Senator Lamar Alexander), some of the wildlife in the streams, and issues regarding possible plans for development by the state.

We then started walking the main trail, which follows Rocky Fork for about a mile. It's an amazingly clear stream, and a good place for rare salamanders. We then turned off on the Flint Creek Trail and went past the site of an ambush and battle in 1789 between a militia led by John Sevier and the Cherokees. John Beaudet had historical details and even a copy of the Charleston newspaper describing the battle. Further up Flint Creek we stopped for lunch, then at the park boundary where the trail enters Cherokee National Forest just below the gap where it joins the Appalachian Trail. On the way back, we took a steep side trail to the top of Whitehouse Cliffs for an amazing view of the entire Rocky Fork drainage. There was some interesting vegetation there, including several American chestnut trees. Definitely a park worth preserving, in as close to its current state as possible!

Information Program: "The Obed Wild and Scenic River: an International Dark Sky Park" - August 1

About 20 people turned out on August 1 to hear Obed WSR Interpretive Park Ranger Rick Ryan discuss the park's Dark Sky Initiative. Ryan serves as the lead ranger for all of the Obed's Night Sky programming and Dark Sky Park initiatives, which resulted in the park's certification as a Silver-Tier International Dark Sky Park in 2017.

Ryan described the park as "a truly dark place," where visitors can experience a night sky strewn with thousands of stars. The Obed was the twentieth National

Park Service unit to be designated by the International Dark Sky Association as a Dark Sky Park, the culmination of a five-year-long effort that involved regular monitoring of 17 sites within the park to demonstrate stable darkness conditions. Ryan pointed out that of 28 NPS Dark Sky Parks, only three (including the Obed) are east of Colorado. Obed staff are currently working on a similar designation for the Big South Fork. (Pickett State Park is on the list of state parks nationwide designated as Dark Sky Parks.)

In addition to other requirements for maintaining its DSP status, the park must conduct a program of educational outreach to encourage public appreciation of dark skies. The Obed offers year-round night sky programs, usually at Lilly Bluff Overlook or Nemo Bridge, with three telescopes to enhance viewers' experience. The programs also offer opportunities to observe park wildlife at night.

Ryan recommended a number of steps citizens can take to help make skies darker, including using outdoor lighting only when needed, lighting the smallest area possible, using lighting that is no brighter than necessary, and minimizing blue light emissions. (Blue light brightens the sky more than any other color of light.) Outdoor lights should be aimed downward through the use of shielding.

In response to a question regarding how best to find out dates and times of dark sky events at the Obed, Ryan referred the audience to the park's Facebook page, at "Obed NPS."

"Kids in the Creek" event - August 10

(Contributed by Belinda Woodiel-Brill, ERWA)

Emory River Watershed Association (ERWA) and TCWP partnered with Frozen Head State Park to create a Kids in the Creek/School Kick-off Day on Saturday, August 10th. About 45 students and parents explored the wonders found in the shallow waters in Frozen Head, finding fish and aquatic invertebrates with the help of professional naturalists and aquatic biologists. Morgan County native and TVA aquatic biologist John Justice brought his expertise and equipment, giving students the opportunity to catch fish, identify them, and see them up close, and students had fun searching under rocks for all sorts of aquatic insects. Other participants included knowledgeable staff from Oak Ridge National Laboratory, Tennessee State Parks, and Big South Fork/Obed Wild & Scenic River. Frozen Head's School Kick-off Day was a grant-funded event that featured blacksmithing

demonstrations, a free cookout, a CCC History Hike, live music, and live birds of prey. By partnering with Frozen Head on their event, ERWA was able to reach more people and also contribute some great expertise and excitement to their Creek Crawl. Teamwork!

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

(Contributed by Tim Bigelow)

We had 9 participants come out for the August Cedar Barren work day. Nice flowers were starting to bloom including some sunflowers and the earlier blooming blazing star.

We were joined by Oak Ridge intern John Scheb who is working on environmental projects for City of OR staff for a 6 month assignment before graduate school.

The weather was great and started turning warm toward the end. Quite a bit of the usual Chinese lespedeza was removed from the ellipse area as well as other invasive and woody plants like mimosa, autumn olive and even poison ivy. An effort was made to bag most of the tips of the lespedeza which had blossoms and possible seeds already showing.

The trail was cleared of encroaching vegetation and an effort was made to remove some of the ivy near the entrance and trash.

A guided trip to the front triangle area was conducted by Larry Pounds and Jimmy Groton

Bledsoe State Forest Fall Flowers - Saturday, September 7

(Contributed by Larry Pounds)

On September 7, TCWP and Tennessee Native Plant Society folks joined together to enjoy the fall flowers in Bledsoe State Forest. Usually our fall wildflower event is later in the year; we paid for our early date with hot conditions, but we got to see many flowers in their prime.

Seven of us braved the sun to see those very beautiful wildflowers. Prominent were hollow Joe-Pye weed, many types of goldenrod, tall ironweed, narrowleaf sunflower, downy lobelia, southern prairie aster, late purple aster, dolly's daisy, tall flat-topped white aster, and southern blazing star. We saw these along a TVA power line right -of-way where the habitat was prairie-like. We discussed how TVA is trying to preserve prairie-type habitat along this line and others, with training and technical assistance.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

- Sept. 26 *Community Shares Campaign Kickoff*
- Sept. 28 *National Public Lands Day at Worthington Cemetery*

- Oct. 4 *Salamander Ball honoring Jimmy Groton, Conservation Hero*
- Oct. 6 *Bald River Falls Hike*
- Oct. 12 *TCWP Annual Meeting*
- Oct. 19 *Lee Russell Memorial*
- Oct. 26 *Norris Watershed Hike*

- Nov. 2 *Oak Ridge Cedar Barren Weed Wrangle®*
- Nov. 9 *Community Shares Brewers Jam*

SAVE THE DATE! December 12 - TCWP Holiday Party