

**Little Tennessee Native Fish Conservation Partnership
Steering Committee**

TVA East Building; Knoxville, TN; Thursday, November 5, 10:00 a.m. – 2:45 p.m.

Attendees

- Shannon O'Quinn – Tennessee Valley Authority
- Tina Guinn – Tennessee Valley Authority
- Evan Crews – Tennessee Valley Authority
- Janet Mizzi – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Larry Everett – Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation
- Erin McCombs – American Rivers
- Missy Petty – Conservation Fisheries, Inc.
- Jason Meador – Mainspring Conservation Trust
- Brian Alford – University of Tennessee
- Bart Carter – Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency
- Joyce Coombs – University of Tennessee
- Justin Wolbert – University of Tennessee
- Gary Peeples – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Stephanie Chance – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Axel Ringe – Sierra Club
- Andrea Leslie – N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission
- Fred Harris – N.C. Wildlife Federation
- Steve Johnson – Duke Energy Carolinas
- Jake Rash – N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission
- Mike LaVoie, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians
- Damon Hearne – Trout Unlimited
- Jason Farmer (phone) – Nantahala National Forest

Welcome and review of charge from Twin Creeks– Shannon

- Shannon O'Quinn introduced Tina Guinn and Evan Crews, sitting in from TVA
- Shannon O'Quinn reminded of the action items with which we walked out of our Twin Creeks meeting - do a designation, have an exec com retreat, review existing planning documents

Review of 2015 successes - Group

- Designation event – Abrams Creek, piggy-backed onto the CFI's release of fish into Abrams.
 - Action item – Gary - compile designation photos on website
- Fundraising
 - Duke Water Resources letter of intent submitted, but we have not yet heard. Includes funding for video by Freshwaters Illustrated; and creation of an updateable, interactive map showing priority areas, where people are working, and pulls together data from various reports.
 - Also an unfunded grant application submitted to Patagonia for aquatic photography – wildlife on white. Patagonia wanted something more direct in terms of advocacy and change.
 - In the future, keep the Tallassee Fund in mind from the Tapoco relicensing settlement. Approx.. \$100,000K in Tennessee with a sister fund on the North Carolina side.
 - Application period coming up for Fisheries Conservation Fund – they've funded the partnership for \$6-8k/year the past couple of years, and Fred suspects it will happen again, though there will be competition.
- Video
 - Jeremy Monroe of Freshwaters Illustrated has been approached about making video. Looking at a series of film shorts on several topics.
 - 2500 – 4000K per completed minute of film. Jeremy will be in watershed this spring with TVA, so hopefully we can piggy back.
 - Currently have \$17000 secured. USFWS, FS, EBCI, TU have all mentioned the potential of funding. NFCA would retain full rights to the video. Duke application includes \$48,000 for film.
 - Action item – Jason - Next step is convening a group of people to focus on developing this concept.
- Website – LittleT.org.
 - Permissions can be shared to enable people to post content.
 - Content can be reused from other places, and from the website into other places.
- *Organization updates*

- Trout Unlimited – Worked with U.S. Forest Service to create aquatic organism passage targeting brook trout on Nantahala National Forest.
- Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians – Assisted with fish weir reenactment on Tuckasegee and with Cherokee language event on Little Snowbird Creek; installing 16 multi-parameter stream gauges on tribal waters; funded sicklefin redhorse propagation/restoration efforts
- Duke Energy Carolinas – Operational changes in reservoir management; expect to be signatory to sicklefin redhorse CCA by the end of the year
- North Carolina Wildlife Federation – Continuing to publicize and support partnership; effort in development to get more kids outside
- North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission – No Appalachian elktoe found in this year’s quantitative survey effort; more than 14000 mussels stocked into Cheoah River as well as spotfin chub; trout socio-economic surveys wrapping up, including landowner surveys
- Sierra Club – Outreach related to designation; looking at hosting snorkeling trips in the basin
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Continued organizational support and funding; working on listing determination for sicklefin redhorse; propagated/restored sicklefin redhorse (Warm Springs NFH)
- Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency - Brook trout propagation continuing and improving - Identifying new restoration opportunities, especially with the U.S. Forest Service; macroinvertebrate work in Little Tennessee Basin; working with schools in basin; Tellico angler use survey
- University of Tennessee - Lake sturgeon tracked in Tellico River; hosted watershed symposium
- Land Trust for the Little Tennessee – Youth education events in four counties; Shade Your Stream (thanks to Duke Energy Carolinas and TVA) looking to expand into Graham Co; brook trout landowner outreach
- Conservation Fisheries Inc. - Supported designation which piggy-backed on field work for the Abrams/Citico genetic exchange program; spotfin chub to the Cheoah; initiating olive darter propagation efforts for Cheoah R restoration; rearing and stocking of sicklefin redhorse; hosting stream-based snorkeling field trips for kids and students; reintroduction of three federally-listed fishes into Abrams Creek; reintroduction of four federally-listed fishes into Tellico River; development of standardized monitoring protocols for rare fishes in Citico and Abrams creeks, and Tellico River; planned reintroductions of ashy darters and sickle darters into Tellico River, blotchside logperch into Citico Creek; re-evaluation of Calderwood bypass for fish restorations suitability.
- American Rivers - Upper Citico River dam removed; Little Tennessee barrier prioritization tool in works
- Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation; supporting science day efforts; supporting Madisonville wastewater treatment plant improvements
- Tennessee Valley Authority - Supporting Shade Your Stream; expect to sign sicklefin CCA; aquatic monitoring; hosted Chattanooga aquatic biodiversity meeting; helped CFI with field trip
- U.S. Forest Service - Houston Branch Dam (Cullasaja River watershed) decommissioned/stream channel restored

Review of existing basin plans-Andrea

- Andrea and Peggy Shute looked at about 15 plans and reports, developed from 2000 onward, evaluating them for a variety of factors. Andrea shared the spreadsheet summary of their findings.
- Three reports were highlighted:
 1. Franklin to Fontana Local Watershed Plan – Comprehensive, developed a number of data sets, identified stressors and management strategies
 2. Upper Little Tennessee Watershed Management Plan (GA portion) – Great for GA stakeholders
 3. Conservation Action Plan for Upper Little Tennessee –WWF – only GA and NC portions. Very systematic. Much is probably applicable to whole watershed
- Action item – Gary and Andrea - make reports available via website
- Action item – Continue to synthesize recommendations from various plans and look for applications across basin to ensure we aren’t reinventing the wheel and are being properly guided by past efforts.

Strategic planning documents from exec comm retreat - Damon

- Benefits
 - No comments
- Mission
 - No comments
- Vision
 - No comments
- Core values
 - No comments
- Boundaries of the partnership
 - After point raised by Andrea Leslie and discussion, the phrase “Does not compete for resources with partners” was stricken.
- Functions and partnership structure
 - **Action item - Need to develop roles and responsibilities for steering committee and friends of partnership**
- Strategy Screen
 - No comments
- Strategic Framework
 - After Jason Meador raised a point about the specific action expected from Objective 4g, “Develop volunteer program,” it was stricken.
 - Axel Ringe questions use of the word “resilient” in goal 3. As a result, goal language to be changed to reflect a desire for all native species to acquire species-level resiliency in the basin. **Action item – Change language to reflect that all native species are to be conserved, not just currently resilient populations.**
 - After Axel Ringe raised a question about objective 4d’s focus on stream education for children and young adults, to the exclusion of older adults, the outreach committee said they would revisit that language. 4d – Develop a stream education program for children and young adults – Insert a row that opens up a general outreach that would reach others – adults. **Action item – Jason Meador - Outreach team revisits these objectives**
- Steering committee makeup
 - Damon Hearne recommends interested organizations may be accepted onto steering committee ideally by consensus, if not then perhaps majority vote, as long as their work in the basin can support the mission of the partnership. Conversely, if any organization’s work no longer supports the partnership’s mission, they can similarly be dismissed. By unanimous vote Duke Energy Carolinas and the University of Tennessee joined the steering committee.

Leadership transition

- Fred Harris nominated Andrea Leslie to become chair, Erin McCombs to become vice-chair for North Carolina. Damon Hearne moves on a vote, Stephanie Chance seconds, unanimous vote.
- Damon Hearne will remain on executive committee in a limited role as immediate past chair
- Janet Mizzi volunteered to co-chair assessment team with Erin.
- Damon Hearne moved for executive committee members to serve one-year terms with ability to serve sequential terms. Axel Ringe seconded, unanimous vote.

2016 Work Plan

Brainstorming session, with each team tasked with taking the list back, applying the group’s strategic planning tools, evaluating their work capacity, and developing a 2016 work plan

On-the Ground Conservation Team (working with assessment team)

- **Action item - Add Bart Carter and Larry Everett**

NFCP projects

- Refine goals 1-3 from the strategic framework
- Identify and begin implementing one group project
- Look into development of a blue trail system

Projects the NFCP may be able to help promote, coordinate, facilitate, or otherwise support

- Sicklefin redhorse rearing and stocking
- Implementing Shade Your Stream showcase sites
- Developing the Tuckasegee River blue trail
- Support blue trail assessment by American Rivers

Assessment Conservation Team (working with on-the-ground team)

NFCP projects

- Refine goal 1-3
- Identify geographic focus areas
- Inventory existing useful tools like SAMAB's Vitality Index, and AppLCC's biodiversity tool and riparian selector.

Projects the NFCP may be able to help promote, coordinate, facilitate, or otherwise support

- American Rivers will finish and inventory and assessment of barriers in the Little TN basin – will need input on metrics, funding, prioritization, etc.
- TDEC will be updating 303d list, and publish stream assessment in 2016
- North Carolina state water quality review

Outreach team

NFCP projects

- Video
- Refine objectives of Goal 4
- Expand/coordinate snorkeling programs
- Tie youth outreach programs together to provide repeated, related experiences over a time-period
- Develop method for sharing equipment
- Develop repository of equipment and other outreach materials
- Expand Shade Your Stream into Tennessee

Projects the NFCP may be able to help promote, coordinate, facilitate, or otherwise support

- Blue trail system development (with on-the-ground team)
- Citico Creek dam removal video
- American Rivers's blue trail assessment

Communications team

NFCP

- Turn up website (with Erin, Fraley, CFI)
- Organized steering committee meeting on Qualla boundary
- Have a stakeholder event timed with existing field work – Weir, sicklefin, inventory, float
- Facebook page
- Develop communications plan
- Develop canned outreach package about NFCP (maybe communications team)

Projects the NFCP may be able to help promote, coordinate, facilitate, or otherwise support

- Citico Creek video

Fundraising team

NFCP

- Craft full Duke proposal
 - Freshwaters Illustrated Video – Mike, Fred, Gary, Shannon, JR, Erin, Steve, Farmer
 - Interactive, web-based map – Erin, Larry's friend, Emily, Stephanie, Mark Endries
- Submit Tallasee Fund proposal (Erin McCombs cannot participate)
- Develop spreadsheet of funding opportunities
 - What funds exist, how much, which partners are tapping them, application due dates
 - Research new funding sources, especially engage NGO development staff to do so
- Explore FWS fish and aquatic conservation plan as a source of funding

- Develop ready-to-go proposals
- Develop funding priorities