

February 5, 2015  
Little Tennessee Native Fish Conservation Partnership  
Steering Committee Notes  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Decision points in green

Action items in red

### Attendees

- Andrea Leslie, N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission, andrea.leslie@ncwildlife.org
- Erin McCombs, American Rivers, emccombs@americanrivers.org
- Jim Herrig, USDA Forest Service, jherrig@fs.fed.us
- Fred Harris, N.C. Wildlife Federation/Fisheries Conservation Foundation
- Mike LaVoie, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, miclavo@nc-chokeee.com
- Jason Farmer, USDA Forest Service, jfarmer@fs.fed.us
- Bart Carter, TN Wildlife Resources Agency, Bart.carter@tn.gov
- Jason Meador, Land Trust for the Little Tennessee, jmeador@ltlt.org
- Axel Ringe, Sierra Club, Onyxfarm@bellsouth.net
- Larry Everett, Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, larry.everett@tn.gov
- Peggy Shute, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, peggy\_shute@fws.gov
- Gary Peebles, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, gary\_peekles@fws.gov
- Matt Kulp, National Park Service, matt\_kulp@nps.gov
- Shannon O'Quinn, Tennessee Valley Authority, tsoquinn@tva.gov
- Patrick Rakes, Conservation Fisheries, Inc., xenisma@gmail.com
- Damon Hearne, Trout Unlimited, dhearne@tu.org

### Introduction

Damon reviewed mission, vision, and core values to no comments

### Executive committee update

*Executive committee members – Damon Hearne, Peggy Shute, Andrea Leslie, Jason Meador, Erin McCombs, Andrea Leslie, Shannon O'Quinn, Fred Harris, and temporarily Gary Peebles*

Damon gave overview of executive committee activities since Knoxville:

- Conservation teams gave updates
- Steering committee agenda developed
- Grant opportunities discussed, specifically the Duke Energy grant – decided to hold off on any action
- Fred has talked with Fisheries Conservation Foundation and NCWF about funding and grants. His report:
  - Fisheries conservation foundation will offer \$6,000 to our partnership, with the opportunity to compete for money in the future.
  - Fred recommends allocating \$2000 for designation events and \$2000 as seed money for a video projects
  - North Carolina Wildlife Federation grant writer standing by to help pursue grants if needed or wanted

### Role of the partnership with grant applications

Identified levels of NFCP engagement in grant seeking and applications:

- 1) Member organizations refer to the NFCA and NFCP when applying for grants
- 2) Member organizations reference NFCP priorities in their grant application
- 3) Member organizations put out a call to NFCP members for letters of support
- 4) Multiple member organizations work together on a grant application
- 5) The NFCP writes a letter of endorsement for a grant application

6) The NFCP, working through a fiscal agent, applies for a grant

There was concern about letters of endorsement coming from the NFCP without seeking and gaining unanimous support from partnership members. This was largely centered on concerns that a partner would be perceived as endorsing a project they might not actually want to endorse. To address this:

- Peggy suggested disclaimer language could be added to the letter of support.
- Matt suggested the organization applying for the grant could simply reference the partnership and its priorities.

In the end, the group committed to two immediate steps:

1) Divide the levels of NFCP engagement into two groups:

The following levels of engagement require communication with the whole partnership, so partners are aware.

- Member organizations refer to NFCA and NFCP when applying for grants
- Member organizations refer to NFCP priorities in their grant application
- Member organizations put out a call to the NFCP for letters of support
- Multiple member organizations work together on a grant application

The following levels of engagement require explicit support of all partnership members

- The NFCP writes a letter of endorsement for a grant application
- The NFCP, working through a fiscal agent, applies for a grant

2) Fred – Will develop boilerplate language that could be used in a NFCP letter of endorsement

## Conservation team reports

Assessment – Erin

- Two calls so far. Emphasis on identifying what do we know, and what do we not know.
- Google doc was created to capture known resources
- Ultimately group was struck by the question of what should they focus on – what is the question for which the data should be compiled?

Outreach – Jason Meador

- In the process of compiling a list of outreach resources related to/appropriate for use in the basin
- Also in communication with Freshwaters Illustrated about pricing a possible project
- Asks partnership members to let Jason know <jmeador@ltlt.org> if you have outreach resources he could add to the list.

Implementation – Shannon and Andrea

- Started by looking at the top three ranked projects from the Knoxville meeting: barrier removal, species reintroduction/augmentation, and streamside forests
- Barrier assessment
  - Long term would like to identify and prioritize all barriers in basin
  - Short term – identify and go after low-hanging fruit
- Reintroduction and augmentation
  - Support existing efforts
- Streamside forests
  - Want to identify existing projects that support streamside forests
  - Support widening the Shade Your Stream outreach effort throughout the Little T
  - Train folks to do light-touch stabilization work – working by hand or using machinery from the bank
  - Explore the possibility of providing financial assistance to support farmland streamside forests, as TWRA and TVA have done elsewhere in Tennessee
- Three questions came out of conversation:

- 1) What's our role?
- 2) How do we move forward?
- 3) How much information do we need to gather before implementing a project?

### What is the role of the partnership?

- (Per Pat Rakes's suggestion, add "support" in the first bullet of the key values)
- One issue that surfaced repeatedly during the day is the need to have clearly stated priorities to guide the work of the conservation teams
- It was agreed that we should compile existing documents that have: identified priority areas, species, or resource concerns; or otherwise provide a strategic look at conservation efforts within or affecting the basin. Examples include the state wildlife action plans, the TNC ecoregional plan, a previous plan by World Wildlife Fund. Also identified as a key guiding document was the paper defining Native Fish Conservation Areas. Erin agreed to coordinate this compilation
- Damon pointed out that we have previously worked on creating a goals and objectives list. The group agreed to work to generate a list of over-arching priorities, or goals that would provide a framework for more specific objectives and projects.
- In order to do this, there will be a one-day retreat, organized by the executive committee and attended by partnership members who want to be part of the conversation, especially sought is a range of expertise. Retreat participants will come familiar with existing strategic planning efforts for the basin. Pat Rakes already volunteered to be part of this effort
- Damon encourages people to discuss with him any concerns they might have about the group or its direction
- Exercise – brainstorm of benefits of the LTNCFP
  - Improve multi-organizational collaboration
  - Communication
  - Consensus
  - Addressing issues bigger than any single group's work
  - Leverage funding from beyond the watershed
  - Focus limited resources to where it generates bigger/faster success
  - Generate conservation momentum beyond the group
  - Increase synergy- whole is more than sum of parts
  - Building relationships that may not have happened, across political and institutional boundaries
  - Information sharing
  - Benefit various strategies, tools, perspectives each organization brings
  - Give strength and quality to products that wouldn't have existed.
  - Gives louder voice to Little Tennessee aquatic resources
  - Tailor various skills, abilities, and knowledge to support Little Tenn fish
  - Encourage people to innovate or explore new approaches
  - Encourages proactive work
  - Instill pride and ownership of the watershed and our efforts
  - Dispersal of tools, techniques, etc. (amplification of efforts)
  - Increasing trust and comfort among partners
  - Increases share of limited organization resources going to Little Tenn
  - Bring in good ideas from other areas
  - Allows us to get the correct messenger for our work/issues/projects
  - \*\*\*\*A challenge: engaging agriculture community\*\*\*\*
  - Facilitate communication among partners
  - Cooperative effort improves chances of success
  - Communicating success to a wider audience (internal and external)

- **\*\*IDEA:** partners list accomplishments 2x/year to document SUCCESS

### Web tools

- Damon has created a web-based file-sharing system for the group which can be worked directly in the cloud like Google documents, or you can set up a folder on your computer that syncs with the cloud.  
**Remember – Anything you do to a file on your computer or the cloud will be done to every copy of that file – on the cloud and on other's computers.**
- Also, Damon has created a Word Press-based draft website. Follows a blog format and is easy to edit, even for those who aren't familiar with website design or coding.

### Designation event

- We have numerous draft outreach products (e.g. fact sheets, press release, etc.). We need a process for final approval of these products.
- Currently looking for a date and location to have two designation events – one in TN, and one in NC. Want to piggy-back on existing fish conservation work. Possibilities include:
  - NC – Sicklefin release, date flexible
  - NC – Cherokee fish harvest reenactment on the Tuckasegee, early June
  - TN – Fish shocking prior to Citico Dam removal, fall
  - TN – TWRA native brook trout release in Sycamore, early fall
  - TN – Translocation of fish between Citico and Abrams creeks
- We will wait to see how other activities settle out (especially the prioritization retreat, and to a lesser extent, the work of the conservation teams), before settling down on a date and place for a designation event.

### Logo

- We have some draft logos that we can accept, manipulate – donated by <ask Fred>.
- **Pat Rakes is going to check with the person who designed the CFI logo about their interest in taking a stab.**