

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_peebles@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.**