

Tennessee Heritage Conservation Trust Fund

Board Meeting Minutes

July 8th, 2025 12:00pm

Clover Bottom Mansion

2941 Lebanon Pike, Nashville TN 37214

Attendance

Quorum ✓

| Tennessee Heritage Conservation Trust Fund Board | | |
|--|----------------|-------------------------|
| Trustee | Representation | Attendance |
| Phil Poux | West | Present |
| Mike Frick | West | Present |
| Angie Box | West | Present |
| Andrew Goddard | Middle | Present |
| Bernie Butler | Middle | Absent |
| Charles Hankla | Middle | Present |
| Jeremy Nagoshiner | Middle | Present |
| Larry Zehnder | East | Present |
| Madge Cleveland | East | Present |
| Pete Claussen | East | Present |
| Michael Bittel | East | Present, exit at 2:00pm |

TDEC Hosts: Bill Avant, Liz Campbell & Amanda Latham, Heather Iverson, Greer Tidwell

Guests: Jim Bryson, Roger Jackson, Rachel Conger, Paul Chandler, Andrew Kiepe, Ryan Hall, Grace Holmquest, Cooper Breeden

Orders of Business

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Governor's Conservation Strategy
4. Reading of the minutes
5. Budget Review
6. Review of grant applications
7. Report items
8. Public comment period
9. Adjournment

Governor's Conservation Strategy: Jim Bryson presenting.

- Resurgence of conservation efforts during Governor Bill Lee's term
- Supplied handout to board members listing completed and in progress projects relating to conservation in the state – including mentioning 14 new state parks will be added – the most in history during a governor's term.
- Goal is to keep the heritage of Tennessee which involves outdoors, hunting and fishing
- Being outdoors proven to better the physical and mental health of Tennesseans
- 2nd handout shared - a financial document
- Most projects from governor's initiative also fuel economic impact in rural and distressed counties as they had requested that "outdoor recreation was a simpler way to bring in revenue to the area.

- Claussen stated that many projects are requesting 100% of their funding come from HCTF. What order is ideal for projects to request funds? Should HCTF be the last option?
 - o Bryson indicated that HCTF funds generally should be applied for after other funding sources have been attempted.

Reading of the Minutes

- Goddard requested that future minutes have the beginning meeting time included.
- Frick motions to accept the minutes as presented
- 2nd by Cleveland
- Vote is unanimous and motion carries.

Budget Review:

- Frick recommends compiling a list of alternative funding sources available to groups, allowing them to explore other options before approaching the HCTF board. He also suggests making grant writers available to help groups secure and leverage additional funding.
- Claussen suggested that moving forward, since funding is not guaranteed over the next administration, that board policy be revisited. Specifically, what percentage of funding should come from HCTF and what conditions must be met before funds are approved.
- Tidwell added that he and his staff encourage teams around the state to come to HCTF with only their greatest projects. He went on to inform the board that a specialized grant writer had been hired and he noted that collaboration among land trust managements has been increasing recently. He also mentioned that Tennessee is performing well in securing funding, which has enabled the state to match and utilize federal dollars effectively.

Review of New Applications

1. TWRA - Hatchie River

The Hatchie Bottom / Hatchie River Hardwoods project is a major land acquisition initiative led by the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA), in partnership with The Conservation Fund (TCF) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC). The project seeks \$27 million from the Heritage Conservation Trust Fund (HCTF) to acquire approximately 7,500 acres of ecologically significant forested wetlands along the Hatchie River in West Tennessee—a State Scenic River and the last unchannelized river in the region. This area includes rich bottomland hardwood forests, swamps, sloughs, and diverse wildlife habitats that support over 100 fish species, 35 mussel species, and 250 bird species. It is a critical conservation priority for state, federal, and international wildlife and watershed programs and a key site for alligator gar restoration.

The acquisition will fill a major conservation gap by adding to more than 30,000 acres of protected lands along the Hatchie River corridor, helping mitigate threats like sedimentation, development, and habitat fragmentation. The project is aligned with numerous strategic plans, including the TN Wildlife Legacy Plan, State Wildlife Action Plan, SECAS Southeast Conservation Blueprint, and Mississippi River Basin initiatives. Once acquired, the land will be transferred directly to the State of Tennessee and permanently managed by TWRA as a new Wildlife Management Area (WMA), offering public recreation access and long-term ecological protection. This acquisition will also support sustainable regional development while preserving essential water resources, wildlife habitat, and outdoor recreation opportunities for future generations.

- Conservation priority of TWRA and SWAP
- Approx. half of property has been professionally logged.

- a. Motion made to approve as requested and award the full amount of \$27,000,000 by Nagoshiner
- b. 2nd by Box
- c. Vote is unanimous and motion carries.

2. TWRA – Eddie Jones Tract

The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) proposes acquiring the 47.35-acre Jones Tract to enhance access and expand the Luper Mountain Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in Cumberland County. This acquisition would secure two new access points to the northern section of the Lonestar Unit of Luper Mountain WMA and the Cumberland Trail, while adding forested acreage to the existing 5,600-acre WMA. Once acquired, the property would be permanently managed by TWRA for public recreation and conservation purposes under existing WMA rules.

The Jones Tract lies within the Catoosa/Emory River Conservation Opportunity Area, an ecologically valuable region of steep slopes and hardwood forests identified in the Tennessee State Wildlife Action Plan. TWRA is requesting \$163,000 from the Tennessee Heritage Conservation Trust Fund (THCTF), representing approximately one-third of the acquisition cost. The land will be protected with restrictive covenants and ongoing stewardship provided by TWRA. Importantly, acquisition of this tract allows for the extension of Millstone Mountain Road and the formalization of two access points to the Lonestar Unit.

- a. Motion to approve as requested and award the full amount requested \$163,000 by Claussen
- b. 2nd by Bittel
- c. Vote is unanimous and motion carries.

3. TWRA – Rarity Mountain

The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) proposes acquiring the 3,295.77-acre Rarity Mountain tracts to expand the High Cliff Unit of the North Cumberland Wildlife Management Area (WMA). These forested and aquatic habitats, located in the Central Appalachians—a region critical for climate resiliency—will enhance biodiversity and ecological services such as clean water, air, and carbon storage. The acquisition aligns with the Tennessee Wildlife Legacy Plan and the Tennessee Heritage Conservation Trust Fund (THCTF) priorities. Once acquired, the land will be permanently managed by TWRA for conservation and recreational uses like hunting and fishing, supported by state and federal funding sources.

The project will also bolster the regional outdoor recreation economy in Campbell County, which is classified as economically “At Risk.” The North Cumberland WMA generates over \$22 million annually, supports more than 500 private-sector jobs, and yields \$7.49 million in taxes. Protecting the Rarity Mountain tracts helps sustain this economic impact while safeguarding habitat for numerous federally and state-listed species. The expansion reinforces the WMA’s role as a nationally unique, resilient landscape supporting diverse wildlife and broad public use.

- a. Motion to approve as requested and award the full amount requested \$726,000 by Hankla
- b. 2nd by Frick
- c. Vote is unanimous and motion carries.

4. TWRA – Woodburn Farms

The Woodburn Farms–Wolf River Acquisition Project is a collaborative conservation effort led by The Conservation Fund (TCF), in partnership with the Wolf River Conservancy (WRC) and the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA), to protect approximately 375 acres of ecologically significant land along the Wolf River in Fayette County, Tennessee. The property features over 1.4 miles of river frontage, including mature baldcypress wetlands, bottomland hardwood forests, and a tributary, Golden Creek. It supports diverse wildlife, including the federally threatened alligator snapping turtle and rare aquatic species like the fat mucket and piebald madtom. The land also includes sections of the Lost Swamp Trail, enhancing recreational access. TCF is requesting \$519,191 from the Heritage Conservation Trust Fund (HCTF) for the acquisition, after which TWRA will manage the land as part of the Wolf River Wildlife Management Area.

This property lies within the 100-year floodplain of the Wolf River, a critical part of the Mississippi River Alluvial Plain Ecoregion and recharge zone for the Memphis Sand Aquifer, which provides drinking water for over one million people. Protecting the site preserves key wetland functions such as floodwater storage, aquifer recharge, habitat conservation, and water quality protection. The acquisition aligns with multiple state and federal conservation priorities, including the HCTF Plan and the State Wildlife Action Plan. Once conveyed to TWRA, the land will be managed for conservation, recreation, and hunting, contributing to a broader protected corridor in western Tennessee and northern Mississippi.

- a. Motion to approve as requested and award the full amount requested \$519,191 by Frick. Tennessee Conservation Fund will purchase tract using the Heritage Conservation Trust Fund.
- b. 2nd by Cleveland.
- c. Vote is unanimous and motion carries.

5. Wolf River Conservancy – Rhea Hurdle

The Wolf River Conservancy (WRC), in partnership with The Conservation Fund (TCF), is acquiring approximately 138 acres along the North Fork of the Wolf River in Fayette County, Tennessee. Known as the Rhea-Hurdle property, this land will eventually be transferred to the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) and added to the Wolf River Wildlife Management Area (WMA). The property features over a mile of river frontage, high-quality wetlands, and habitat critical for rare and threatened species such as the fat mucket, piebald madtom, and the federally threatened alligator snapping turtle. WRC is requesting \$188,861 from the Heritage Conservation Trust Fund (HCTF), with matching funds provided by WRC and TCF.

The Rhea-Hurdle property lies in a conservation priority area within the Wolf River Corridor and contributes to the protection of the Memphis Sand Aquifer—Memphis's primary drinking water source. Its wetlands offer essential benefits such as flood control, aquifer recharge, water quality improvement, and wildlife habitat. This acquisition supports regional conservation goals outlined in the State Wildlife Action Plan and the HCTF Preliminary Report. Until the land is officially transferred to the State, WRC and TCF will manage it as wetland habitat. Once under TWRA's stewardship, it will be managed for conservation and recreation, contributing to an extensive protected corridor in western Tennessee and northern Mississippi.

- a. Motion to approve as requested and award the full amount requested \$188,861 with the understanding that this project will likely be split into two separate closings (\$149,904 for Rhea tract and \$38,957 for Hurdle tract) by Cleveland
- b. Vote is unanimous and motion carries.

c.

6. City of Jonesborough – Mauk Tract

The Town of Jonesborough seeks to acquire the 12-acre Mauk property to create a vital pedestrian walkway along Little Limestone Creek, linking its historic downtown to Johnson City and the broader Tweetsie Trail network. This walkway will improve safety and accessibility for residents in southeast Jonesborough who currently lack sidewalks along Spring Street. Beyond connectivity, the acquisition would help buffer the historic district from development, reduce stormwater runoff and pollution into Little Limestone Creek, and preserve natural open space for recreational use. The property would be developed into Pioneer Park, with trails, native plant restoration, and long-term protection for public enjoyment.

The Mauk property plays a critical role in protecting both environmental and historical resources. It lies adjacent to Jonesborough's Historic District, including the 1790 Hawley House, and has remained undeveloped since the 1890s. Development would threaten the area's character and contribute to water pollution due to challenging topography and increased runoff. By acquiring the land, the Town will ensure long-term conservation, construct a new gravity sewer line to support future growth sustainably, and implement a landscape design aligned with ecological principles. The site will be managed to enhance wildlife habitat, filter stormwater naturally, and potentially achieve arboretum status for public education and enjoyment.

- "Tennessee's oldest town"

- Motion to approve as requested and award the full amount requested \$308,000 by Cleveland
 - Application noted 100% funding would come from HCTF but during discussion, it was discovered that an RTP grant had been awarded for \$492,000. In addition, other city funding was planned for the project bringing the HCTF percent closer to 31%
 - Heather Iverson confirmed that this percent can be accepted in lieu of the 100% at the board's discretion.
- 2nd by Hankla
- Vote is unanimous and motion carries.

~~7. Museum of Appalachia – Heritage Space Expansion~~

Canceled via email before meeting began.

A 10-minute recess was called at 2:35 pm, meeting reconvened at 2:45pm

Report Items:

- Memphis River Park Project Update
 - Paul Chandler, new leadership introduction
 - Project has reach 50% completion
 - Shelby County \$1 million funding has been removed from the 2026 budget.
 - o Other funding will have to be raised to cover this portion
 - Over 800 articles have been published covering five different awards that have been presented to the project.
 - Stoltzfus Project Update
 - Tenn Green Land Conservancy submitted a letter to the board requesting to use the grant funds, previously approved by the board, be used for the direct closing by the state. Tenn Green has already closed on the property and is in the process of transferring the property to the state.
 - Letter proposed that the funds be wired directly to "Grissim Title and Escrow and reflected on the settlement statement, with grant restrictions incorporated into the conveyance deed."
 - o Goddard would accept a motion to approve funding of \$890,000 for closing escrow per the application at closing, assigning funds from NGO to the state.
- Motion to approve by Frick
 - 2nd by Cleveland
 - Vote is unanimous and motion carries.

c. Upcoming Contract Extensions

- Six contracts are coming up on their end dates and need to be extended. All are for one year and will be the first extension of each.
 - Natural areas project at Cedars of Lebanon, City of Sparta, Gordon Farms, Bart, Newsome's Mill, Legacy Parks Donation
 - Process overview:
 - Extension will be created using template already approved by the board.
 - D. Goddard signs via Adobe Sign
 - Signed contract will be shared to all board members along with the applicant.

Closing

Public Comments

- No public comments were made.

Adjournment

@3:32 pm