



STATE OF TENNESSEE  
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION  
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37243-0435

## **Tennessee Heritage Conservation Trust Fund, Board of Trustees 2025 Report**

The Tennessee Heritage Conservation Trust Fund (the “Fund”) was established in 2005 to assist the State in permanently conserving and preserving tracts of land to promote tourism and recreation, including outdoor activities such as hunting, fishing, equestrian activities, and hiking; protect, conserve, and restore Tennessee’s physical, cultural, archeological, historical, and environmental resources; and preserve working landscapes.

The Tennessee Heritage Conservation Trust Fund Board of Trustees (the “Board”) seeks to protect significant natural areas in Tennessee by strategically partnering with landowners, government agencies, non-profit organizations, for-profit companies, and others. In 2012, the General Assembly enacted Public Chapter 986, transferring the duties of the Conservation Commission to the Board.

The Board is administratively attached to the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC). The Board has no staff but is administered by the Bureau of Conservation’s staff, who assists the Board with matters regarding grant management, board meeting correspondence, and reports.

The 11-member board, made up of a diverse group from across Tennessee, has met quarterly since 2006 to review grant proposals and award grants to other governmental agencies, land trust groups, and other conservation organizations. Over this period, the Board has held regular meetings to ensure timely and thorough evaluation of projects. In the most recent year, the Board approved 20 projects totaling \$31,224,463 in funding—an astounding average of 36.8% of the total project cost. Grants from the Fund are often matched with additional funding from the grantee to acquire land of high conservation or natural resources significance or, in some cases, to provide for conservation easements. Since the establishment of the Fund through 2025, the average matching was more than 3.68:1 (more than \$3.68 from other sources to match each \$1.00 spent from the Fund).

Grants made by the Board pursuant to Tennessee Code Annotated section 11-7-105(2), and the projects funded by these grants, were all awarded through the grant process developed by the Board. All projects funded by the Board are to be protected in perpetuity through deed restrictions or covenants, whether by fee simple purchase, conservation easements, or other similar means.

The projects approved for grants must meet certain criteria before the funds are provided, including property surveys and appraisals, environmental assessments, and enactment of mechanisms like conservation easements to guarantee the permanent protection of the properties.

The Board has a proven record of protecting important and valuable properties and leveraging the funds entrusted to it, with the Fund’s balance currently at \$79,822,408.60\*.

\*The current balance of this fund is based on the best available numbers as of June 30, 2025. As of the submission of this report, year-end closed entries have not been signed and finalized.

**Attachment 1** shows the FY 25 fund balance.

**Attachment 2** shows recent projects that have been funded by the Board.

**Attachment 3** shows map of the projects funded by the Board

**Attachment 1**

Pursuant to TCA 11-7-103, the Tennessee Conservation Trust Fund was created to assist the State in permanently conserving and preserving tracts of land within the State. The expenditures and revenues are recorded in Department ID 3275001000.

The reserve balance as of May 31, 2025, is calculated as follows:

Beginning Balance 7/1/24	\$31,721,671.39
State Appropriation FY25	\$51,000,000.00
Interest FY 25	\$1,760,594.85
Expenditures FY 25	\$4,659,857.64
<b>Reserve Ending Balance 04/30/2025</b>	<b>\$79,822,408.60</b>
Current Obligations	\$10,669,202.00
Balance 04/30/2025	\$69,153,206.60

## **Attachment 2**

### **FY25 Heritage Conservation Trust Fund Approved Projects**

#### **Grainger County / City of Bean Station – Bishop Tract**

**\$125,000, 1.84 acres, Grainger County**

Grainger County, in collaboration with the Town of Bean Station and the Grainger County Historic Society, aims to preserve part of the historic 1863 Battle of Bean Station site at Breastworks Island by creating Veterans Island Park. Cherokee Dam, constructed by TVA in 1941, submerged much of the area, but Breastworks Hill remains above water, forming an island. The project requires establishing public access via a lease agreement with TVA and acquiring nearby mainland land, currently owned by David Bishop, totaling 1.84 acres. The estimated project cost is \$250,000, with a funding request of \$125,000 to the Board. The future plans include developing recreational and educational facilities such as a 2,500 ft walking trail, picnic area, park benches, fifteen informational kiosks, a park office, parking spaces, fencing, security lighting, cameras, and Wi-Fi.

#### **Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency – Somerset Tract**

**\$137,750, 71 acres, Jackson County**

The TWRA plans to acquire the 71-acre Blackburn Fork-Somerset tract adjacent to the Blackburn Fork Wildlife Management Area (WMA). TennGreen and The Conservation Fund (TCF) have the property under contract for joint pre-acquisition by August 2024, after which ownership will transfer to the State of Tennessee to expand the WMA. Once integrated into the WMA and managed by TWRA, the Somerset tract, which is primarily composed of forested habitat with some open land along Blackburn Fork State Scenic River, will support public recreation, including small game hunting and fishing. The tract features a mix of deciduous forest, evergreen forest, and pasture, and is bordered by approximately 1.25 miles of the Blackburn Fork River or its tributaries. This area is part of the Tennessee Highlands Conservation Partnership's Blackburn Fork/Roaring River/Spring Creek Area of Interest. The property to be acquired spans 71 acres, with a total estimated project cost of \$417,450.00.

#### **Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency – Hastings Tract**

**\$719,261, 170.01 acres, Rhea County**

The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) aims to acquire the 170-acre Hastings tract to expand the Yuchi Refuge at Smith Bend for \$2,200,000, a \$180,000 discount from its fair market value. Once acquired, the property will be managed by TWRA for public use, including hunting, wildlife watching, and fishing. The Hastings tract is part of the Hiwassee Conservation Opportunity Area (COA), which is crucial for migrating waterfowl and endangered Whooping Cranes and sandhill cranes. The acquisition will prevent negative impacts such as shoreline development and agricultural practices. The Yuchi Refuge – Smith Bend, spanning 2,500 acres, is a diverse habitat along the Tennessee River, known for its bird, wildflower, and butterfly habitats. Acquiring the Hastings tract could encourage the last private owner on the peninsula to sell, further preserving the habitat. TWRA has appraised the property and negotiated the price with the landowners, who are eager to sell. Without this acquisition, the land could be sold for shoreline development, adversely affecting the Hastings tract and the Yuchi Refuge. TWRA is requesting \$737,550 from the Tennessee Heritage Conservation Trust Fund (THCTF) to help purchase the Hastings tract, which has an estimated total project cost of \$2,235,000. The property is bordered by the Tennessee River to the south, Yuchi Refuge to the west and part of the north, and one private landowner to the east and part of the north.

### **Legacy Parks / TDEC Tennessee State Parks – Dorsey Tract**

**\$310,000, 134 acres, Knox County**

The acquisition of two islands adjacent to Seven Islands State Birding Park in east Knox County aims to expand the park and protect critical habitat. This initiative includes three islands, three homes, and 19,000 feet of river frontage along the French Broad River's south shore. The Claussen properties, which border the river and Seven Islands Road, hold significant historical structures like the Peter Keener Pioneer Home and an 1800 Farmhouse, alongside steamboat landings and remnants of a sawmill and store. Ecologically, the area boasts over 40 fish species and 220 bird varieties, including nesting bald eagles, making it regionally diverse. Legacy Parks Foundation will acquire the properties in collaboration with Foothills Land Conservancy and Seven Islands Foundation, aiming for permanent conservation before transferring them to the State of Tennessee. Managed by Seven Islands State Birding Park, the properties will support scientific research, habitat conservation, interpretive programming, and trail system expansion, including recreational backcountry camping. Plans also include hiking trails, river access, and a pedestrian bridge for enhanced park connectivity and biodiversity protection. The total project cost is estimated at \$2,080,000, with a funding request of \$310,000 to support acquisition and initial conservation efforts. This acquisition aligns with local planning strategies emphasizing rural character preservation and enhancing natural areas, as outlined in the Knoxville-Knox County Planning 2017 East Knox County Community Plan and the French Broad River Corridor Study. It supports Advance Knox's 2024 Comprehensive Plan, prioritizing conservation, and recreation in East Knox County's long-term land use policies.

### **TDEC Tennessee State Parks – TIR Tract**

**\$689,400, 658 acres, Grundy County**

The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) aims to acquire the approximately 658-acre Savage Gulf – TIR tract to expand Savage Gulf State Park. TennGreen Land Conservancy (TennGreen), The Conservation Fund (TCF), and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) plan to jointly acquire the tract at Fair Market Value and transfer ownership to the State of Tennessee. This inholding within Savage Gulf State Park lies within the Middle Cumberland Plateau Conservation Opportunity Area (COA), known for its diverse aquatic and karst features, including numerous caves. It supports state species of Greatest Conservation Need, such as the federally endangered Bluemask Darter, and aligns with goals to increase habitat under permanent conservation management. The Savage Gulf Area of Interest, identified by the Tennessee Highlands Conservation Trust Fund (THCTF), underscores the importance of acquiring inholdings to enhance the park's conservation value. The TIR tract features over one mile of streams flowing into the Collins State Scenic River, classified as a Class II Pastoral River Area, known for its unique underground flow patterns. Upon acquisition by TDEC, the tract will be managed alongside Savage Gulf State Park's existing amenities, including waterfalls, scenic vistas, hiking trails, and campgrounds. Negotiations between TennGreen, TNC, TCF, and TIR are progressing towards a contract, with acquisition targeted for August/September 2024. TDEC seeks \$689,400 (33% of project costs) from THCTF to support acquisition, with additional funding efforts underway. The property, surrounded on three sides by Savage Gulf State Park, promises to enhance regional conservation efforts and public enjoyment upon integration into the park's management framework.

### **TDEC Tennessee State Parks – Hinsley Tract**

**\$85,800, 15.07 acres, White County**

Burgess Falls State Park, designated in 1973, attracts nearly 200,000 visitors annually with its stunning waterfalls and rich biodiversity. Due to increased development in the surrounding area, the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) is interested in acquiring the 15-acre Hinsley property, which borders the park. This acquisition would protect the park's viewshed, watershed, and access while offering opportunities for expanded trails, wildlife observation, and habitat restoration.

### **TDEC Division of Natural Areas – Keisling Tract**

**\$654,000, 610 acres, Fentress County**

The Keisling tract, a 610-acre property near Pogue Creek Canyon State Natural Area, is one of the last undeveloped tracts in the area, featuring 7 miles of scenic sandstone bluff line, caves, waterfalls, and significant natural and cultural resources, including pre-historic Native American sites and a Civil War-era saltpeter mine. The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) aims to acquire this property to protect its sensitive habitats and viewsheds, as well as to expand recreational opportunities, including a potential trail connection to Sgt. Alvin C. York State Historic Park. Acquisition would also preserve the tract's cultural and ecological significance and protect it under the Natural Areas Preservation Act.

### **TennGreen Land Conservancy / TDEC Tennessee State Parks – Keeble Tract**

**\$591,850, 600 acres, Franklin County**

The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) plans to acquire the approximately 600-acre Head of the Crow - Keeble tract to establish the newly proposed Head of the Crow State Park. TennGreen Land Conservancy (TennGreen), The Nature Conservancy (TNC), and The Conservation Fund (TCF) intend to pre-acquire the property and transfer it to the State of Tennessee for management by TDEC. The Head of the Crow - Keeble tract is located within the South Cumberland Plateau Conservation Opportunity Area (COA) as defined by the Tennessee State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP). This region features forests interspersed with karst habitats, supporting unique species threatened by unsustainable forestry practices and development. Increasing habitat under permanent conservation management is a key goal in this COA to enhance habitat connectivity. Surrounded by protected lands including South Cumberland State Park, Bear Hollow Mountain Wildlife Management Area, and others, the Keeble tract enhances a corridor of conservation. It scores high in TNC's Resilient Land Mapping Tool for climate flow and local connectedness, crucial for species movement and landscape connectivity. TDEC seeks \$591,850 (33% of project costs) from the Tennessee Highlands Conservation Trust Fund (THCTF) to acquire the tract, with additional funding efforts underway. Once integrated into Head of the Crow State Park, ongoing management and restoration costs will be covered by the state. The property's protection will be ensured through grant-required restrictive covenants if funded by THCTF. The tract is bordered by forested tracts to the west and south, with smaller privately-owned tracts to the east.

### **TDA Division of Forestry – Ames Forest**

**\$16,950,000, 5,477 acres, LaGrange County**

Ames State Forest is a 5,477-acre fee acquisition project led by the TN Division of Forestry (DOF) in partnership with The Conservation Fund (TCF) to establish a new state forest in Western Tennessee. The forest is located along the Wolf River, an area known for its bottomland hardwoods and timber industry, supporting a \$21.7 billion industry in Tennessee. The project aims to preserve the forest, which connects 52,000 acres of conserved lands, protects 30 miles of streams and over 1,500 acres of wetlands, and provides a crucial drinking water supply for 2.8 million people in Memphis. The forest is a well-managed, diverse habitat with significant hardwood resources, including 4 million board feet of white oak. It will support local sawmills and the forest industry while providing public recreation opportunities such as hiking, hunting, fishing, and boating. The forest also serves as a research and education site for the University of Tennessee, particularly in forestry, wildlife, archaeology, and cultural history. The project aligns with various conservation and recreation plans, such as the Tennessee Outdoors Vision 2023, and supports state and local economic impact through outdoor recreation, which directly supports 188,000 jobs in Tennessee. The forest provides habitat for 17 terrestrial and 5 aquatic species of state interest and contains significant archaeological and historical sites, including cemeteries and dwellings of enslaved people. The TN DOF is requesting \$16,950,000 from the Tennessee Heritage Conservation Trust Fund (THCTF) to acquire the property from the Hobart Ames Foundation. TWRA has committed \$1,500,000 from the TWRA Wetlands Fund, and The Conservation Fund is supporting the project through private fundraising and grants. The total estimated project cost is \$24,300,000. TN DOF also applied and were awarded a grant through the Forest Legacy Program of the United States Department of Agriculture, which funds fully reimbursed the Heritage Conservation Trust Fund.

**TDEC Tennessee State Parks – Luke Tract**

**\$343,200, 192.8 acres, Putnam County**

Burgess Falls State Park, established in 1973 in White County, Tennessee, is a popular ecological and recreational site, attracting nearly 200,000 visitors annually with its notable waterfalls. The nearby Window Cliffs, a 275-acre natural area in Putnam County, features rare geological formations and endangered species. Due to increasing development pressures, the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) aims to acquire the 193-acre Luke property, which borders Burgess Falls, to expand and connect the two areas. This acquisition would protect watersheds, enhance recreational opportunities, and support rare species.

**City of Kingsport / Bays Mountain Park– Gibbs Tract**

**\$105,000, 38.68 acres, Hawkins County**

Bays Mountain Park wishes to acquire a 38.68-acre property in Hawkins County, formerly owned by the Gibbs family. This acquisition is crucial for the park's long-term goal of fully protecting the Laurel Run Watershed, a vital tributary to the Holston River. For over 20 years, the park has sought this land, and the Gibbs family is now willing to sell to the City of Kingsport. This purchase will ensure a clean water supply, improve water quality, protect aquatic habitats, and maintain the hydrological integrity of the region. Beyond watershed protection, the Gibbs property offers significant scenic and strategic advantages. It boasts a 30-foot waterfall, forested landscapes, and panoramic views, enhancing the park's aesthetic and recreational value. Critically, acquiring this land will provide direct vehicle access from Bays Mountain Road to the park's western section, eliminating the current reliance on private landowners for access to trails like Laurel Run Trail and Kiner Hollow. This improved access will enable faster emergency response times and more efficient perimeter monitoring. The future plans include assessing the property for light recreational uses like hiking and backcountry camping. The park, a Class I Natural Area managed by the City of Kingsport, will fund the property's maintenance and operation through its existing yearly budget.

**TennGreen Land Conservancy / Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency – Stoltzfus Tract**

**\$890,000, 1261.35 acres, McNairy & Hardeman County**

The Hatchie River Conservancy contacted TennGreen Land Conservancy in late 2024 regarding the imminent auction of over 1,000 acres of land along the Hatchie River. This significant property, adjacent to Big Hill Pond State Park, presents a unique opportunity for conservation and public recreation. Recognizing the ecological and public importance of this property, TennGreen, The Conservation Fund (TCF), and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) collaborated to secure the property outside of the auction. This collaborative effort was crucial, as the auction would likely have resulted in the fragmentation of this valuable land. The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) is interested in acquiring and managing the property as a new Wildlife Management Area (WMA). The property possesses exceptional ecological value. It contains significant wetland habitats, diverse forests, and over eleven miles of the meandering Hatchie River, a renowned State Scenic River. This project aligns with numerous conservation plans, including the State Wildlife Action Plan, the Southeast Conservation Blueprint, and the Heritage Conservation Trust Fund's Areas of Interest. Securing this property will safeguard critical habitat, protect the Hatchie River ecosystem, and provide valuable opportunities for public recreation and wildlife viewing.

### **The Nature Conservancy– Wanamaker Tract**

**\$500,000, 210 acres, Warren County**

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) seeks funding from the Tennessee Heritage Conservation Trust Fund (THCTF) to acquire 210 acres of land surrounding Hubbard's Cave, significantly expanding the existing 50-acre preserve. Hubbard's Cave, renowned for its massive bat populations, including federally endangered species like the gray bat and Indiana bat, is a critical site for bat conservation in Tennessee. This project aligns with the THCTF strategy to acquire land surrounding Hubbard's Cave to enhance bat habitat. Expanding the protected area will benefit not only bats but also other wildlife, including rare plant species. The proposed acquisition will also enhance the ecological integrity of the surrounding watershed and protect valuable cultural resources associated with the cave, including evidence of prehistoric and historic human use. This project will contribute significantly to the conservation of this unique and irreplaceable natural and cultural resource in Tennessee.

### **The Nature Conservancy - Jones Tract**

**\$1,384,250, 944 acres, Madison County**

The West Tennessee River Basin Authority (WTRBA) seeks funding from the Tennessee Heritage Conservation Trust Fund (THCTF) to acquire the Jones Family Trust property, a significant block of bottomland forest in the South Fork Forked Deer River (SFFD) watershed. The SFFD watershed in and around Jackson, Tennessee, faces severe environmental challenges, including frequent flooding, poor water quality, and habitat loss. The acquisition of the Jones Family Trust property will enable WTRBA to implement a multi-benefit floodplain restoration project, including river channel restoration, floodplain reconnection, and bottomland hardwood forest restoration. This project will improve water quality, reduce flood risk, enhance wildlife habitat, and provide new recreational opportunities for the residents of Jackson. This project aligns with the goals of the Tennessee Heritage Conservation Trust Fund by addressing critical environmental issues within the South Fork Forked Deer River watershed. The acquisition and restoration of the Jones Family Trust property will contribute to a healthier river ecosystem, improve the quality of life for local residents, and create a valuable public resource for generations to come.

### **Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency - Elder Tract**

**\$330,000, 285 acres, Dyer County**

The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) seeks \$330,000 from the Tennessee Heritage Conservation Trust Fund (THCTF) to acquire a 285-acre property known as the Elder tract. This acquisition aims to expand the adjacent Tigrett Wildlife Management Area (WMA) and enhance wildlife habitat and public recreation opportunities in the region. The Elder tract lies within a significant conservation area, overlapping with the Middle Fork Habitat Corridor Area of Interest and the Middle Fork of the Forked Deer Conservation Opportunity Area, both identified in state conservation plans. The property includes valuable wetlands, farmland, and approximately 0.4 miles of the North Fork Forked Deer River. Acquisition of the Elder tract would support the conservation goals outlined in these plans, including habitat restoration, watershed protection, and the protection of riparian zones. The Elder tract also falls within the Tigrett WMA Important Bird Area, recognized for its importance to migratory birds, including the Mississippi Kite. Incorporating the Elder tract into Tigrett WMA will expand habitat conservation efforts and provide valuable recreational opportunities for the public, such as hunting and fishing. If not acquired by TWRA, the Elder tract may be sold to a private landowner, resulting in the loss of these important conservation and recreational values.

**TDA – Division of Forestry - South Lory Tract**  
**\$1,792,503, 1991.67 acres, Stewart County**

The Tennessee Division of Forestry (DOF) proposed a project to acquire a 1,954-acre property called "South Lory" and add it to Stewart State Forest. This project would conserve a large working forest block, critical for Tennessee's hardwood production and water quality. It would also expand forest and habitat diversity, potentially harboring cultural and historical resources. The acquisition of South Lory presents several economic benefits as well. It supports the timber industry and creates new public access for outdoor recreation, potentially boosting tourism and related jobs. This project aligns with various state and national conservation plans, and funding is requested to cover the acquisition cost. In summary, this project offers both environmental and economic advantages. It would protect valuable forests, promote sustainable forestry practices, and provide new recreational opportunities for the public.

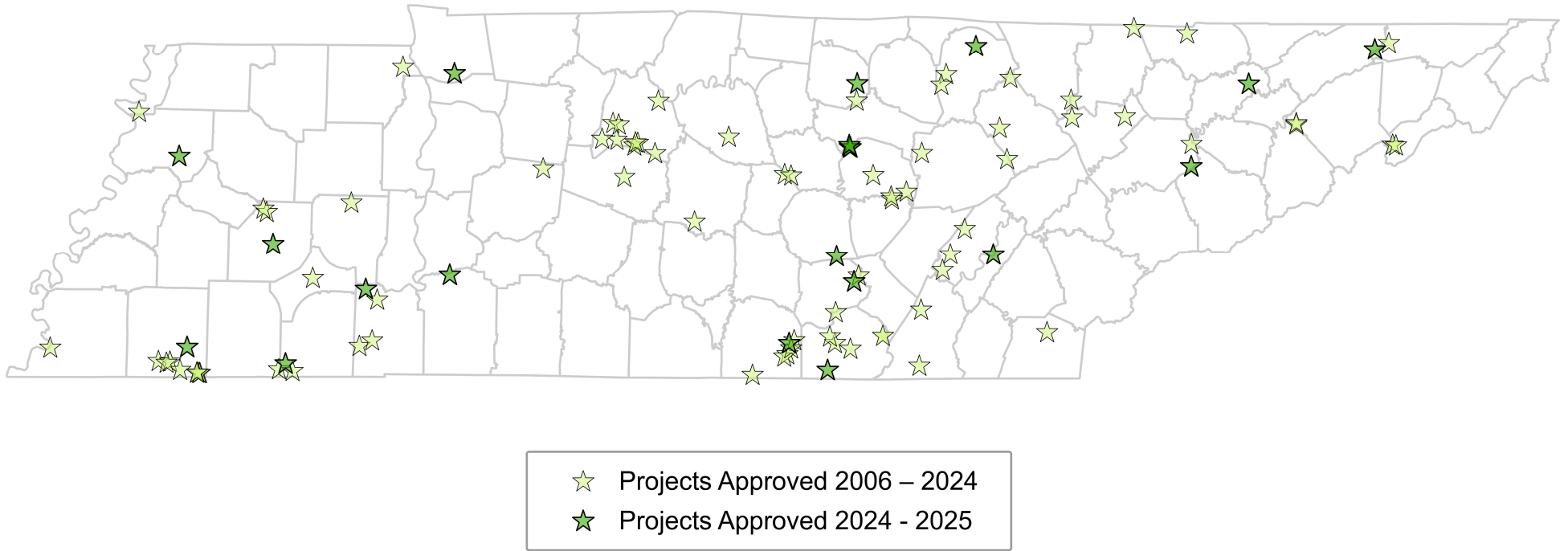
**Tennessee State Parks Conservancy – Barzizza Tract**  
**\$4,520,000, 448 acres, Wayne County**

As part of the governor's initiative, in February 2025, the Tennessee State Parks Conservancy (TSPC) identified a 448-acre property for sale along the Buffalo River in Wayne County. Recognizing its high conservation value and recreational potential, the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) expressed interest in protecting the land for public recreation and camping. TSPC quickly secured a purchase contract for the property, which consists of pastures, forested hills, and several structures, including residences and barns. The Buffalo River, a significant ecological area, supports rare species and is a conservation priority. Public ownership would protect the land while enabling recreational activities like paddling. TSPC is seeking a \$4.509 million grant from the Heritage Conservation Trust Fund (HCTF) to complete the purchase, with closing expected on June 19, 2025. Once acquired, the land will be donated to the State of Tennessee, and TDEC may seek federal funding to reimburse part of the costs. Ongoing management will be the responsibility of the state. The final purchase price may vary based on the surveyed acreage.

**City of South Pittsburg - Happy Hollow Vista Tract**  
**\$700,000, 615 acres, Marion County**

Happy Hollow Vista is a 615-acre property near South Pittsburg, TN, offering a new common space with scenic views, walkable access from downtown, and connections to regional trails. The land, featuring a bluff plateau overlooking the Tennessee River, was previously unprotected and for sale. The Open Space Institute Land Trust (OSILT) will hold it for up to two years while South Pittsburg secures funding for acquisition. Once acquired, the City of South Pittsburg will manage the property as a permanently protected forest for public recreation, with trails, parking, and minimal-impact amenities. The project aligns with conservation priorities, as nearly 45% of the land is classified as a high priority in the Southeastern Conservation Adaptation Strategy. It also supports regional watershed health and provides habitat for rare species, including those in South Pittsburg Pit, a nearby cave protected by the Southeastern Cave Conservancy. The project involves partnerships with organizations like the Trust for Public Land, Tennessee Valley Authority, and Lyndhurst Foundation to enhance community access and economic benefits through outdoor recreation. Future site planning will consider community feedback, and the land will be managed for conservation, invasive species control, and sustainable use.

Attachment 3



# Heritage Conservation Trust Fund Awarded Projects