

# Tennessee Heritage Conservation Trust Fund

## Board Meeting Minutes

April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024

### 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	Absent
Angie Box	West	Present
Andrew Goddard	Middle	Present
Bernie Butler	Middle	Absent
Charles Hankla	Middle	Present
Jeremy Nagoshiner	Middle	Absent
Larry Zehnder	East	Present
Madge Cleveland	East	Present
Pete Claussen	East	Present
vacant	East	Absent

**TDEC Hosts:** Bill Avant, Liz Campbell

**Guests:** Mitch Porcello (TDEC), Adam Binger (TDEC), Greer Tidwell (TDEC), Mayor Jerry Lowery (City of Sparta), Andrew Kiepe (Memphis River Partnership), Jackson Lundy (Land Trust for Tennessee), Bill Morton (TDEC), Daniel Dunn (Access Fund), Sam King (TDEC), Adam Kelley (TDEC), Justin King (TDEC), Mike Robertson (TDEC)

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## Orders of Business

- Roll Call
- Public Comments – No comments

## Reading of the Minutes

- Motion to approve the minutes: Zehnder.
- 2<sup>nd</sup>: Hankla
- Motion approved unanimously.

## Unfinished Business

1. Update on CF Ataya Easement: Mr. Goddard & Mr. Avant reviewed the easement language and shared their concerns with Mr. Churchill. Mr. Churchill is following up with The Nature Conservancy to get more information.

## NEW Applications

1. **City of Sparta – Sparta Riverfront Park**  
**\$650,000 – 119.65acres – White County**

The proposal outlines a plan to acquire a 120-acre parcel of natural land with 3700 feet of riverfront access in Sparta, Tennessee, aligning with the goals of the Heritage Conservation Trust Fund (HCTF). The intention is to preserve the land's natural state while adding amenities like kayak and fishing docks, trails, and open-air facilities to enhance outdoor experiences for residents and attract tourists. Protecting the riverfront from commercial or residential development ensures public accessibility and fosters recreational opportunities. This

preservation effort not only benefits locals but also boosts tourism and economic growth in the region. Coupled with existing projects like a splash pad and playground, acquiring this property is seen as a catalyst for tourism promotion and overall community enhancement in Sparta, Tennessee.

**2. Memphis River Parks Partnership – The Flyway  
\$4,350,000 – Shelby County**

The Mississippi River, spanning 3,000 miles, lacks notable spots for public engagement along its Tennessee stretch, a situation compounded by private ownership of much of its lower reaches. However, the Memphis River Parks Partnership has made strides since 2018, following the Mayor’s Riverfront Task Force’s plan. This effort has transformed the riverfront into a 5-mile park system, including new trails and parks like River Garden and Fourth Bluff, and notably, the \$61M Tom Lee Park. These developments have garnered national attention and awards, attracting a diverse audience and promoting ecological conservation with extensive tree planting and wildlife-friendly habitats. The Flyway project, an observation deck honoring the Mississippi Migratory Flyway, promises a unique experience for visitors, offering stunning views and opportunities to witness diverse bird species along their migration path. Planned as a public asset, ADA accessible, and strategically located for tourism, The Flyway is poised to generate significant revenue and support conservation efforts along the riverfront, securing public access to these spaces for the future. If the project is funded with this grant, the status of the land can be changed from vacant lot to recreation and be protected in perpetuity.

**3. The Land Trust for Tennessee – Gordon Farm Conservation Easement  
\$75,000 – 162acres – Rutherford County**

The Gordon Farm conservation easement project aims to safeguard 162 acres of ecologically and agriculturally valuable property in Rutherford County by selling a conservation easement to The Land Trust for Tennessee. This initiative utilizes federal funding from the NRCS’s Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) for an Agricultural Land Easement (ALE), compensating landowners for conserving agricultural properties with significant prime farm soils. The property boasts 57% prime soils, 1,500 feet of West Fork Stones River frontage, critical wildlife habitat, and Nashville Limestone Basin Glades. Despite not being in a priority area per the Tennessee Conservation Trust Fund Act, its proximity to environmentally important sites like Cedar Grove Glade underscores its conservation significance. The farm’s location near rapidly developing areas emphasizes the urgency of conservation efforts amid agricultural land losses in Tennessee. Conservation aligns with local, regional, and state plans, ensuring perpetual monitoring and enforcement of easement terms by The Land Trust and NRCS, preserving the Gordon family’s agricultural legacy and ecological diversity for future generations.

#### **4. The Land Trust for Tennessee / Tennessee State Parks – Newsome’s Mill Expansion**

**\$1,000,000 – 131.06acres – Davidson County**

The Newsom’s Mill Expansion project aims to safeguard 141 acres of ecologically valuable property in Davidson County by incorporating it into the Harpeth River State Park. This property, located within the Newsom’s Mill priority area, boasts significant Harpeth River frontage and is adjacent to existing state park land. Acquisition of this property is crucial for Tennessee State Parks, offering opportunities to expand recreational activities, protect scenic river views, and enhance wildlife habitats. The property’s location in the Bellevue community, surrounded by residential developments and fronting the Harpeth River, underscores its high potential for residential development. However, concerns about environmental impacts and preserving wildlife habitats are key considerations. The acquisition aligns with various conservation and planning initiatives, including increasing urban parkland, protecting riparian areas, and supporting species of conservation concern. If acquired, the State of Tennessee will integrate and manage the property as an expansion of the Harpeth River State Park, benefiting conservation efforts, recreational opportunities, and public access in a strategically important area.

#### **5. Access Fund – Upper Duskin Creek**

**\$279,950 – 260acres – Rhea County**

This acquisition in Tennessee serves multiple purposes that benefit residents and visitors alike. Firstly, the property holds significant conservation value, featuring a high-quality riparian zone on Walden Ridge with a priority watershed and habitat for endemic species. Secondly, its adjacency to the 33,500-acre Cumberland Trail State Park adds a valuable buffer and expands the park’s footprint, offering potential for rock climbing and other recreational activities. Identified as a priority conservation area, the tract aligns with regional reports and would eventually become part of the state park, safeguarding it from timber harvesting and providing public access with minimal improvements like parking lots and trails. The partnership between Access Fund, Southeastern Climbers Coalition, and Open Space Institute aims to acquire, enhance, and transfer the tract to the state park for long-term management, leveraging community stewardship for ongoing maintenance and preservation efforts.

#### **6. Division of Natural Areas – Cedars of Lebanon**

**\$525,000 – 175.5acres – Wilson County**

The project aims to acquire a 176-acre tract of conservation land housing federally endangered species and globally imperiled habitats, adding it to the Cedars of Lebanon conservation complex. It seeks to enhance resiliency, redundancy, and representation of species like the leafy prairie clover, Indiana Bat, and Pyne’s ground plum through habitat conservation and long-term protection. The Tennessee Department of Conservation will manage the land as a State Natural Area, balancing species habitat protection with compatible recreational uses like hiking. The project also supports a biodiverse limestone glades and barrens habitat threatened by development, aligning with federal recovery plans and conservation priorities to mitigate urban expansion pressures from nearby cities like Nashville, Murfreesboro, and Lebanon.

#### **7. Tennessee State Parks – Cypress Creek**

**\$310,000 – 366acres – McNairy County**

The Cypress Creek Tract in McNairy County is a significant tributary to the Tuscumbia River, enriching the state scenic Hatchie River. Despite much of Cypress Creek being channelized, the old creek run within this area maintains vital hydrological connections to the Hatchie River system,

supporting thriving wetland habitats adjacent to Big Hill Pond State Park. Tennessee State Parks' acquisition of approximately 366 acres in this tract aims to enhance conservation efforts, providing opportunities for hiking, paddle sports, hunting, fishing, and birdwatching while safeguarding crucial wetlands, floodplains, and the McNairy-Nacatoch Aquifer. This acquisition aligns with conservation priorities outlined in state plans and tools like the Southeast Conservation Blueprint and The Nature Conservancy's Resilient Land Mapping Tool, ensuring the preservation of high-priority terrestrial habitats and contributing to broader biodiversity and aquifer replenishment goals in the region.

**8. Tennessee State Parks – Calfkiller State Park  
\$10,000,000 - 6,074.43acres – Putnam & White Counties**

The acquisition of the Cunningham properties in Putnam County aims to protect over 6 miles of river frontage along the Calfkiller River and preserve 6000 acres of prime bottom land, offering a blend of open fields, mature hardwoods, creeks, rock formations, caves, and scenic mountain terrain. This acquisition presents an opportunity to develop a State Park, providing increased recreational opportunities for the public and economic benefits to the local economy. Discussions are underway to receive donations of over 2,000 additional acres adjacent to the Cunningham properties, potentially increasing the total preserved acreage to over 8,000 acres. The site is of state significance due to its cultural history, including the Civil War skirmish at Dug Hill along the Calfkiller River. If successful, this site is slated to become one of the governor's planned 8 new state parks.

**Future Action Steps**

1. Update the application to require applicants to indicate if the project includes an easement and require the easement to be included for review.
2. Next Board meeting will be held on July 9, 2024, at 12:00pm Clover Bottom Mansion.

**Closing**

- Public Comment Period – no comments
- Meeting adjourned: 2:57pm