

SUMMER 2018 Tennessee
field notes

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Chestnut Mountain: A Gift for All of Tennessee

The largest land donation in the history of The Nature Conservancy in Tennessee

Spectacular Property

Alex Wyss vividly recalls his first visit to Chestnut Mountain in 2013. “I was struck by how spectacular this property was,” says the Director of Conservation for The Nature Conservancy in Tennessee. “A very large forested property—nearly 6,000 acres. In great condition. Gorgeous scenic views. We already knew it was in a biologically rich area and in close proximity or adjacent to several other protected lands on the Cumberland Plateau. We felt it needed to be protected, and we hoped that maybe we could help

Bridgestone with management of these forests. Little did we know then what our relationship would lead to.”

On April 25, 2018, Bridgestone Americas, Inc. announced the donation of all 5,763 acres of the company’s Chestnut Mountain property to The Nature Conservancy. The property, which will be known as the Bridgestone Nature Reserve at Chestnut Mountain, is located in White County on the Cumberland Plateau, 80 miles east of Nashville. It is the largest donation in the history of The Nature Conservancy in Tennessee.

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Protecting nature. Preserving life.

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The Nature Conservancy is a private, nonprofit 501(c)(3) international membership organization.

The Nature Conservancy's mission is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

State Director's Chat



As many of you know, The Nature Conservancy has acquired and protected many important landscapes in Tennessee during our 40-year history in the state. We're over 335,000 acres now, and growing. That's the equivalent of 397 New York Central Parks—or 250,000 football fields. But more important than the quantity of acres is the quality, because we've protected landscapes that are special for people and provide crucial habitat for wildlife and plant species.

Over the past four decades, we've helped protect and expand some of Tennessee's most treasured places. Radnor Lake. Savage Gulf. The Walls of Jericho. Frozen Head State Park. Pogue Creek Canyon. The Tennessee River Gorge. The Duck River. The Hatchie River. The Obed Wild and Scenic River. All told, the Conservancy has created or expanded 29 State Natural Areas, 13 Wildlife Management Areas and 3 National Wildlife Refuges in Tennessee.

Now, through the generosity of Bridgestone Americas Inc., we can add Chestnut Mountain to the list of special places we are protecting. Currently, we are developing a management plan for the Bridgestone Nature Reserve. Several things are high on our list of priorities, including:

- Carbon sequestration
- Enhanced forest management
- The restoration of shortleaf pine and grassland habitats where appropriate
- Involvement of local universities in research and biological inventories
- And also public access and recreation.

Our intention is to make the Bridgestone Nature Reserve accessible to the local White County community and general public for low-impact activities such as hiking, birding, educational programs and more. We're also interested in working with the state and other conservation groups to develop and improve trail connectivity between the 60,000 acres of public lands in this area. By improving opportunities for ecotourism, we hope to boost the local economy.

Ultimately, by working with our state agency partners and other conservation organizations, we hope to bring more attention to and support for conservation of this entire area of the Cumberland Plateau.

We're formulating plans for a Conservancy members day with our staff at this beautiful place sometime this fall. Stay tuned to our emails, website and social media. We're looking forward to sharing this spectacular place with you.

See you outside,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Terry Cook'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of 'Terry' and 'Cook' being capitalized and prominent.

Terry Cook, State Director

P.S.: If you haven't done so already, please consider a gift to Tennessee above and beyond your annual membership. That support enables us to enhance our programs, especially at the new Bridgestone Nature Reserve at Chestnut Mountain. Our fiscal year ends June 30.

TNC will manage a carbon sequestration project on the property that will offset the carbon emissions of the Bridgestone Tower, the company's corporate headquarters in downtown Nashville, for years to come.

"We applaud Bridgestone for its commitment to the environment," says Terry Cook, State Director for The Nature Conservancy in Tennessee. "We are honored that Bridgestone has entrusted The Nature Conservancy with the management of this important forest."

The property's namesake, Chestnut Mountain, is the highest peak in White County, with an elevation of about 2,000 feet. The nature preserve includes mixed hardwood and pine forests, wooded mountain gulfs, caves, the headwaters of the Caney Fork River, and Billy Branch Lake, which provides drinking water for communities in the area.

A Haven for Rare Species

The Firestone tire company had acquired the property in the early 1970s as a potential corporate retreat, and when Bridgestone acquired Firestone in 1988 it kept the property undeveloped and protected. That was fortunate and far-sighted. The Bridgestone Nature Reserve at Chestnut Mountain provides habitat to more than 100 species of conservation concern, including the golden eagle, the Eastern slender glass lizard, the barking tree frog and the green salamander. The area is also known habitat for turkey, quail, deer, bobcat, red and gray foxes and beaver.

In addition, the property is part of a mosaic of 60,000 acres protected public lands on the Cumberland Plateau that includes Virgin Falls State Natural Area, Fall Creek Falls State Park, Bledsoe State Forest and the 10,000-acre Bridgestone/Firestone Centennial Wilderness, which Bridgestone donated to the state of Tennessee in



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1998-2000 as a wildlife management area.

Plans for the Bridgestone Nature Reserve include low-impact public access and the creation of connector trails between Chestnut Mountain and the other protected lands in the area. The Nature Conservancy will develop a master plan for public access first. These actions can help ecotourism and provide a positive economic impact to the area.

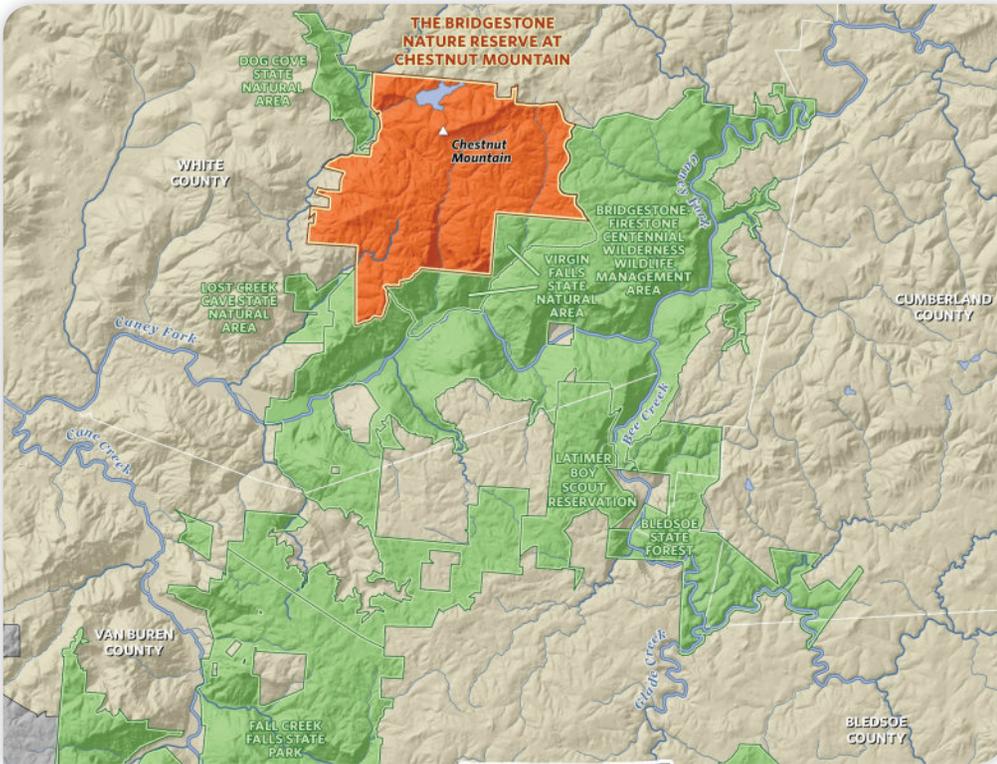
Outgrowth of Collaboration

The property donation is a natural outgrowth of a collaboration between Bridgestone and TNC. In 2014, the two organizations began working together on a comprehensive forest management plan for the property, which has included protective treatments for its hemlock trees to fight the hemlock woolly adelgid pest and restoration of native shortleaf pine stands on selected areas. In the Southeast, shortleaf pine forests have declined by more than 50 percent in the past 30 years. Restoring these trees will help re-establish habitat for ground-nesting birds like bobwhite quail and other species.

With the help of TNC, Bridgestone had enrolled the property in Forest Stewardship Council certification, one of the highest standards of forest management for sustainable forest products. Plans for the property include sustainable management of the forest in addition to the carbon sequestration program.

"Prior to our involvement, this forest had not seen much disturbance in terms of fire or active management," says Trish Johnson, Director of Forest Protection for TNC in Tennessee. "Active management of this forest will strengthen its overall health and resilience to climate change. It also provides a great opportunity to do shortleaf pine restoration."

"If we had first visited this property a decade ago, we might have said simply, 'Great forest! Big trees! Let's just leave it alone and protect it,'" says Alex Wyss. "But in recent years, conservation science has shown that sometimes forests like this have lost key components, especially with an over-suppression of natural fires. Pine-oak woodlands and savannahs with native grasses and wildflowers are native habitats



that we have lost in many places but that we can bring back. Make no mistake: Chestnut Mountain has lots of healthy forest, but it doesn't have all the species that should be there. We can help that."

Trish Johnson also thinks it's significant that the natural splendor of Chestnut Mountain will no longer be a well-kept secret: "I suspect that when Firestone bought this property in the 1970s, they recognized the beauty of this landscape and wanted to preserve it. That was a good thing. But now all the citizens of Tennessee will be able to enjoy it. And that's even better. The vision for this property has changed, and for the better for everybody."

LAND PROTECTION UPDATE

In addition to the donation of Chestnut Mountain, we continue to be very active in pursuing other key land purchases to protect ecologically important areas.

Rhea County/Spring City

Our first land acquisition ever in Rhea County was a beauty! In May, we purchased 377 acres on Walden Ridge, overlooking the scenic Piney River gorge. This beautiful property, located just north of Watts Bar Lake, is close to the Cumberland Trail State Park and Soak Creek, a State Scenic River.

Even better, this Piney River tract is adjacent to Piney Falls State Natural Area. That fact was a key motivation to acquire the property when it came on the market. Our plan is to transfer this now-protected land to the state of Tennessee, which will almost double the

size of Piney Falls State Natural Area to more than 800 acres.

Jackson

In the Winter 2017 issue of *Field Notes*, we reported on the new, multi-use nature park that is being planned for Jackson, Tennessee. It will have miles of trails for walking, jogging and biking, and access for paddlers and anglers. When we last reported on it, we had acquired 858 acres along the Middle Fork of the Forked Deer River. Now we have purchased an additional 287 acres, bringing the grand total of acreage for the park to 1,145. We're grateful to the Tennessee Heritage Conservation Trust Fund and the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency's U. A. Moore Wetlands Acquisition Fund for making this project possible. The park's plan is currently under development with key

partners, including the West Tennessee River Basin Authority, the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation and other partners.

Obed River

Our longtime relationship with a family in Morgan County helped facilitate a wonderful land donation to the National Park Service, expanding the protected lands of the Obed Wild and Scenic River corridor. In February, the Gibbons family donated 161 acres along the gorge of the Obed River to the Park Service. This property had long been a high priority acquisition for the Obed Wild and Scenic River, because if bluff-top development occurred here, a long stretch the Obed's famous wilderness view would have been irreparably marred. We were proud to assist with the donation to protect this special area.

Helping the Brook Trout Cross the Road

In the mountains of East Tennessee, aquatic animals like the Southern Appalachian brook trout often suffer when road construction, logging and other development affect the mountain streams they call home. Last fall, The Nature Conservancy and an alliance of agencies and nonprofits banded together to address a problematic road crossing and keep a mountain stream in the Cherokee National Forest safe for brook trout and other fish.

Tennessee's only native trout species—the brook trout—suffered severe declines in the last century, mostly through human actions. Pollution, overfishing and the introduction of the non-native rainbow trout all took a heavy toll on the species. Although the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, the Tennessee Valley Authority and other agencies have been reintroducing this fish to Tennessee's Appalachian mountain streams, the brook trout still needs help.

This was certainly the case at Briar Creek (a tributary of the Nolichucky River) in the Cherokee National Forest in Unicoi County. The problem: a road across Briar Creek had a culvert underneath that was never intended to be a fish passage. The old concrete box culvert that had been installed years ago wasn't designed to do anything but move the creek's water underneath the road. Because the base of the culvert was a smooth concrete pad, stream water passing through it moved too fast and finished with a waterfall-like drop-off into Briar Creek. It proved to be an impasse for brook trout as well as many other fish. They couldn't swim upstream past the culvert, weakening their populations.

Fortunately, The Nature Conservancy,



Tennessee's only native trout species—the brook trout—suffered severe declines in the last century, mostly through human actions.

the U.S. Forest Service, the Tennessee Valley Authority, the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, Trout Unlimited, American Rivers and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service joined forces to solve this problem.

Together, we generated the necessary funds and removed the old culvert and installed a new one designed according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's state-of-the-art Aquatic Organism Passage techniques. The new culvert has more of a gentle, stair-step incline and a natural, rocky streambed.

"With the old structure, the stream had been forced through the culvert," said Ali Reddington, hydrologist with the U.S. Forest Service. "With this new structure, we have restored the stream all the way through the road crossing and put a lid on top of it. It now mimics

a natural stream channel."

"The channel in the new culvert now matches the natural streambed of Briar Creek on either side of the road," said Rob Bullard, Tennessee and Cumberland River program director for The Nature Conservancy in Tennessee. "It has a couple of benefits over the old structure. First, it allows passage of aquatic organisms. But it also has the capacity to allow for greater flow during flood events, which means it's more stable and will require less maintenance in the long run."

With the new culvert, more than two miles of stream habitat have now been opened up for brook trout and other fish species. The improvement of habitat should lead to healthier fish populations in Briar Creek.

Leaving a Legacy: Emma Williams

Even though she has deep Tennessee roots, Emma Williams brings an international perspective to The Nature Conservancy's work in Tennessee. That's because the Tennessee Chapter board member, a native of England, spent her childhood in Gloucestershire before her family moved to Chattanooga when she was entering junior high.

"I have really wonderful memories of being a young child and hiking in the Lake District. Going back to when I was very small, I had hiking boots!" she says with a laugh. "At age six, I started riding horses, and I've ridden continuously ever since."

Emma found that time in nature became a true passion for her after taking kayaking and camping trips in high school. "That was when I really got it," she says. "We had a teacher who led us who was passionate about the outdoors,



and it was infectious."

Now a marketing and communications professional with her own firm (Full Circle Communications), Emma was invited to join the board of The Nature Conservancy in Tennessee in 2013. "It's funny," she says, "but it seems like I always knew about The Nature Conservancy—but more as a global organization. I really only got to know our exceptional work in Tennessee when I joined the board.

"The more I saw and learned, the more invested I became. For example, our Tennessee work with cave bats and their protection is phenomenal. We have contributed so much to research in the fight against white-nose syndrome [the fungal disease that is decimating cave bats]. I'm really proud to be a part of an organization that's creating opportunities for innovation and working to save a key population of animals."

Recently, Emma's commitment to The Nature Conservancy led her to include TNC in her estate plans. That step made her a member of the Conservancy's Legacy Club, which celebrates its 25th anniversary this year. "Putting The Nature Conservancy in my will aligns with my values. It simply makes sense to me," she says.

We asked her what she would like to say to fellow supporters about putting TNC in their estate plans. "I'd say this: What is it you want to leave behind as your legacy? It's not about how much money you leave as it is about why or where you choose to give. Because if you make the commitment now, your estate has a chance to grow over time. Committing to a legacy gift is not just for people approaching the end of their lives—it's truly for every generation. You're never too old and you're never too young to make this commitment. I'm certainly glad I did."



TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW YOU CAN LEAVE A LEGACY FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS, please contact Director of Philanthropy Britt Moses at britt.moses@tnc.org or (615) 383-9909.

Economic Benefits of Open Space for Middle Tennessee

Middle Tennessee's 10-county area has lost 120,000 acres of open, undeveloped space since 1999. A recent research report published by Cumberland Region Tomorrow quantifies the many economic benefits that natural lands and open space bring and shares some revealing numbers.

Open space brings...

...up to **178,000 agriculture & forestry jobs** in the 10-county region.

...an average of **\$1,913 in annual recreational benefits per household** in Middle Tennessee.

...a **\$30,535 average property value increase** for Middle Tennessee homes close to open space.

...**\$213.7 million per year in medical cost savings** due to physical activity on Middle Tennessee open space.

...**\$325 million of air pollution removal benefits** every year brought by just the trees in open space.

...**\$3.2 billion in annual cost savings and economic benefits** through ecosystem services: water supply, water filtration, flood control, wildlife habitat, pollination, air pollution removal and carbon sequestration.



FOR MORE on the report, visit cumberlandregiontomorrow.org.



Gov. Bill Haslam has assembled stakeholders from federal, state and local agencies, as well as industry, academia, environmental nonprofits and public utilities to develop a statewide plan for water use and availability in Tennessee. The plan, named TN H2O, will include an assessment of current water resources and recommendations to help ensure Tennessee has an abundance of water to support future population and economic growth. Working groups composed of subject matter experts will conduct the research and gather the data and information. The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation will lead plan development.

Our own Director of Science and Policy, Sally Palmer, is co-chairing the Natural Resources Committee of this planning effort. Our West Tennessee Program Director, Jeff Fore, and our Cave Program Director, Cory Holliday, are also participating on committees. A draft of TN H2O will be submitted to the governor and made available for public input by October 2018.

→ FOR MORE INFORMATION, visit www.tn.gov/environment/program-areas/wr-water-resources/tnh20.html.

Batty for Bats!

Nearly 100 people of all ages attended our “Batty for Bats” program at Owl’s Hill Nature Sanctuary in Brentwood on Saturday, May 12. Our Tennessee Cave Program Director, Cory Holliday, talked about bats and The Nature Conservancy’s work to protect them. Then he led the group in building their own bat houses out of kits that we provided. Thanks to our friends at Owl’s Hill for hosting this popular program and to the Wallace Research Foundation, which generously funded the bat house kits!



Help TNC Through AmazonSmile

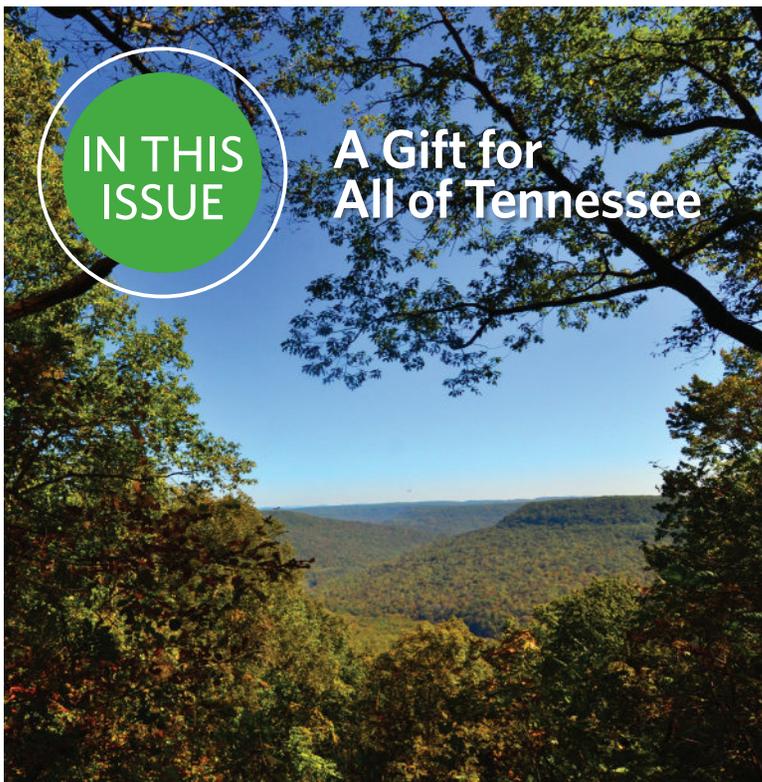
Here’s an easy way to support The Nature Conservancy at no cost to you. Whenever you order something from Amazon, use AmazonSmile. It’s a website operated by Amazon with the same products, prices and shopping features as Amazon.com. The difference is that when you shop on AmazonSmile, the AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the purchase price of eligible products to the charitable organization of your choice. The Nature Conservancy is registered with AmazonSmile, and it’s easy to use. Just type AmazonSmile into your search engine or browser.

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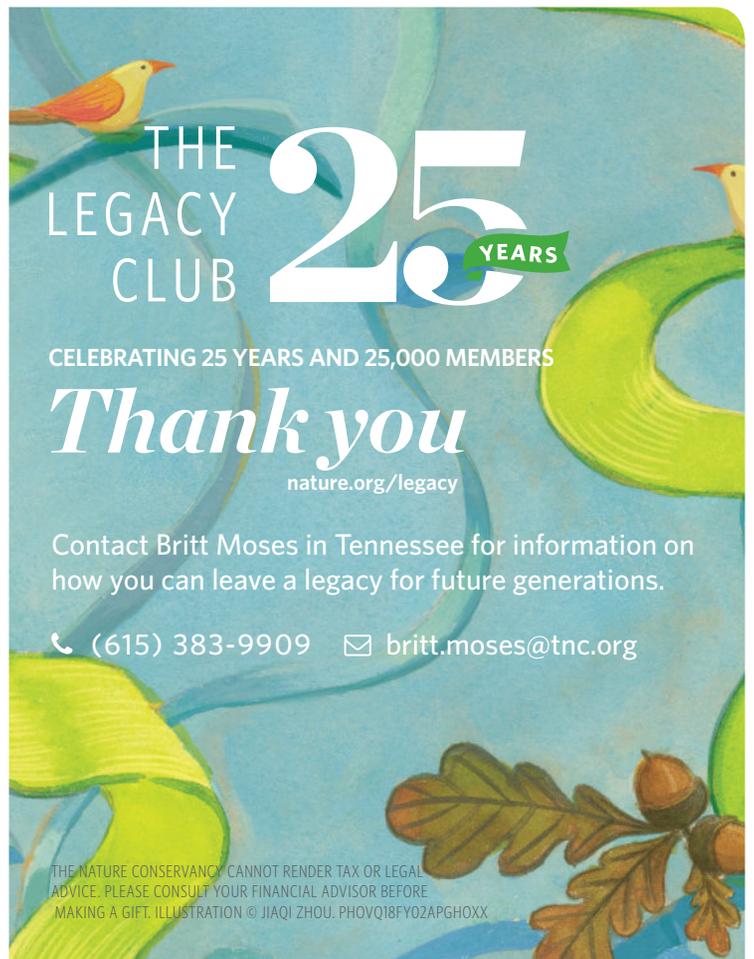


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BELOW View from Chestnut Mountain overlook. © Terry Cook/The Nature Conservancy



We have some very good news to share with you. In April, Bridgestone Americas, Inc. announced the company's plans to donate its Chestnut Mountain property in White County to The Nature Conservancy in Tennessee. **Read more inside.**



THE LEGACY CLUB **25** YEARS

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS AND 25,000 MEMBERS

Thank you
nature.org/legacy

Contact Britt Moses in Tennessee for information on how you can leave a legacy for future generations.

 (615) 383-9909  britt.moses@tnc.org

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