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DIRECTOR'S NOTE

At The Nature Conservancy, we know that enduring conservation begins with thoughtful planning. For almost 50 years, we have been building strong partnerships, investing in science-based strategies and supporting collaborative efforts that protect Tennessee's natural world. Over the past two years, we've been involved in the Tennessee State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) and the Tennessee Department of Agriculture Division of Forestry's Forest Action Plan (FAP). Both are approaching key milestones: SWAP's 10-year revision and FAP's five-year review. We're proud to work alongside our partners to shape a healthier, more resilient Tennessee for today and for generations to come.

Laurel Creech

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Tennessee State Director

SUPPORT OUR WORK

Visit nature.org/tngiving to support our conservation efforts in Tennessee.



Partners from The Nature Conservancy and the Tennessee Division of Forestry gathered at the Bridgestone Nature Reserve at Chestnut Mountain for a Forest Action Plan Field Day, highlighting progress and collaboration during the Five-Year Review. © TNC

Tennessee's Forest Action Plan: A Living Strategy for Conservation and Resilience

Across Tennessee, partners are working together to shape the future of our forests. Co-authored by the Tennessee Chapter of The Nature Conservancy and the Tennessee Department of Agriculture Division of Forestry, which also funds the project, the 2020-2030 Forest Action Plan is a strategic roadmap for forest management and conservation statewide.

Led by Allana Funderburk, forest action plan coordinator for The Nature Conservancy, the plan outlines four key objectives:

- Enhancing forest health and resiliency
- Expanding market diversification
- Improving connected landscapes
- Enhancing wildfire resiliency

"Planning for forest resilience means thinking beyond today's challenges to

anticipate tomorrow's needs," Funderburk said. "The Forest Action Plan is a living strategy. One that grows stronger through collaboration, innovation and the shared commitment of Tennesseans to protect the lands we all depend on."

Now at its midpoint, The Nature Conservancy is leading the plan's five-year review to assess progress and refine priorities. Funderburk is gathering data and success stories from partners across the state to ensure the plan remains responsive and effective.

She is also developing a post-wildfire restoration manual to guide landowners through wildfire readiness, response and recovery. While focused on fire, the manual's strategies, such as erosion control and habitat restoration, apply to other disasters, as well.



SWAP Steering Committee Meeting © TWRA

Strategic Planning for Wildlife Conservation

First published in 2005, the SWAP is Tennessee's blueprint for conserving the state's wildlife. These planning tools guide decisions on protecting habitats, managing freshwater systems, and conserving caves and karst landscapes. The 2025 revision identifies 1,575 species of greatest conservation need and introduces updated mapping tools, urbanization projections and a regional chapter to align efforts across state lines. It also includes a One Health appendix addressing wildlife diseases and environmental stressors.

Over the past 18 months, the newly established Tennessee State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) Steering Committee has played a vital role in shaping the future of conservation. Since its inaugural meeting in July 2024, this collaborative body—made up of more than 20 organizations, including the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA), Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and The Nature Conservancy—has guided the 10-year revision of the SWAP and laid the groundwork for its long-term success.

“TWRA and TNC have a longstanding partnership associated with conservation actions in Tennessee. Specifically, TNC's partnership with the agency over the past two decades with development and revision of the State's Wildlife Action Plan has been instrumental in conservation planning. Tennessee's Wildlife Action Plan has combined science, strategy, innovation and conservation, and TNC's foresight and leadership associated with these efforts has been invaluable to these processes. The partnership has allowed for a conservation plan to be developed for all Tennesseans to achieve lasting conservation outcomes preserving the state's diverse assemblages of wildlife and habitats.” —Josh Campbell, TWRA Chief of Biodiversity.

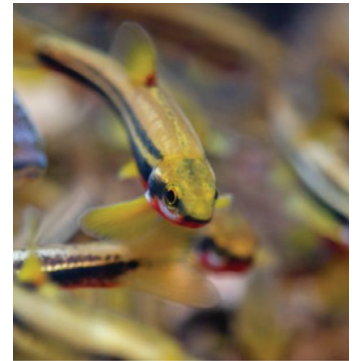
“By collaborating across organizations to plan projects and share information, we can make a greater impact on preserving our state's natural resources and biodiversity,” says Janie Becker, SWAP revision coordinator for The Nature Conservancy.

This committee's work builds a living strategy that empowers communities and strengthens stewardship across Tennessee and beyond.

NATURE TENNESSEE

Species Spotlight: Tennessee Dace (*Chrosomus tennesseensis*)

Bright, bold and rare, the Tennessee dace is a small, colorful fish found only in the upper Tennessee River drainage across Tennessee, Georgia, North Carolina and Virginia. A recently discovered subpopulation in north-east Alabama adds to its intrigue.



A Tennessee dace (*Chrosomus tennesseensis*), a small, colorful fish native to Tennessee and federally listed as endangered © Andrew Zimmerman

This vulnerable fish, designated as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN), thrives in clean, cool, forest-filtered streams—making it a powerful indicator of water quality and ecosystem health. Its presence tells a story about the landscapes we must protect.

That's why the Tennessee dace is a standout in Tennessee's State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP). The Nature Conservancy's work in the Appalachian Mountains includes restoring forests, improving stream habitats and collaborating with partners, all of which align directly with SWAP's science-based priorities.

By protecting the places this fish calls home, we're safeguarding entire ecosystems and the species that depend on them.