

TENNESSEE

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Middle Fork Bottoms State Park © TNC/Zach Lutrell

Conservation Progress in Tennessee

Partnership, leadership and lasting impact

Tennessee's natural places reflect who we are and what we value. From managed forests and fertile farmland to rivers and state parks, these landscapes support wildlife, strengthen communities and connect people across the state. Protecting them requires long-term vision, steady leadership and collaboration across sectors.

During Governor Bill Lee's administration, conservation has remained a clear priority for Tennessee. Since Governor Lee came into office in January 2019, consistent public investment, thoughtful policy and strong partnerships have advanced land protection, water planning and outdoor access, helping ensure these places continue to serve both people and nature.

Governor Lee captured this connection in his 2025 State of the State address when he said, "To grow Tennessee, we have to conserve Tennessee."

The Nature Conservancy in Tennessee is grateful for Governor Lee's leadership and for the opportunity to contribute science-based insight and collaborative support to conservation efforts across the state during his administration. His leadership is leaving a lasting mark on Tennessee's landscape, from protecting treasured public lands to advancing conservation initiatives that strengthen our economy, improve quality of life and preserve our natural heritage for future generations. The actions taken during this time set a strong standard for conservation leadership—one that will

deliver benefits for years to come. The page that follows highlights the work and partnerships that made this possible.

As members and supporters of The Nature Conservancy, you play an essential role in ensuring this momentum continues for future generations.

To a healthier today and tomorrow,

Laurel Creech
Tennessee State Director



Head of the Crow 2025 © TDEC

Conservation Gains Set a Standard for Tennessee's Future

Since 2019, Tennessee has expanded its conservation footprint through land protection and public access and long-term planning. These efforts resulted in new state parks, stronger conservation funding tools and more coordinated approaches to safeguarding water, working lands and outdoor recreation statewide. The state also established the Office of Outdoor Recreation to expand access and stewardship.

During this period, 14 Tennessee state parks were funded, the most under any gubernatorial administration, protecting important landscapes and expanding opportunities for public recreation.

The Nature Conservancy in Tennessee supported several of these parks by

providing science and expertise to state agencies and partners.

Beyond park creation, the state directed significant new funding to the Heritage Conservation Trust Fund and launched the Farmland and Forestland Preservation Fund to help keep working lands intact.

Planning and coordination also advanced through statewide conservation summits and focused efforts to protect the Duck River, one of the most biodiverse rivers in North America.

Together, these actions reflect measurable conservation progress and provide a framework for guiding land and water stewardship in the years ahead.

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Building a Conservation Legacy

In the years since 2019, Tennessee has achieved significant conservation wins that expand access, protect key landscapes and support long-term stewardship across the state.

- New state parks created:
 - Cardwell Mountain State Archaeological Park
 - Cherokee Trail of Tears State Park
 - Devil's Backbone State Park
 - Fiery Gizzard State Park
 - Head of the Crow State Park
 - Middle Fork Bottoms State Park
 - North Chickamauga Creek Gorge State Park
 - Ocoee River State Park
 - Savage Gulf State Park
 - Scott's Gulf Wilderness State Park
- \$100M invested through the Heritage Conservation Trust Fund
- Office of Outdoor Recreation established
- Annual statewide conservation summits convened
- Creation of the Duck River Watershed Planning Partnership
- Tennessee Outdoor Partnership established

Your support makes a difference

A gift to The Nature Conservancy in Tennessee is an investment in our rivers, forests, working land, and communities. Your support drives lasting conservation outcomes locally while contributing to global, science-based solutions to our planet's greatest challenges.

Visit nature.org/tngiving for more information.



Turtle at Middle Fork Bottoms State Park © Brian Cates