

Terry Cook Takes the Helm As Our New State Director



Terry Cook joined us in May as our new State Director for the Tennessee Chapter of The Nature Conservancy.

Terry comes to

The Nature Conservancy's Tennessee Chapter from The Trustees of Reservations, the oldest land trust in the United States, where he served as the Northeast Regional Director. There he managed a staff of more than 40 full-time employees and a \$6.5 million budget.

"Terry is coming to us with a tremendous background and leadership skills which we strongly believe will vigorously continue to expand our conservation efforts in the state," said Edgar Faust, chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Tennessee Chapter.

Terry's appointment as State Director marks a return to the Nature Conservancy fold. A veteran ecologist and conservation leader, he had previously worked for more than 20 years in a variety of capacities for The Nature Conservancy, ranging from staff ecologist in Texas, to Director of Science for the Eastern U.S. Region of the Conservancy, to State Director of the Kentucky Chapter in his last post with the nonprofit.

"I am truly delighted to be returning to

The Nature Conservancy as State Director for Tennessee," said Cook. "Much of my passion for the natural world was nurtured while serving the Conservancy in previous scientific and leadership positions.

"I've had occasion to work with the Tennessee staff over the years, and I've always admired their tenacity and success in bringing about significant conservation results, such as the 130,000-acre Connecting the Cumberland project a few years ago.

Tennessee is a special place, with a deep-seated conservation ethic and tradition. I look forward to working

with the staff as well as our many state agency and nonprofit partners to build on Tennessee's impressive legacy of protecting lands and waters for future generations."

Cook succeeds the previous Tennessee State Director, Gina Hancock, who was promoted to Conservation Strategies Director for The Nature Conservancy's Global Lands program in November 2015.

You can follow Terry on Twitter. His handle is [@tlcoutside](https://twitter.com/tlcoutside).



The Cook family includes (from left) Terry, wife Laura and twins Elizabeth and Cody. Terry returns to the Conservancy, where he served as State Director for Kentucky from 2008 to 2014. Wife Laura is also a former high-ranking Conservancy employee.

Joining Forces to Protect a Treasured Mountain Property



A former Methodist youth camp is now protected land in the Appalachians.

A treasured piece of Appalachia, lovingly enjoyed and protected by the United Methodist Church (UMC) for nearly 70 years, has been passed along to new stewards. In the process, a beloved youth camp will get a new lease on life. In April, we partnered with The Conservation Fund to purchase the former Buffalo Mountain Camp, 488 acres of Appalachian forestland on the flank of Buffalo Mountain, about four miles south of Johnson City.

For nearly 70 years the property had served as a Methodist youth camp. But a 2012 flood damaged the camp badly, and the United Methodist Church determined that the property needed to be sold.

“The flood was just devastating to us, as you can imagine,” says the Reverend Jeff Wadley, executive director of

the former camp and of the new camp that will replace it.

The camp’s board approached the U.S. Forest Service about acquiring the property because of its location adjacent to the Cherokee National Forest.

“I was thrilled to learn that that this property could be placed into the public trust.”
—The Reverend Jeff Wadley

Though interested, the Forest Service was not in a financial position to purchase the camp immediately. That’s when The Conservation Fund and The Nature Conservancy stepped in to protect this place. Both organizations knew of the Forest Service’s interest in

the camp and were well aware that the undeveloped, eastern portion of the property also had high conservation value as forest habitat. The 2015 Tennessee State Wildlife Action Plan rated the Buffalo Mountain site as a high forest habitat priority. The purchase of this property marks the first time The Conservation Fund and The Nature Conservancy will be joint owners and managers of a property in Tennessee.

“One group alone can never save all the beautiful land that merits protection,” says Gabby Lynch, Director of Protection for The Nature Conservancy in Tennessee. “By working together, our two organizations’ strengths are complemented and magnified.”

The sale of the Buffalo Mountain Camp property has generated funds for the Holston Conference of the UMC that “will be used to establish our new camp,” said Wadley. The new camp site, Camp Bays Mountain in Kingsport, is expected to open in time for the 2017 summer season.

“Personally speaking, I’m very pleased with this outcome,” says Wadley. “I was thrilled to learn that this property could be placed into the public trust, and that it will be available for the public to enjoy for generations to come.”

The two nonprofit conservation organizations plan to own and manage the property together, with long-term plans to transfer the property to the U.S. Forest Service to become part of the Cherokee National Forest as soon as federal funding becomes available.

Four Species of Bats Hit Hard by White Nose in Tennessee

The Tennessee Chapter has made the fight against White Nose Syndrome (WNS) a major priority ever since it was discovered in our state in 2010. The invasive fungal disease has spread relentlessly since its discovery 10 years ago in upstate New York and has killed more than 6 million bats in North America. In partnership with Bat Conservation International, we have invested in scientific research on WNS treatments for bats. At least one of those experimental treatments shows promise, as we reported in our Fall 2015 newsletter. (Learn more at nature.org/whitenosetreatment.)

In our efforts to understand this disease, over the past five years we have sought and discovered 130+ additional Tennessee caves that harbor large populations of hibernating bats, which local bat experts had not previously known about. “Knowing where the bats are hibernating is very important in learning how WNS spreads and affects bats—and how we can fight it,” said our Tennessee Cave Program Director Cory Holliday.

Each winter, we conduct surveys of Tennessee caves with partners at the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, the National Park Service, the Tennessee Valley Authority and Tennessee State Parks. What we’ve learned about Tennessee’s bats following this year’s surveys is sobering.

“WNS has now spread across the entire state,” said Holliday. “It’s everywhere.” The four species that have been hardest hit in Tennessee are the little brown bat, the tricolored bat,



Attaching a tiny transmitter to an Indiana bat to track its spring migration—one way we are learning how to protect bats’ maternity habitats. Photo © Paul Kingsbury/TNC

the Northern long-eared bat and the Indiana bat. The first three species used to be common in Tennessee; the Indiana bat has been a federally listed Endangered Species since 1973. “We have lost 90 percent plus of these four species in Tennessee to WNS,” said Holliday.

There is some good news, though. Gray bats, also an endangered species, “appear to be holding their own,” according to Holliday. “They have been making some drastic changes in choices of hibernation caves, but overall numbers across the state appear to be fairly steady.” Holliday said that given that WNS has spread across the state the Conservancy’s focus is now “to

give the bats that are surviving the best habitat protection and cave management we can.”

To that end, we recently installed two artificial bat roosts on the site of Bellamy Cave and our artificial cave. These artificial roosts consist of 20-foot-tall untreated telephone poles, with the top section wrapped in a sheet of rubber with plastic mesh attached to the inside. The roosts are primarily intended for Indiana bats, which tend to roost under the peeling bark of dead trees in the summer. We will be monitoring the bats’ use of these roosts. If bats take to them on this site, we expect to expand the use of these roosts elsewhere in Tennessee.

State Parks Adopt New Firewood Policy to Stop Pests

A major factor in the spread of invasive, tree-killing insects is the transportation of firewood. Most tree pests—such as the Asian longhorned beetle or emerald ash borer—can only travel a few miles on their own. But when people take firewood cross country to parks and campgrounds, pests can hitchhike hundreds of miles.

Those pests can wreak havoc with native trees that are not adapted to living with voracious pests like the Asian longhorned beetle, which feasts on more than 30 varieties of trees that live in Tennessee. That's why The Nature Conservancy worked with the Tennessee Department of Environment & Conservation and the Tennes-



Don'tMoveFirewood.org is a national Nature Conservancy initiative to heighten awareness about the dangers of spreading tree-killing pests through moving firewood.

see Division of Forestry to institute a new policy for firewood for Tennessee State Parks, effective as of June 1. The policy advises park visitors to buy certified, heat-treated firewood at or near their campgrounds or to use downed wood at the campsite.

This policy mirrors the new firewood

rule that the Great Smoky Mountains National Park adopted in 2015. The Nature Conservancy advised and assisted the National Park Service in adopting its firewood rule, just as we advised State Parks. To find certified firewood vendors across the state, visit firewoodscout.org, which the Conservancy helped expand and develop.

Meet Our Staff: Trish Johnson, Director of Forest Conservation

Trish Johnson knows when the seed of conservation took root in her heart. It happened during childhood summers when her parents would take her and her sister from their Indiana home to a vacation in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

“We just couldn't wait to get out of the car and dip our toes into those cool mountain streams shaded by big hemlock trees,” she recalls. “Being there in the woods in summer remains one of my favorite childhood memories.” When she went to work for The Nature Conservancy in Tennessee in 2010, one of Trish's first tasks was to head up the Conservancy's efforts to work with public land managers to save hemlocks being decimated by the invasive hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA) tree pest. It was a responsibility

that felt very personal to her.

“That project has been close to my heart, because hemlocks are the trees that shaded those streams and those trails that I enjoyed so much in the Smokies,” she says. Fortunately, she has had made good headway in combatting HWA. “We and our partners have treated and saved thousands of hemlocks in 15 counties, focusing on public lands and our Nature Conservancy preserves,” she says.

Trish, who works out of a home office in Cookeville and is the Tennessee Chapter's Director of Forest Conservation, is a former high school and college star softball player who was inducted into both the Indiana Softball Hall of Fame and her college's athletics hall of fame. She brings that same passionate



Trish was named Forest Conservationist of the Year in 2013 by the Tennessee Wildlife Federation.

drive to succeed to her conservation work. But now she isn't competing with athletes; she's competing with threats to Tennessee's forests. *Continued on page 5*

MEET OUR STAFF cont.

The biggest threat she's tackling is that of invasive pest insects, such as HWA, Asian longhorned beetle, emerald ash borer, gypsy moth and others. Trish has collaborated closely with the National Park Service, Tennessee State Parks and the Tennessee Division of Forestry to help the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and now State Parks adopt new policies to prevent the spread of pest-infested firewood. "These bugs don't move very fast," she says, "just a mile or so a year. But when they hitchhike on firewood that we transport, they can travel hundreds of miles. Everything we can do to stop and slow the spread of these bugs is a good thing for our forests."

To help campers find stores where they can buy pest-free, heat-treated firewood, Trish and a Conservancy



Career inspiration: young Trish (right) with sister Gina at a creek in the Smoky Mountains.

colleague collaborated with a team in Michigan to expand **firewood-scout.org**. The website, which initially focused only on Michigan, now has interactive maps and a search engine to help find certified firewood vendors anywhere in Tennessee, plus California and Wisconsin. Ultimately, she hopes the site will serve the entire United States.

Other major projects for Trish include completing a Habitat Conservation Plan with the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency to improve protection for 216,000 acres of Cumberland Plateau public lands, and introducing a new Nature Conservancy forestry program to Tennessee. Working Woodlands helps private landowners protect and better manage forests they own while earning revenue in the burgeoning carbon trading markets (more on this in an upcoming newsletter).

"It is an honor to work for such an amazing science-based organization that encourages its employees to solve complex conservation problems with integrity and non-confrontational methods," says Trish. "I couldn't imagine another job that would allow me to protect and improve the beauty of this state I grew to love as a child."

Working for the Conservancy has introduced Trish to a new favorite outdoor place: Shady Valley in the mountains of Johnson County, Tennessee, and our John R. Dickey Birch Branch Nature Sanctuary there. Trish also enjoys spending time gardening and hiking with her two dogs, Uma and Kona.



Tennessee's Newest Scenic River

With a nomination from The Nature Conservancy, Soak Creek in Rhea and Bledsoe counties has been named the state's first scenic river in 15 years. It's a favorite of white-water kayakers and is located near the Cumberland Trail. Photo © Byron Jorjorian



Who You Gonna Call? Goat Busters!

Meet the new assistants at our Shady Valley Orchard Bog Preserve: goats! They chew up invasive grasses in delicate turtle nesting areas where our other helpers—cows—don't go. Together they're keeping this wetland healthy for turtles and other species.

If Trees Could Sing Expands with Earth Day Launch Concert in Chattanooga



Earth Day: The Bohannons rocked the park, while staff and spouses worked our booth.

If Trees Could Sing, our program of videos by singers and musicians, is growing just like the leafy green trees it celebrates. The program's colorful tree signs, which feature scannable QR codes that take viewers to the web-based videos, are now in Atlanta and eleven parks across Tennessee, including locations in Nashville, Knoxville and now Chattanooga. On Earth Day, April 22, we celebrated the program's expansion to Chattanooga with a public concert at Co-

olidge Park featuring local musicians The Bohannons, Danimal Pinson and The Laura Walker Trio. The Bohannons and Danimal recently completed new If Trees Could Sing videos for the program. We're grateful to the City of Chattanooga for partnering on a well-attended concert and the installation of If Trees Could Sing tree signs at Aquarium Plaza, Greenway Farm Park and Coolidge Park. To view the videos and learn more about the program, visit nature.org/iftreescouldsing.

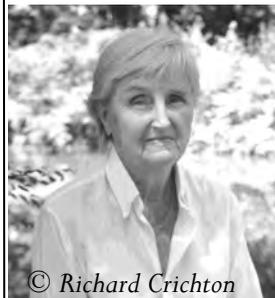
Got Wheels?

Our Cave & Karst Program now has a new 2016 Nissan Frontier pickup truck, thanks to the Wallace Research Foundation. It replaces a truck that had more than 250,000 miles on it. We're grateful to the Wallace Research Foundation for the donation. We could use more vehicles to replace other old trucks used in our conservation program. Call Matt Jagnow, Associate Director of Philanthropy, if you can help: 865-441-8378.

Support Tennessee

The Nature Conservancy does crucial work all over the world, and we could not do it without your help. **To ensure your gift supports our work in Tennessee**, you can give using the enclosed envelope, via the web by choosing the Tennessee drop-down menu choice, or in a planned bequest designated to Tennessee. You can give and learn more at nature.org/Tennessee or by calling 615-383-9909.

In Memoriam: Shirley Caldwell-Patterson



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We were saddened to learn of the passing of Shirley Caldwell-Patterson on May 17. She left a profound impact on

Tennessee conservation—as a charter board member for The Nature Conservancy in Tennessee, a founder of the Cumberland River Compact and in numerous other ways. Among her honors: a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation.