

NATURE

TENNESSEE

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A Little Spring in My Step

Spring is a time of renewal—the season when nature’s unceasing drive to grow is most apparent. Everywhere around us we will soon see green leaves unfurling, delicate wildflowers blooming and hear the cheeping of hidden baby birds.

I hope you will join me in taking advantage of the warmer days and explore some of the special places we have helped protect. Some of them offer beautiful wildflower displays. I’m thinking particularly of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Frozen Head State Park, Flat Rock Cedar Glades and two Nature Conservancy preserves, Washmorgan Hollow and Taylor Hollow.

Follow us on Facebook and Instagram as the staff and I share our spring experiences.

For directions and visitation information on our preserves, email us at tn@tnc.org.

See you outside,

Terry Cook
State Director



At the prime snorkeling spot on the Conasauga River, near the Howell Tract. © The Nature Conservancy (George Ivey)

Tennessee Land Protection Patience Pays Off in New Appalachians Acquisition

In conservation, it pays to be patient and persevere. Our chapter has co-purchased the Howell Tract, a rugged, 616-acre forested property in Polk County that we had first tried to acquire in 1993. The sale did not happen then, but recently we were able to make the purchase jointly with The Conservation Fund.

Bordered on three sides by the Cherokee National Forest, the Howell Tract had been owned since 1987 by William Howell Jr. and his family. “The property was never sold to developers because it was important to the Howell family that this land be protected,” said Gabby Lynch, Director of Protection for the Tennessee Chapter. With this purchase, The Nature Conservancy has now protected more than 27,000 acres in Tennessee’s Southern Appalachians.

The property’s most significant feature is Taylor Branch, a pristine tributary that meets the Conasauga River just

upstream from a biologically rich part of the river. The river there harbors 11 federally endangered mussel species, one federally endangered fish species and 15 fish species of state concern. This exceptionally clean stretch of river is also a popular place to snorkel.

In addition, the Howell property includes massive shortleaf pines. “I

“It was important to the Howell family that this land be protected.”

Gabby Lynch, Director of Protection for Tennessee

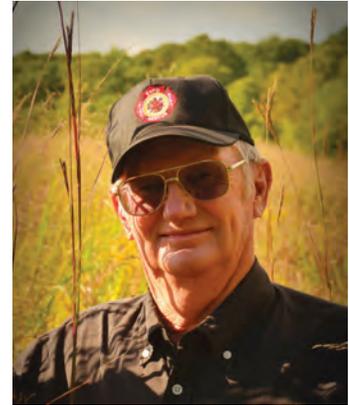
always notice a shortleaf when I see it. These towering shortleaf pines could be hundreds of years old,” said Tennessee’s Conservation Director, Alex Wyss. The Conservancy and The Conservation Fund plan to transfer the property to the Cherokee National Forest in the future.



Clockwise from top: A shortleaf pine forest, one of our shortleaf pine seedlings and a group of landowners at one of our workshops.
© Greg Dimijian (1), The Nature Conservancy (Trish Johnson, 2-3)

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Charles McQueen Marks 20 Years with Conservancy



© The Nature Conservancy (Terry Cook)

Bringing Back Shortleaf Pine

Conservancy and Partners Restore Native Tree to Tennessee

Shortleaf pines were once the most prevalent pine tree in the eastern United States. However, this tall, long-living evergreen with thick, fire-resistant bark and bluish-green needles has declined dramatically. Nearly 500,000 acres of shortleaf pine forest have disappeared in Tennessee since the early 20th century.

Since 2014, the Conservancy has been working with partners to turn the tide for shortleaf pines in Tennessee. Working closely with experts at the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, the Tennessee Department of Environment & Conservation and the Tennessee Division of Forestry, we have been restoring shortleaf pine on two Wildlife Management Areas, Catoosa and Bridgestone-Firestone, and at Cummins Falls State Park. Overall we have more than 2,500 acres in active shortleaf pine restoration on these public lands. Restoration activities include prescribed burning, site preparation

thinnings and tree plantings.

“In a shortleaf pine forest, the understory is open, which provides great habitat for wildlife.”

Trish Johnson, Director of Forest Conservation for Tennessee

We are also restoring shortleaf pine forests on private lands with 130 acres currently in restoration. In addition, we have held three shortleaf pine workshops with our partners, reaching more than 230 private landowners, public lands managers

and agricultural extension agents. All of our restoration efforts so far have been funded with support from International Paper and Altria Group’s Forestland Stewards Initiative through the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, and the Maddox Charitable Fund. Private landowners have provided matching labor and funds.

“In a shortleaf pine forest, the understory is open, which provides great habitat for wildlife such as deer, turkey and bobwhite quail,” said Trish Johnson, Tennessee’s Director of Forest Conservation. “We are not only returning habitat to these creatures, but also giving landowners and visitors beautiful wooded landscapes to enjoy.”

The Nature Conservancy owns four nature preserves in Shady Valley, a farming community perched high in the Blue Ridge Mountains of northeastern Tennessee. Charles McQueen has been the Shady Valley Preserves Manager since March 1997. Over the past 20 years, he has been instrumental in the restoration of our Orchard Bog and Quarry Bog preserves (home to endangered bog turtles), building the boardwalk at Schoolyard Springs and doing a thousand and one things to maintain all four preserves.

Charles grew up in Shady Valley, where four generations of McQueens preceded him. He is a man of many talents. In addition to working for the Conservancy, he owns a working farm, runs a thriving farm equipment business and is the longtime chief of the local volunteer fire department.

“Most folks around here farm, and overall the community is very supportive of what we do,” said Charles. “All of our work here proves that we can do conservation on wetlands and streams, and have it be compatible with agriculture in the valley.”

Visit Us Here!

To learn about visiting Shady Valley, go to nature.org/shadyvalleytn.



The Nature Conservancy
210 25th Avenue North, Suite 810
Nashville, TN 37203

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nature.org/tennessee

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