



Middle Fork Bottoms © Zach Luttrell/TNC

An Open Letter from the State Director

Creating a Conservation Legacy for Tennessee

More than ever, a topic near and dear to my heart is funding for conservation. The Nature Conservancy is grateful for every dollar dedicated to protecting our state's lands, waters and wildlife, especially the \$71.5 million in recent funding that came through the Tennessee Heritage Conservation Trust Fund, which had not received funding in more than 15 years until 2023. Thanks to Governor Lee's leadership, and approval by the Tennessee Legislature, this funding represents a significant step forward in conserving Tennessee's landscapes, supporting wildlife, expanding outdoor recreation and building climate resilience. It will build momentum to protect Tennessee's lands and waters for future generations.

However, to achieve TNC's 2030 goals for adapting to changes in climate



© Laurel Creech, Tennessee State Director

and halting, or even reversing, a global decline in biodiversity, we need to pursue innovative strategies that generate recurring, predictable annual funding for nature in Tennessee and beyond. Nationally, funding gaps exist. In 2020, the Paulson Institute, TNC and the Cornell Atkinson Center for Sustainability

published a report called *Financing Nature: Closing the Global Biodiversity Financing Gap*. The report states, "To reverse the decline in biodiversity by 2030, our analysis suggests that, globally, we need to spend between US\$ 722–967 billion each year over the next ten years. That puts the biodiversity financing gap at an average of US\$ 711 billion, or between US\$ 598–824 billion per year." The good news is that such investment also creates jobs and, more importantly, secures a habitable planet for all life on Earth.

SUPPORT OUR WORK

Visit nature.org/tngiving to help us tackle conservation priorities in Tennessee.

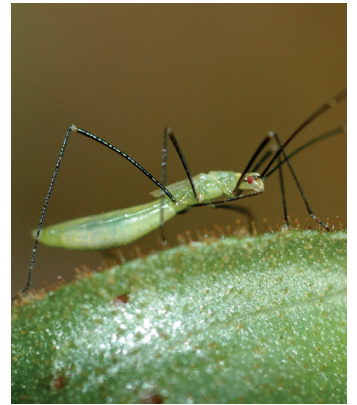
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Clockwise from top left: Middle Fork Bottoms © TNC; Cumberland Plateau © Byron Jorjorian; Pipevine butterfly on larkspur at Taylor Hollow © Terry Cook/TNC

NATURE TENNESSEE

Nationally, TNC has helped secure **\$125 billion** in dedicated public funding for conservation programs through ballot measures over the last 35 years. For each public dollar generated for conservation, anywhere from \$4–6 in private investment follows.



Stilt bug nymph on a lady slipper © Cory Holliday/TNC

An Open Letter (continued from front)

Pursuing conservation priorities across Tennessee requires dedicated funding.

In light of the nature funding gap in Tennessee, TNC values the recent support for conservation and encourages state leaders to consider a recurring and stable funding source for conservation, one that would be in place beyond their terms. This could further enhance a healthy and resilient natural environment for all Tennesseans.

TNC is here to help with a rigorous, well-tested, science-based process for identifying places that are key to supporting our state's unique biodiversity and building natural defenses against climate change. Over the years, TNC has accessed funds from the Heritage Conservation Trust Fund to support various initiatives throughout the state. Most recently, these funds were instrumental in establishing the Middle Fork Bottoms Recreation Area in West Tennessee, which will soon become a Tennessee State Park, and supporting conservation work within South Cumberland State Park. TNC can also help guide efforts to preserve working forests, restore nature to secure clean and abundant freshwater, and ensure unforgettable opportunities for outdoor tourism and recreation. If such a recurring funding source was established, TNC and our partners could pursue priorities faster, including acquiring and connecting lands and waters that are critical to the survival of native plants and animals and freshwater resources.

We are excited to see Governor Lee's leadership when it comes to funding conservation in Tennessee. We look forward to working with partners around the state to build on this momentum. Together, we can collectively establish a conservation legacy that invests in preserving Tennessee's lands, waters and wildlife for generations to come.

"Acquiring conservation lands often requires multiple years to get across the finish line and multiple revenue sources for success. Recurring, dedicated conservation funding alleviates the risk that year-to-year grants and other time-restricted funding mechanisms present. Non-profit land trusts like The Nature Conservancy could achieve more land protection with our government agency partners knowing that the proverbial well won't run dry."

—Gabby Lynch, TNC's director of protection in Tennessee