

# June Partner Spotlight

The Tennessee Aquarium Conservation Institute (TNACI) seeks to conserve native aquatic animals and their habitats through scientific research, ecosystem restoration, education programs, and public outreach. TNACI focuses its efforts on protecting the natural resources of the Southeast, including monitoring human impact on fragile habitats, reintroducing native species to Tennessee's waters and partnering with peer organizations and private citizens to bolster the remarkable aquatic life of our region. We visited with Hayley Wise, Outreach Coordinator to learn more about her and TNACI. Thanks for sitting at the table with us TNACI!

**What part of our freshwater aquatic ecosystem do you really admire?**

I adore the amount of biodiversity we have among us. There are so many things you can see right here in our basin.

**What is your role with TN Aquarium Conservation Institute?** I am TNACI's Watershed Coordinator. I coordinate our outreach and education programs. Some of these programs include going into schools, having school groups come to our campus, teacher professional development. I have been in this role for two and a half years.

**What is the mission of TN Aquarium Conservation Institute?** TNACI furthers the impact of the Tennessee Aquarium by conducting scientific studies, restoring the region's natural ecosystems and education members of the public to take conservation action.

**How did the TN Aquarium Conservation Institute come about?** TNACI was developed as part of the Tennessee Aquarium in 1995 to further aquatic conservation.

**How can people get involved or connected with the TN Aquarium Conservation Institute? What type of assistance could they provide to you?** We recently launched the [Freshwater Information Network](#) (FIN). Here citizens and scientists can report fish sightings throughout the world. We also have a [Facebook](#) page specific to the Conservation Institute. Upcoming events are posted here from time to time.

**What has been your favorite project?** My favorite program I have been involved with is Nooga Nature Explorers, a program created in connection with an all-girls high school. Students are taken into the field to participate in fish sampling, canoeing and nature hikes.

**What has been your proudest moment for your organization? One of the proudest moments for me has been the** Successful launching of the [River Teachers Program](#). This program consists of weeklong immersive workshops for elementary, middle and high school teachers focused on bringing freshwater

aquatic education into the classroom. Teachers throughout the country can attend this program. You can contact Hayley (hbw@tnaqua.org) directly to learn more.

**Anything special happening this year?** Keep a lookout on our [Facebook](#) for special events or announcements.

**How did you hear about the Tennessee River Basin Network?** I heard about the TRBN from Dr. Anna George, Vice President of Conservation Science and Education for the Tennessee Aquarium.

**Why do you participate in the Tennessee River Basin Network?** Participating in the TRBN provides me a way to be aware and connected to what is happening around the basin. I also find the Network to be a great Networking tool for me and our members.

**How could TN Aquarium Conservation Institute support others in our Network?** We can always support network members by aiding in aquatic research, education, and conservation. In addition to our knowledge in outreach and education, TN Aquarium Conservation Institute employs experts in ichthyology, herpetology, propagation, and GIS analysis.