

2023 TRBN Annual Conference | SUMMARY REPORT

Thanks to the fiscal support of Tennessee Valley Authority, and leadership from TRBN's 2023 Planning Committee, the Tennessee River Basin Network convened for their 9th annual conference at the Marriott Shoals in Florence, AL on August 23-24th, 2023. A total of 90 participants, representing 39 affiliations (see Table 1) attended over two ½ day programs that focused on networking, freshwater mussel conservation, and highlighting the diverse sectors and actions in play to safeguard our Basin's aquatic biodiversity. The sessions were structured in a variety of ways. With some being the traditional informational exchange from a single presenter, and others being highly engaging for all participants. This year's conference pulled in the highest number of participants yet. Speaker presentations can be found on TRBN's website under Conference Archives. **Conference Agenda can be found at the end of summary report.**

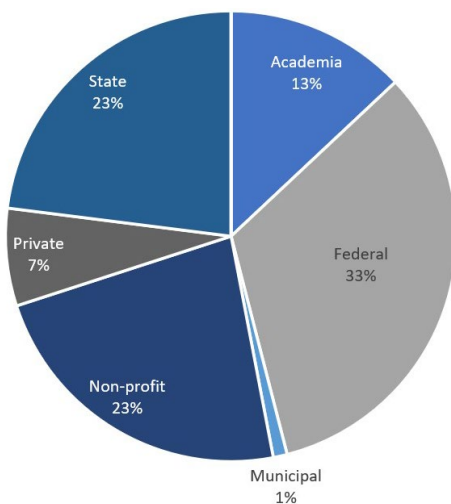
PLANNING COMMITTEE

The following individuals and affiliations made up the planning committee for this year's conference. All individuals were key to the successful implementation and brought to the table their own unique knowledge and skill set.

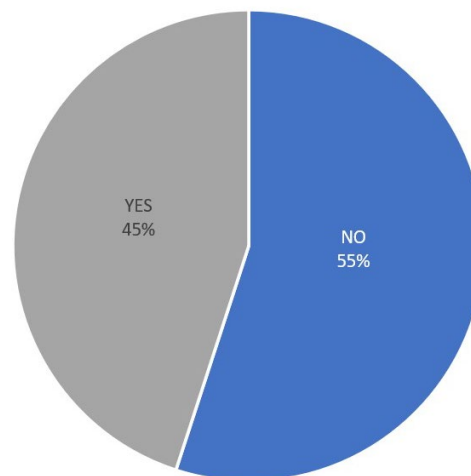
- Shannon O'Quinn & Jess Wykoff-Carpenter - Tennessee Valley Authority
- Cal Johnson – Alabama Department of Environmental Management
- Kathy Hawes – Southeastern Partnership for Forests & Water
- Tiffany Penland – Georgia Wildlife Resources Division
- Rob Hurt – U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
- Xingli Giam – University of Tennessee, Knoxville
- Callie Moore - MountainTrue

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Participants by Sector



Have you attended a TRBN Conference in the past?



SPONSORSHIP

A total of 9 sponsorships were secured this year, in addition to in-kind contributions from New Belgium Brewing, TGL Adventures, and Pickwick Studios. All sponsors, except Tennessee Valley Authority and Wildlands Engineering were first time sponsors. Representatives from each sponsor's affiliation, but one, attended the conference and were highly engaged.

Conference Sponsors included:

- Tennessee Valley Authority
- Defenders of Wildlife
- Working Lands for Wildlife
- Conservation Management Institute at Virginia Tech
- Wildlands Engineering
- Muscle Shoals National Heritage Center
- PELA GeoEnvironmental
- Wild Alabama
- Bass Nation – Alabama

AWARDS

During the conference's evening banquet two awards were given out to celebrate the success of our Network partners. Thanks to the support of TVA, each awardee received a plaque and monetary donation. This years' awardees were:

Research & Management: StreamSweepers
Communication & Outreach: Mr. Luke Etchison

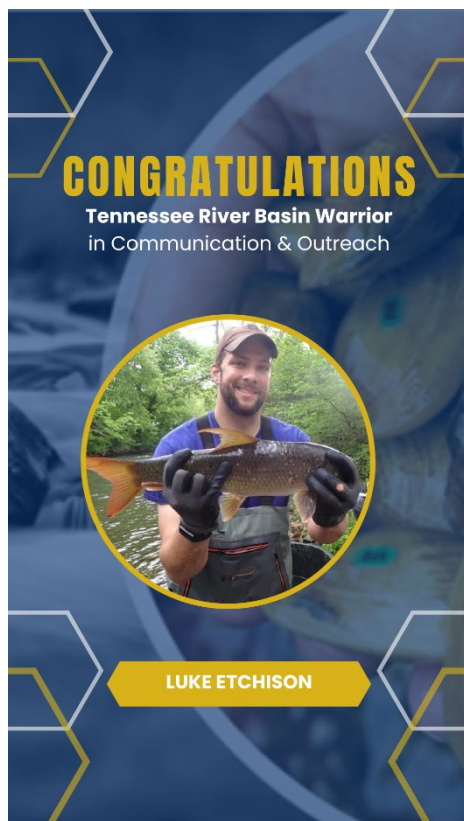




Table 1. Affiliations represented at the 2023 TRBN Annual Conference

ADCNR Fisheries	Southeastern Partnership for Forests & Water
Alabama Department of Environmental Management	StreamSweepers
Alabama Forestry Foundation	TDOT
Alabama Rivers Alliance	Tennessee Aquarium Conservation Institute
CFI	Tennessee Valley Authority
City of Chattanooga	Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency
Conservation Management Institute	The Nature Conservancy
Defenders of Wildlife	TN Cooperative Fishery Research Unit
Duck River Agency	Trutta Environmental Solutions LLC
FernLeaf Community Charter School	U.S Fish & Wildlife Service
GADNR	University of North Alabama
Geological Survey of Alabama	University of Tennessee Extension
K Gregg Consulting Conservation Communications	USDA - NRCS
Mississippi Dept of Environmental Quality	USDA Farm Service Agency
Mississippi Soil and Water Conservation Commission	USDA Forest Service
MountainTrue	WaterWays
NC Wildlife Resources Commission	Western Carolina University
North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission	Wild Alabama
PELA GEOENVIRONMENTAL INC	Wildlands Engineering, Inc.
Southeastern Hellbender Conservation Initiative	

Working together to make a difference for aquatic life.

Conference Agenda



Date: August 23-24, 2023

Location: Marriott Shoals Hotel, 10 Hightower Place, Florence AL

August 23rd

11:30 am – 12:30 pm CDT **Registration**

12:30 pm – 12:45 pm CDT **Welcome**

12:45 pm – 1:30 pm CDT **Opening Networking Session**

A chance for you to gather, engage, and build valuable connections across our community working to safeguard our Basin's aquatic life.

1:30 pm – 2:15 pm CDT **Keynote Address**

William Finch, *Finch Conservation*

Finch is an award-winning writer, botanist, natural historian, and specialist in landscape interpretation and restoration and has been involved in Alabama conservation for more than 30 years. Through his consulting business, Finch Conservation, Bill is increasingly focusing his skills and efforts on large-scale landscape conservation and restoration efforts, in coordination with the E. O. Wilson Biodiversity Foundation.

2:15 pm – 2:30pm CDT **BREAK**

2:30 pm – 3:30 pm CDT **Freshwater Mussel Conservation Session**

Erin McCombs, *American Rivers*

Dr. Paul Johnson, *Alabama Aquatic Biodiversity Center*

Dr. Dan Hua, *Cumberland River Aquatic Center - Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency*

Dr. Amanda Rosenberger, *TN Cooperative Fishery Research Unit, Tennessee Tech*

August 23rd

3:30 pm – 5:00 pm CDT **Partner Lightning Talks**

A great opportunity to spark new conversations and collaborations and learn about the work of your peers across the Tennessee River Basin. All slots currently filled.

6:00 pm – 7:00 pm CDT **Social**

7:00 pm CDT **Celebration Banquet & Dinner**

Awards Celebration: Anthony Summit, *Tennessee Valley Authority*

The Snail Darter's Road to Recovery: David Matthews, *Tennessee Valley Authority & Warren Stiles, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service*

August 24th

9:00 am – 9:10 am CDT **Day Two Welcome w/Breakfast Bar**

9:10 am – 9:30 am CDT **TRBN Business Update**

9:30 am – 10:30 am CDT **It Takes a Village - A holistic approach to aquatic life conservation: panelists presentations.**

Nearly as diverse as the aquatic life within our Basin are the discipline types working to conserve it. This session is designed to highlight a diversity of approaches in safeguarding our Basin's aquatic biodiversity.

Morgan Harris, *Conservation Management Institute, Virginia Tech*
Brad Nail, *Alabama Forestry Association*
Zachary Wilbanks, *Wilbanks Engineering & Environmental Solutions*
Dr. Andrea Ludwig, *University of Tennessee*
Jeremy Monroe, *Freshwaters Illustrated*

10:30 am – 10:45 am CDT **BREAK**

10:45 am – 11:45 am CDT **It Takes a Village – A holistic approach to aquatic life conservation: panel discussion.**

Moderators:
Kathy Hawes, *Southeastern Partnership for Forests & Water*
Rob Hurt, *U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service*

11:45 am – 12:00 pm CDT **Closing Remarks & Meeting Close**

August 24th

12:00 pm CDT **Gather to depart for [Cypress Creek Paddle Event](#)**

Pre-registration for this event is required.

A box lunch will be provided to paddle event registrants.
