

## SUMMARY REPORT

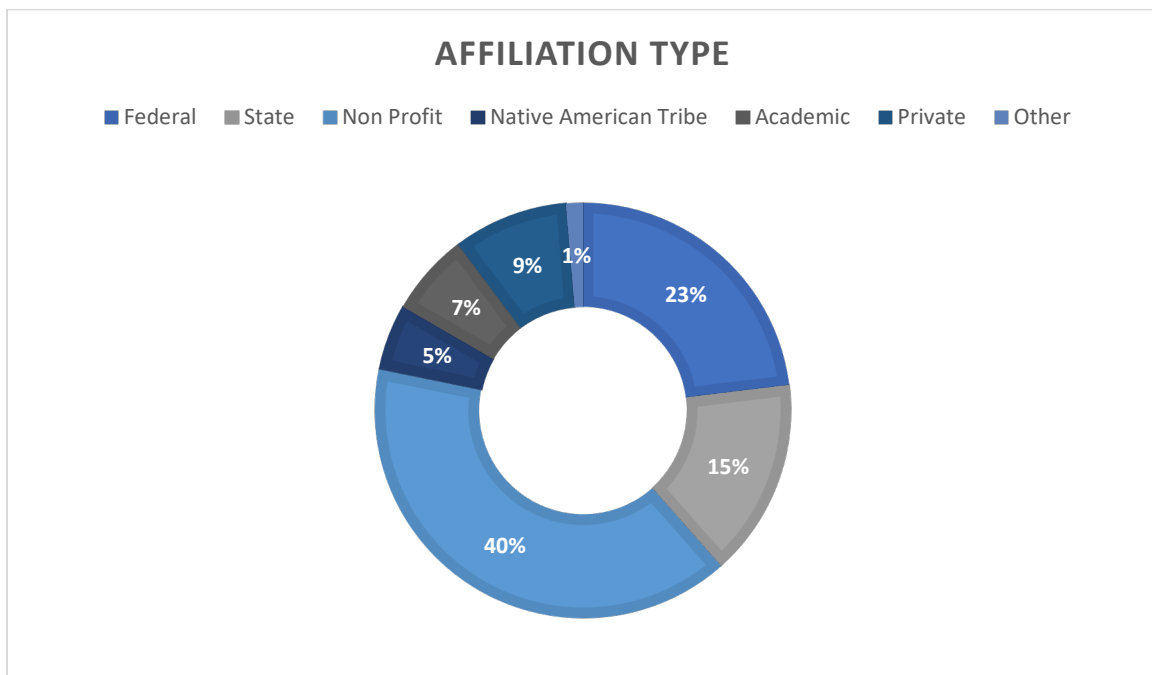
On August 24-25, 2022, the Tennessee River Basin Network convened for their 8<sup>th</sup> annual conference at Ijams Nature Center in Knoxville, TN. A total of 72 participants, representing 39 affiliations (see Table 1) attended over two ½ day programs that focused on environmental justice, decision support tools, aquatic connectivity, and the bipartisan infrastructure bill. 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. It was very important for this year’s event to provide significant time for participants to connect in smaller settings since it had been three years since the Network had been able to gather in person. **Conference Agenda can be found at end of summary report.**

## PLANNING COMMITTEE

The following individuals and affiliations made of 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.

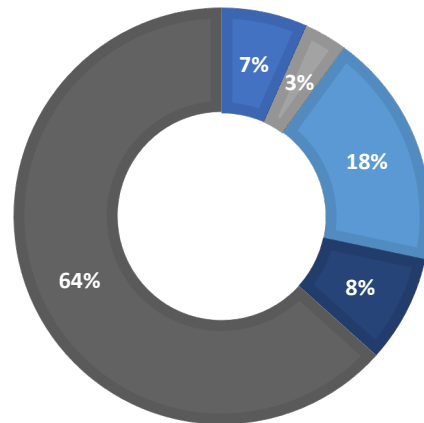
- Shannon O’Quinn - Tennessee Valley Authority
- Jenny Adkins – Natural Resources Conservation Service (now retired)
- Daniel West – Geological Survey of Alabama
- Jeff Schaeffer – The Water Center @ Tennessee Technical University
- Gregg Elliot – K. Gregg Consulting

## PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS



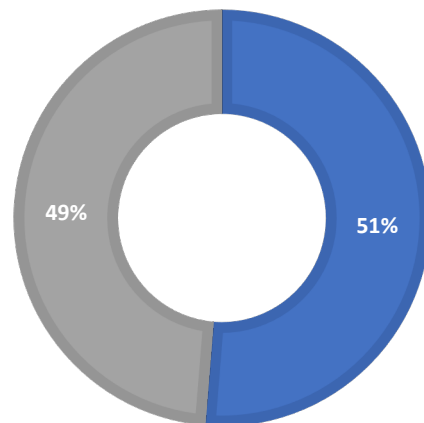
## GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS

■ Lower Basin ■ Lower & Middle Basin ■ Middle Basin ■ Middle & Upper Basin ■ Upper Basin



## ENGAGEMENT

■ 1st Time ■ Past Participant



## NETWORKING SESSIONS

Connection was very important to promote at this year's event. To provide opportunities for people to connect with each other a networking session was held at the beginning and closing of the conference. Participants were split into smaller groups and asked to discuss conservation concerns and needed action at the sub-basin level. Below is a summary of the major themes that were identified in discussions (**Bolded text notates themes most frequently identified by individuals**).

- **Aquatic Connectivity & Habitat**
- **Pollution from Industry & Urban Areas**
- **Agricultural Land Use**
- **Need for outreach and education**
- Need for environmental justice
- Invasive species
- Flood events

Results from this exercise may help the Network identify areas to act collectively due to high level of energy of participants in addressing these concerns across the Basin. Action could be in the field of raising awareness or on-the-ground conservation.

### **SUBCOMMITTEE MEETINGS SUMMARY**

After the close of the conference, three subcommittees meet (Education & Outreach, Conservation & Restoration, Sub-network Paddle Events). Below are summaries from the three meetings. This gathering was the first in years for the Education & Outreach and Conservation & Restoration subcommittees. This was the first meeting for the Sub-network subcommittee. Based on the notes below, there appears to be interest to work collaboratively on some activities. TRBN Steering Committee will need to identify how to proceed and help guide focus of each subcommittee.

#### Conservation & Restoration:

Attendees: Stuart McGregor, Todd Reed, Charles Kitts, John Womack, Emily Granstaff, Bryan Hummel, Alexander Miele, and a few others that came and went throughout the talk, whose names I didn't get.

The main question was, what process should we use to decide what we want our long-term goals for the Basin to be? Responses tended to focus more on the goals themselves than on the process for arriving at goals.

"As a group, if there's a small project, we could do to give us a "success story" and then publicize it, maybe that would draw resources our way."

"I'm zeroing in on the word 'Network.' Maybe we should have scheduled zoom calls to share information amongst ourselves."

"Should we do another survey of members about their priorities?"

"Could the Everglades Coalition be a model for us? They developed a whole watershed protection plan and are active in advocating for policies and funding to implement it. Should the Network become more about actual planning and management at the watershed scale?"

"Look at award-winning efforts by NRCS in Coffee Co and the FEMA money they are bringing in. That's all to promote soil health, but soil health helps rivers too, so we should be looking at soil health."

"We should use 'systems thinking' to decide on our statement of purpose."

"We should be trying to become a clearinghouse of information for partners."

"We need a 'big hairy audacious goal' and then offer guidelines that member organizations can use to help them contribute to the goal in their own way."

"What about establishing a list of reasonable priorities? We could develop a 'matrix' of all the problems we're trying to tackle, all the possible solutions, and all the organizations/resources we have available. This will help us connect the dots and figure out what is achievable within the Network."

"The problem is that the goals have to be scaled to what we can actually reasonably affect as an organization."

"At the end of whatever process we use, it'd be nice if we had a 'this is our vision for the next 50 years' statement."

"As far as process goes, I'm a fan of the adaptive process. We don't have to be married to one goal statement forever. We can change as the goals of our members change."

#### Education & Outreach:

Attendees: Parker Phillips (AmeriCorps (Knox County Stormwater)), Andrea Ludwig (University of TN Extension), Bryan Bozeman (no affiliation (formerly UGA)), Axel Ringe (Sierra Club), Kait Klema (Knox County Stormwater), Mary Beth Sutton (WaterWays), Tiffany Penland (TN Wildlife Resources Agency (West TN))

- Structure of subcommittee? Ideally two co-chairs; bimonthly meetings
- How to engage the rest of the Network? Solicit participation via newsletter, page on website, and/or targeted email
- Social media content – difficult to develop with such limited staff capacity/resources
- Impact? Change behaviors; raise environmental literacy
- Utilize local resources: **local problems, local partners, local solutions**
- Teach-the-teacher programs to get the education into the schools
- Partners do the outreach to decision-makers using the tools we help develop
- Should we add communications to subcommittee name since we have an award specifically named this?
- Workshops at annual meeting; local meetings

#### Next Steps

- Answer these questions to further develop basis for subcommittee:
  - Who would this committee be educating and/or outreaching to? The public **OR** network members – completely different approaches
  - Who would be the audience of the communications tools/resources? Community members **OR** Network members
- Conduct a needs assessment via survey. Develop a better picture of who the Network members are, what resources are available to share among members, what the needs of the members are

### Sub-network Paddle Events:

Attendees : Pat Rakes (CFI), Daniel West (GSA), Mark Odum (TVA), Elaine Eisenbraun (Nikwasi Institute), Chantelle Rondelle (NCWRC)

There still is energy around the idea of holding paddle events for each sub-network within the Basin. Target season would be no earlier than Fall 2023. TRBN needs to visit with TN RiverLine to see how the Network and TN RiverLine could work in partnership with these events. Below is a summary of topics and comments that were discussed during the subcommittee meeting:

- Need to work on a potential budget and ask if we have the funds or do we need to seek funding?
- Need to ID locations and research how we can find/use a fleet (Universities, outfitters, TN RiverLine)
- The title of the event needs to be one so that staff can get permission to attend
- Need to consider safety and liability
- Need to consider possible water levels
- It may involve the need to shuttle people – an idea is to park at take out and then shuttle everyone to put in.
- How would all crafts be returned to owners?
- Include catering?
- Structure: ¾ day event. Paddle then take out with catering and a speaker specific to the location and issues of the area. Also include an off-water networking opportunity.
- Crafts need to be inclusive (kayak, canoes, paddle boards etc.)
- Work with Riversweepers (Maddie Gordan – StreamSweepers – Clinch River)

### **TENNESSEE RIVER BASIN WARRIOR AWARDS**

The 2022 Tennessee River Basin Warrior Awardees were announced and celebrated during the evening social at the Ijams Homesite. This year's award in Communication & Outreach was presented to Care NET. Bill Kornrich was present to accept the award from award sponsor, Tennessee Valley Authority. This year's award in Science & Management was presented to the Alabama Aquatic Biodiversity Center. Dr. Paul Johnson was present to accept the award from award sponsor, Tennessee Valley Authority. Write ups for each awardee can be found at the end of this report.



2022

# TN River Basin Warrior Awardee

## Communication & Outreach



# Care NET

## Northeast Tennessee

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Care NET is a community-based group from Grainer, Green, Hancock, and Hawkins Counties in northeast Tennessee. The group formed in 2016 and is a regional conservation committee of the Tennessee Sierra Club.

Care NET understands the importance of education and involving citizens to successfully promote environmental health. In a little over five years, Care NET has undertaken numerous activities, including:

- Hosting semi-annual cleanups of the Holston River and Cherokee Lake
- Meeting with TDEC about the impact of Carters Valley Landfill on the Holston River
- Engaging county commissioners to adopt the Jackson Bill
- Leading kayak river runs on the Holston River
- Bringing the touring exhibit, *Tennessee Waters*, to Hawkins County
- Creating a portable educational exhibit on the Holston River

## Partnership

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Care NET is a team player and has partnered with numerous organizations across their region, including Cherokee Lake Users Association, Residents of Jim Town Road, the Hawkins County Solid Waste Department, Hawkins County Library System, Tennessee Printing Museum, the Surgoinsville Area Museum and Keep the Tennessee River Beautiful.

Pictured: Bill Kornrich w/Care NET (left), Allen Clare w/Tennessee Valley Authority (right)





2022

TN River Basin  
Warrior Awardee

Science &  
Management

# Alabama Aquatic Biodiversity Center

The Alabama Aquatic Biodiversity Center (AABC) is the largest state non-game recovery program of its kind in the United States. AABC's mission is to promote the conservation and restoration of rare freshwater species in Alabama waters and in turn, return cleaner water in Alabama's waterways.

The Center became fully operational in 2010 and despite a lean budget, and staff of six, the center has already rescued several species from extinction. Dr. Paul Johnson oversees AABC and its dedicated team at their facilities in Perry County, Alabama. The facilities at AABC include three aquatic buildings, an administrative building and laboratory, and ~30 surface acres of aquatic ponds.

## Saving species as risk

To date, AABC has released over 57,000 mussels in the Tennessee watershed to help ensure the aquatic life in our Basin continues to thrive. Their work also will ensure future generations of Tennessee River Basin residents will benefit from the clean water our bivalves help to maintain.

AABC's staff and facilities are a testament to applying science and management to ensure our waterways remain healthy.



Pictured: Dr. Paul Johnson of AABC (left), Allen Clare w/Tennessee Valley Authority (right)