

TennGreen

TENNESSEE PARKS & GREENWAYS FOUNDATION

# STRATEGIC PLAN --- 2019-2023



*Conserving land where  
people and nature can thrive.*

# LOOKING BEYOND TOMORROW

Conserving open space is vital for protecting the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the land that sustains us all. For more than 20 years, the Tennessee Parks & Greenways Foundation (TennGreen) has conserved land where people and nature can thrive—safeguarding wetlands, grasslands, mountains, forests, and waterways across the state we call home.

Despite these successes, increasing human development pressure in Tennessee poses a grave threat to our natural world.

## *We don't have time to wait.*

Every missed opportunity to protect our cherished lands is an irreversible loss to our future. **We must work together**—not just for our own health, but for that of future generations and the wildlife with whom we are graced to share this land.

Over the past year, with the help and professional guidance of the Conservation Consulting Group, TennGreen embarked upon a full-scale strategic planning process to learn anew how to best address the conservation needs of the state.

TennGreen crafted its first Strategic Plan in 1998, guiding its mission to conserve Tennessee's natural treasures for the benefit of all Tennesseans. It has created several plans since. What differentiates this Strategic Plan from the rest is that it was developed after (and in direct response to) an extended period of listening to YOU—TennGreen's loyal members, partners, colleagues, civic leaders, and communities.

This Strategic Plan launches a new chapter in TennGreen's storied history. As our treasured lands are passed on to the next generation, and development pressures continue to accelerate, we stand poised to have a greater conservation impact.

# THANK YOU

***Strategic Planning Steering Committee:***

Mark Peacock	Melinda Welton
Ed Roeber	Steve Law
Estie Sheahan	Alice Hudson Pell
Chuck Womack	

***Goal Champions:***

Melinda Welton	Carolyn Rehm
Janie Finch	Mark Peacock
Charles Askew	Bob Tuke
John Noel	

# A HISTORY OF CONSERVATION

TennGreen was founded in 1998 through the merger of the Tennessee Greenways Program of The Conservation Fund and the Tennessee State Parks Foundation. The merger of these existing programs created a new combined mission for TennGreen: “to preserve the natural beauty of Tennessee by creating a network of parks, greenways, and wildlife areas with our beautiful state parks as the destinations.”

Throughout the years following, TennGreen’s work focused on three program areas and goals: conserving Tennessee Treasures, creating greenway Corridor Connections, and fostering initiatives by others through Conservation Education and Advocacy.

***Tennessee Treasures***—Purchasing and protecting ecologically-rich and historically-significant places remaining in Tennessee; accepting land/easement donations; and through the Revolving Land Fund, making loans available to other private or public organizations for conserving important land.

***Corridor Connections***—Coordinating large landscape-scale greenway projects, often with partners, to protect wildlife migration corridors, scenic vistas, air and water quality, and to provide Tennesseans with a greater quality of life. In previous years as funding was available, TennGreen awarded small matching grants to parks and friends groups across the state.

***Conservation Education and Advocacy***—Offering members and non-members activities, workshops, and celebrations to share the mission of conservation and to connect people with the natural world that surrounds them. Additionally, as appropriate, TennGreen advocated for conservation initiatives at the local, state, and federal levels.

In 2015, Founder, Executive Director and President, Kathleen Williams, retired and Steve Law, TennGreen’s second Executive Director in its then 18-year history, joined the organization.

TennGreen conserves land where people and nature can *thrive*.



OUR MISSION

# OUR VISION

TennGreen envisions *large, connected natural areas* that support diversity of life, inspire appreciation of nature, and spark action to protect the water we drink, the air we breathe, and the land that sustains us all.

# GUIDING PRINCIPLES

***Dedication to the Entire State***—We will focus on the entire state of Tennessee, an irreplaceable and boundless gift of natural landscapes that deserve protection in perpetuity.

***Nature Nurtures***—Our individual physical, intellectual, and spiritual well-being is dependent upon access to and experiences in beautiful, natural spaces; we need places to hike and play.

***Commitment to Future Generations***—We accept responsibility as caretakers of our state's natural assets, for not only its current inhabitants but also future generations.

***Prioritized Protection***—We will strategically invest in conservation, with priorities based on sound science and community needs, including recreation; response to clear environmental threats; the protection of large, connected natural areas; wildlife habitat and corridors; and land along lakes, rivers, and streams.

***Building Trust and Awareness***—We acknowledge that many within Tennessee may not understand the value of our natural assets. It is, therefore, our responsibility to listen, learn, engage, and provide many of the educational tools and experiences necessary to build awareness, relevance, and trust, to ensure that our work is honored in perpetuity.

***Urgency***—We recognize that Tennessee is experiencing extraordinary human development pressure and that our natural assets which draw many to the state are in jeopardy; we must act swiftly and smartly to protect them before it is too late.

***Interdependence***—We understand ourselves to be one small, interdependent part of a much larger, whole universe. We cannot exist separately and independently. We have a duty to responsibly protect and share our natural world with all other species who are equally dependent upon it.

# STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

TennGreen's Strategic Plan reflects a step up in our conservation leadership in Tennessee. We intend to be present, relevant, and effective in every part of the state, with a larger, professional staff, an active Board of Directors, and dozens of trained volunteers. We will continue to protect land of the highest priority, forge strong new partnerships, support and leverage the work of other groups, and consistently bring a larger conservation vision to each task.

## ***Three Pillars***

This Plan has three pillars that help describe what we will do, together, over the next five years to conserve land where people and nature can thrive:

### **IDENTIFY AND PROTECT**

We will be more proactive and strategic in the pursuit and protection of new property, as well as more effective in stewarding the land and easements we currently hold.

### **CONNECT AND ENGAGE**

We will connect Tennesseans with nature and engage them as volunteers, as ambassadors and advocates, and as members and donors.

### **STRENGTHEN AND SUPPORT**

We will be more deliberate in our internal organizational development to professionally support and fulfill our mission in perpetuity.

# IDENTIFY & PROTECT

## PILLAR ONE

We need healthy land to survive and thrive. Through sound science and partnerships with landowners, other organizations, and state, county, and local agencies, we will identify and conserve biologically important land and open space across Tennessee for wildlife corridors, critical habitat, and public benefit (e.g., recreation).

### SUCCESS BY 2023

- **Completion and full integration of a Strategic Land Conservation Plan—incorporating biologically important land and open space, as well as state, county, and local agency priorities—into TennGreen’s land conservation operations. This Plan will:**
  - Explicitly include identification and mapping of conservation “hot spot” areas and establishment of selection criteria for projects.
  - Allow us to support and facilitate land acquisition priorities for TWRA, TDEC, and local communities while enabling us to establish and pursue our own conservation priorities.
  - Guide us in creating a statewide network of conserved lands and advance our ability to protect the beauty, wildlife, water, and natural assets of Tennessee for current inhabitants and generations to come.
- **Completion of at least eight (8) conservation projects within the priority areas (“hot spots”) identified in the Conservation Plan.**
- **Completion of at least ten (10) partnered conservation projects within agency priority areas.**
- **Implementation of a proactive landowner outreach program, including at least two (2) conservation workshops/easement seminars hosted each year beginning in 2020;** TennGreen staff and Board Members will reach out proactively to landowners within the “hot spots” to cultivate their interest in preserving their land and introduce TennGreen as an organization that can help.
- **Implementation of a proactive state, county, and local agency outreach program;** TennGreen staff and Board members will meet regularly with conservation partners (state, municipal, nonprofit) to enhance initiatives and achieve shared conservation goals.
- **Creation and evaluation of a volunteer “eyes and ears” ambassador program to generate land conservation referrals within “hot spot” areas.**
- **Development of a formalized Buy-Protect-Sell program.**
- **Enhanced ability to protect our lands and waters through swift and strategic action;** Revolving Land Fund will be increased to at least \$2.5 million.

# CONNECT & ENGAGE

## PILLAR TWO

The future of Tennessee's land, water, and wildlife depends on the *attitudes* and *actions* of Tennesseans today. Our natural world cannot afford to wait—and neither can we. Through enhanced experiences and engagement, we will strengthen the connection between people and our natural world to build relevance, support, and action for Tennessee conservation.

### SUCCESS BY 2023

- Establishment of a thriving, active network of volunteers, ambassadors, advocates, members, and donors.
- Expansion of inclusive outdoor experiential program offerings to 25 per year, with an emphasis on engaging “under-served” and diverse audiences (cultural, geographic, age, and other demographic diversity) to help instill a love of nature in Tennesseans across the state.
- Assessment of TennGreen landholdings for possible adaptation as Ambassador Preserves where Tennesseans can connect with their outdoor heritage and gain nature-based knowledge to succeed as stewards of our cherished lands.
- Engagement of partners and allies from across many sectors to actively support and advocate for the protection of our land, water, and wildlife.
- Engagement of state and local officials to enhance understanding and support for conservation and inspire action to defend and fund ecological preservation, public access to nature, and responsible land management.



# STRENGTHEN & SUPPORT

## PILLAR THREE

To have the greatest impact, we must be deliberate in the way we work. Through thoughtful investments in branding, processes, and infrastructure, we will build a stronger organizational platform to increase our capacity, expand our reach, and ensure long-term sustainability to protect the lands we love in perpetuity.

### SUCCESS BY 2023

- Completion of a comprehensive Communications Plan to support engagement and enhance TennGreen's visibility and accessibility as a leading conservation organization in Tennessee.
- Completion of a comprehensive fundraising campaign to increase our ability to secure conservation funding and grow the Revolving Land Fund, Operating Reserve, and Planned Giving Program.
- Implementation of sound financial and investment practices to ensure long-term viability for land protection.
- Realignment of current program processes, systems, and personnel to support strategic goals and maximize statewide conservation efforts.
- Diversification of TennGreen staff and Board to ensure we can continuously learn and improve, leverage new ideas, and better address the conservation needs of all Tennesseans.

# CONTACT US

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**[www.tenngreen.org](http://www.tenngreen.org)**

*As Tennesseans,  
we have a shared  
responsibility to  
protect the beauty,  
wildlife, water, and  
natural assets of  
our state for its  
current inhabitants  
and for future  
generations.*

## **WAYS TO GIVE**

- Give online at [www.tenngreen.org](http://www.tenngreen.org)
- Mail a check to our Nashville office (117 30th Ave South, Nashville, TN 37212).
- Stop by our Nashville office to make a gift by cash or check.
- Call us at (615) 329-4441 if you prefer to donate another way or have any questions.
- For information on other ways to give, please visit [www.tenngreen.org](http://www.tenngreen.org)

**TennGreen**

