



# TENNESSEE STATE BIODIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS PLAN 2017-2019

TENNESSEE WILDLIFE RESOURCES AGENCY

## **SCOPE & PURPOSE OF TN BIODIVERSITY NETWORK**

The purpose of TN Biodiversity Network is to (1) maintain and increase public awareness, understanding, and support for Tennessee's biodiversity and the role that SWG grants play in biodiversity conservation, and (2) to support the work of TWRA conservation partners to focus work in designated Conservation Opportunity Areas and priority habitats through development of collaborative SWG projects and other means.

### **Primary activities to be conducted to achieve communications goals**

- ❖ Develop a Tennessee Biodiversity Communications Strategy.
- ❖ Maintain the website <http://www.tnswap.com>, add projects that relate to TN-SWAP conservation (whether or not they are led or funded by TWRA).
- ❖ Continue to create regular e-news campaigns about TN-SWAP, the TWRA Biodiversity Division, the SWG program (and potentially Blue Ribbon Panel funding initiative) and Tennessee's natural heritage. Maintain the news list associated with the TN-SWAP newsletter.
- ❖ Develop/maintain a social media presence aimed at people who are interested in wildlife/nature recreation. Use the Watchable Wildlife facebook page as the main platform for this effort, in collaboration with David Hanni and Cynthia Routledge.
- ❖ Partner communications assistance (for meetings etc.) as assigned; this includes email campaigns that support Sally Palmer's coordination of TN SWAP work and meetings.

### **Background**

There are five key elements of a Communications Strategy:

1. goals/objectives of communications (why - what is to be achieved?)
2. audience identification (who)
3. messaging tailored to audiences (what we say, information we convey)
4. tactics/tools/channels for reaching audiences (how)
5. evaluation to assess results and improve future performance

## **Communications Strategy Goals & Objectives**

### **GOAL 1. PROMOTE A GREATER AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING OF GCN SPECIES & HABITAT CONSERVATION NEED, ISSUES, AND EFFORTS WITHIN TENNESSEE.**

Objective 1. Increase the audience, sharing of news, and engagement of followers via the TN Watchable Wildlife Facebook page as well as a twitter account.

Objective 2. Foster “co-communication” both within TWRA (among the Biodiversity Division and across departments) and with conservation partners in Tennessee to increase the sharing of TWRA/SWG/biodiversity conservation news. Increase collaboration on social media/popular outlets for showcasing biodiversity conservation.

### **Audiences**

**The interested public**, a fundamentally non-science/non-conservation audience that nevertheless constitutes an important constituency for conservation in the U.S. (e.g. birders, fishers, memberships of conservation NGOs, etc.). This audience may include:

- bird watchers
- wildlife enthusiasts/photographers
- federal and state park, refuge, WMA visitors
- campers
- hikers
- kayakers, canoers
- boaters
- hunters
- fishers

**SWAP Leadership** - TWRA Biodiversity Division, The Nature Conservancy, others, TWRA Real Estate,

**SWAP partners** - Those agencies, researchers, and NGOs listed in the 2015 SWAP

**Conservation community** - Those who share conservation objectives but are not yet working with us or not yet on our newlist (e.g. Tennessee Native Plant Society, TN Division of Forestry, or historic/cultural resource interests)

**Elected government** - legislative/executive bodies to whom we are accountable and that must support the SWAP's conservation mission in order for it to succeed (e.g. Congress, state governors, state legislatures)

### **Messaging**

- People are a part of nature; examples of people as caregivers of nature (including biologists/conservationists, volunteers).
- Interesting, important, or little-known natural history facts about Tennessee's biodiversity, its habitats, and native species.
- Educational information about conservation practitioners and projects - what they are doing, where, and why.
- Information about opportunities to get outside, learn more, or participate in conservation as a volunteer.

(For more details on messaging, see the Watchable Wildlife Social Media section.)

### **Tactics/tools/channels & Evaluation**

- Maintain the [TN-SWAP website](#); focus on adding new conservation success stories/case studies.

**Evaluation:** Website traffic as measured by google analytics, annually and in response to email campaigns

- Develop a running list of potential stories, from the FY2016 TRACS report as well as Biodiversity Division staff.

**Evaluation:** Number of potential stories on list; number of potential stories actually developed (stories can be shared via the website, email campaigns, news release, or directly by staff)

- Send regular e-news campaigns/updates on a quarterly basis.

**Evaluation:** Number of campaigns sent, growth in news list, open and click rate

- Bring the Tennessee Watchable Wildlife Facebook page back to life via regular posting (minimum weekly basis) - NOTE: see the TWW Social Media plan appended to this strategy.

**Evaluation:** Number of likes/FB page followers; number of interactions (such as comments, or likes of posts)

- Conduct regular calls/outreach/meetings with TWRA Biodiversity Division biologists to sync their stories and needs with communications.

**Evaluation:** Number of telephone calls or meetings; number of stories/photos/videos shared by TWRA staff

## **GOAL 2. PROMOTE/FOSTER THE USE OF THE STATE WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN TO ACHIEVE CONSERVATION GOALS**

Objective 1. Facilitate and support collaboration among TWRA's SWAP conservation partners, under the direction of TWRA and TNC/SWAP Coordinator to help achieve SWAP/COA conservation goals.

Objective 2. Facilitate the development of a SWG "project pipeline" by TWRA and its SWAP partners by providing communications/writing/organization capacity.

### **Audiences**

**SWAP Leadership** - TWRA Biodiversity Division, The Nature Conservancy, others, TWRA Real Estate,

**SWAP partners** - Those agencies, researchers, and NGOs listed in the 2015 SWAP

**Conservation community** - Those who share conservation objectives but are not yet working with us or not yet on our newslist (e.g. Tennessee Native Plant Society, TN Division of Forestry, or historic/cultural resource interests)

In the first 1-2 years, the focus will be primarily on:

- [TVA Natural Resource Management](#) (see the [TVA Natural Resource Plan, 2014 Annual Report](#))
- USDA [Natural Resources Conservation Service in Tennessee](#)

- The Tennessee Dept. of Environment & Conservation's [Natural Heritage Inventory Program](#)

### **Messaging**

- As directed by TN-SWAP Coordinator for general outreach to partners.
- How agencies/organizations can most effectively work together to achieve conservation goals.
- Examples that show the importance of collaboration to reach goals, create synergy.
- The unique roles played by each organization.
- Recognition of partners and partnership efforts.
- Informational/organizational tools to assist collaboration.
- An accounting of what has been achieved on the ground.

### **Tactics/tools/channels & Evaluation**

- Send E-news campaigns, updates, meeting invitations.  
**Evaluation:** Number of campaigns sent; campaign open/click rate; meeting RSVPs/attendance; direct feedback from partners via surveys or other
- Develop a story map and/or infographics in collaboration with TNC, making use of GCN species, habitat and COA data in the Tennessee GIS database. (The audience for particular product would likely be similar to the audience for Goal 1, but partners are the focal audience).
- Assist in developing news release content, for dissemination by TWRA Communications, as needed for important news.  
**Evaluation:** Number of special graphics or news releases created; number of recipients; response via media/social media (likes, website traffic), and direct feedback of partners
- Conduct web meetings or webinars, as needed.  
**Evaluation:** Number of attendees; direct feedback of attendees during the meetings

## WATCHABLE WILDLIFE SOCIAL MEDIA MINI-PLAN

Developed in consultation with David Hanni/TWRA, and Cyndi Routledge/  
contractor managing Watchable Wildlife website (12/19/16).

### Summary table of TWRA-related websites and Facebook pages:

Web content type				
Websites	<b>TWRA</b>	<b>TNSWAP</b>	<b>WATCHABLE WILDLIFE</b>	<b>TENNESSEE BIRDING TRAILS</b>
Website URLs	<a href="https://www.tn.gov/twra">https://www.tn.gov/twra</a>	<a href="http://www.tnswap.com/">http://www.tnswap.com/</a>	<a href="http://www.tnwatchablewildlife.org/">http://www.tnwatchablewildlife.org/</a>	<a href="http://www.tnbirdingtrails.org/">http://www.tnbirdingtrails.org/</a>
Associated Facebook page URLs	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/TennesseeWildlifeResourcesAgency/">https://www.facebook.com/TennesseeWildlifeResourcesAgency/</a>	none at present	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/tnwatchablewildlife/?fref=ts">https://www.facebook.com/tnwatchablewildlife/?fref=ts</a>	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/pg/TNBirdingTrails/about/?ref=page_internal">https://www.facebook.com/pg/TNBirdingTrails/about/?ref=page_internal</a>

### Proposed changes to websites & pages:

Web content type				
Websites	<b>TWRA - remain a separate website</b>	<b>TNSWAP - post on Watchable Wildlife (WW) FB page</b>	<b>WATCHABLE WILDLIFE - primary TN biodiversity page on FB</b>	<b>TENNESSEE BIRDING TRAILS - merge with WW page</b>
Website URLs	<a href="https://www.tn.gov/twra">https://www.tn.gov/twra</a>	<a href="http://www.tnswap.com/">http://www.tnswap.com/</a>	<a href="http://www.tnwatchablewildlife.org/">http://www.tnwatchablewildlife.org/</a>	<a href="http://www.tnbirdingtrails.org/">http://www.tnbirdingtrails.org/</a>
Associated Facebook page URLs	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/TennesseeWildlifeResourcesAgency/">https://www.facebook.com/TennesseeWildlifeResourcesAgency/</a>	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/tnwatchablewildlife/?fref=ts">https://www.facebook.com/tnwatchablewildlife/?fref=ts</a>	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/tnwatchablewildlife/?fref=ts">https://www.facebook.com/tnwatchablewildlife/?fref=ts</a>	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/tnwatchablewildlife/?fref=ts">https://www.facebook.com/tnwatchablewildlife/?fref=ts</a>

## **Decisions on website/facebook management**

The Watchable Wildlife page should be the primary social media page for a general audience interested in biodiversity and non-consumptive wildlife recreation. The TWRA, Watchable Wildlife, TN-SWAP, and Birding Trail websites will not change.

It's important to coordinate and share TN Biodiversity communications/social media content with the TWRA website/FB page, and the TWRA Information & Education Division. The TWRA FB page social media content (especially photos and video) can be shared with and from Doug Markham.

To incorporate all aspects of the TN SWAP, including exciting recent developments about plant conservation in the Southeast, we can begin including posts about plants on the Watchable Wildlife FB page, provided they maintain a focus on plants as habitat for watchable wildlife species, not plant biology.

TWRA should coordinate with TDEC on posting information concerning plants, since they are the regulatory authority for plants in TN.

The Watchable Wildlife Facebook page will function for three purposes:

6. Education in the form of content that is interesting to promote learning, engagement, increase followers, and raise the profile of Tennessee's biodiversity and its importance to Tennesseans.
7. Drive traffic to TWRA, TN-SWAP, Watchable Wildlife, and Tennessee Amphibian Monitoring Program (TAMP) websites and the Tennessee Birding Trails online tool.
8. Recognize and drive traffic to sites and stories of our conservation partners in TN.

## **Next steps**

- David will give Gregg administrative access to begin managing the Watchable Wildlife Facebook page.
- Cynthia will begin coordinating with Gregg on new content from the Watchable Wildlife website, which can be shared on Facebook.



- Gregg will maintain the TN-SWAP website and can share social media from it directly.
- Gregg will approach TDEC about how best to coordinate and post plant stories. TDEC has their own Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/TNEnvironment/?fref=ts>.
- Gregg will research and attempt to [merge the two Facebook pages](#), so that Birding Trails is incorporated into Watchable Wildlife (this includes moving posts and photos directly to the WW page).
- Gregg will work with TWRA Biodiversity Division staff and TN-SWAP partners to begin sharing a broad variety of information from their field work, projects, and accomplishments via the TN-SWAP website and/or the Watchable Wildlife Facebook page. She will seek to determine the easiest and best way for staff to share their photos and videos with the least amount of added work or inconvenience.
- With input from staff or other experts, Gregg will develop a calendar of themes/topics on a monthly/weekly basis to guide and anticipate social media posts.
- Gregg will aim to post content minimum once/week and optimally once/day on the Watchable Wildlife Facebook page. Many of the photos for posting could come directly from the Watchable Wildlife website and/or Cyndi Routledge's stash of previously submitted photos!

### **Some "sideboards" for TWW Facebook posts**

- All subject matter will be about species of wildlife native to Tennessee (including those that are not listed as GCNs) or will be about plants/plant communities that highlight their importance to wildlife (as habitat, foraging, symbiosis, etc).
- Positive news (i.e. nothing that attacks or criticizes); however this is to be distinguished from educational information that informs people how certain activities could be injurious to wildlife or their habitats.
- "Biology-in-action" news, e.g. conservation projects or activities undertaken by biologists that most people might not be aware of or understand
- Outdoor recreation opportunities related to wildlife/natural areas that provide habitat
- "Did you know?" stats on TN biodiversity, e.g. Tennessee is the most diverse inland state in the country.

- All of the above can be about TWRA but also about TWRA conservation partners, and what we collectively are achieving/working toward.
- Re: calls to action: unless they are explicitly related to TWRA or volunteer opportunities (e.g. how to sign up for E-bird and how E-bird data are used) calls to action will be avoided. Any call to action that might be posted will first be approved by Bill Reeves, or higher levels of authority within TWRA. Examples of posts requiring approval include opportunities for the public to voice their support for TWRA programs or wildlife-related legislation.
- As much as possible, posts should be accompanied by photographs (can include photo from a linked site) and/or video.