



Tennessee
Environmental
Council

Summit for a Sustainable Tennessee

Many voices, common vision moving Tennessee toward a healthy and sustainable future for its people, places, and economy.

John McFadden, Executive Director, TEC, 615-330-5364, jfm@hughes.net
Chris Ford, Executive Director, TCV, 615-269-9090, tcved@comcast.net



1st Annual Summit for a Sustainable Tennessee: Lipscomb University - Nashville November 15-17, 2007

Why a Summit? Why Now?

Tennessee's economy and population are growing, and although there is a myriad of benefits that come with this growth there are also many costs to our natural heritage, our public health and our shared sense of civic life.

Tennessee ranks seventh in the nation in the amount of natural landscape lost each year to commercial and residential development--an average loss of more than 80,000 acres per year. Sprawl-style development patterns that focus on moving cars instead of people lead to Tennesseans driving millions of miles in their cars, mostly alone, instead of biking, walking or taking transit. What we've gained in convenience, we've paid for in dirty air and increased respiratory ailments, obesity and other sedentary diseases among children and adults.

And now, with an increased understanding of the threats of global climate change, we all share the critical responsibility to shift our priorities toward healthier choices that are less dependent on using fossil fuels. More and more, the most attractive communities and the most profitable companies across the US and around the world are the ones based on sustainable principles. Tennessee's industries and cities can not afford to sit back while others move farther and farther ahead in the race to live, work and invest green.

Fortunately, Tennessee still enjoys a rich reserve of unspoiled landscapes and waterways. These areas are valued by more citizens than ever as places to relax and recreate. But we can not afford to take any of these resources for granted. The same sprawling development that brings jobs and tax revenues to many areas, seriously threatens these life-giving landscapes.

In all too many cases, once these valleys and streams are built over and drained dry, they are essentially lost forever....and with them, the birds, fish and other wildlife that called them home.

Now, before it is too late, is the critical time to take care of our remaining natural resources. To do so, we, as conservationists and environmental entrepreneurs, will have to leverage our new found political and economic clout in innovative ways.

2007 is the time to imagine in detail what a healthy, prosperous, ecologically balanced Tennessee would look like, *and feel like*, in 25 or 50 years. Working together, we can begin *today* creating that greener, more sustainable place for working, for learning and for living.

The Road to the 2007 Summit

Early in 2007, the leadership of The Tennessee Environmental Council and Tennessee Conservation Voters came together to re-establish the idea of an annual gathering of conservationists and other citizens with similar interests. These organizers were motivated by the idea of assembling representatives from several communities that had common interests but little history of working together. Forging new partnerships and sharing ideas and solutions in new ways would require finding common ground among concerned citizens, representatives of private industry, conservation groups, environmental policy experts, elected officials, educators and community leaders from a wide range of backgrounds

A planning committee made up of members of fifteen organizations began meeting regularly in Nashville in May, 2007. Over the past several months, through the efforts of this committee and with the leadership of TEC and TCV, a historically broad consensus has been formed around the need to begin speaking with more unity on conservation and sustainability issues. As a first step, the planning committee developed a detailed work plan for organizing a statewide gathering to be called *The Summit for a Sustainable Tennessee*.

Now, in the fall of 2007, this statewide collaborative effort seeks to represent a truly broad cross section of Tennessee's communities and populations. As citizens from across the state, we believe a much more diverse community of participants is necessary if we are to understand our state's most pressing environmental issues and the related economic and social challenges in a meaningful and politically influential way. Tennessee conservationists are eager to invite new groups and community leaders whose skills have gone untapped and whose voices have not traditionally been heard at the table when environmental issues were being discussed.

We realize the need to tap into the experience and expertise of *the entire community* if we hope to reach our ultimate goal. This goal is nothing less than crafting and implementing the most innovative and effective solutions we can find for conserving and restoring some of the most beautiful parts of our state. We must also promote the wise, long range economic choices that enable Tennessee to maintain these natural areas far into the future and make them accessible to its citizens.

Many voices. One vision. Working together, at last, we are prepared to make the next great leap forward toward sustaining a healthy, vital and prosperous Tennessee for all its citizens.

For details on the *Summit* agenda and how to register, visit: <http://www.sustainabletn.org>

A History of Statewide Collaboration

In 1973, the Tennessee Environmental Council (TEC) hosted the first annual "inter-group" meeting of concerned citizens and environmentalists, later to be called the "Tennessee Environmental Congress". This yearly gathering provided workshops on critical state environmental issues and developed a preliminary statewide environmental agenda for the state government and legislature.

Though progress was made on a host of issues, Tennessee still faces, almost thirty-five years later, some of the same challenges and threats to our shared natural heritage. Today, there are new challenges and risks to Tennessee's quality of life and the goal of sustainable growth that were not easy to foresee a generation ago.

Two Host Organizations Sharing a Commitment to Collaboration

The Tennessee Environmental Council and Tennessee Conservation Voters have agreed to act as the lead organizations for planning and producing the *Summit for a Sustainable Tennessee*.

Many organizations and individuals across the state are already working diligently on pertinent issues facing Tennessee and its residents. Our lives are richer, our landscapes are healthier and our neighborhoods are better places to live and work because of the hard work of these groups and their many dedicated staff, board members, donors and volunteers. Our most precious natural and civic resources are available to more of us because so many non-profit groups and associations, large and small, are dedicated to making Tennessee a better, more beautiful place for all its citizens.

Two established groups are well positioned to reach out beyond the traditional conservation community to build a new coalition to envision a shared, sustainable future that includes better protected landscapes and ecosystems. These two organizations are working in every corner of the state and have members living throughout Tennessee. The *Tennessee Environmental Council* (TEC) and *Tennessee Conservation Voters* (TCV) have chosen to help bring together a much broader coalition of citizens, companies and communities, all sharing a genuine interest in promoting "opportunity through sustainability", than has ever come together before.

The membership of TEC and TCV believe strongly in creative collaboration. They are convinced that structured collaboration among non-profit groups, for-profit businesses and a diverse range of communities and institutions

across the state, is the best way for Tennessee to produce an integrated approach for finally focusing on, and addressing, the state's most pressing environmental issues.

#

*The mission of the **Tennessee Environmental Council (TEC)** is to educate and advocate for the protection of Tennessee's environment and public health. For more than thirty years, TEC has been working daily to protect the environment in Tennessee.*

***Tennessee Conservation Voters (TCV)** is a coalition of Tennessee environmental, conservation and preservation groups dedicated to electing environmentally responsible state officials and holding them accountable for safeguarding the natural heritage of Tennessee through the making of prudent laws.*