

TNP VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

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LONG HUNTER CHAPTER, 2025

CERTIFIED TENNESSEE NATURALIST + 200 HOUR MILESTONE

HABITAT RESTORATION

CEDAR CREEK GREENWAY



**get to know...**

# **CEDAR CREEK GREENWAY RESTORATION PROJECT**



**Focus on restoring a healthy ecosystem and riparian buffer between Cedar Creek and a greenway trail in Mt. Juliet**



**Host nature walks for the community to provide education about the plants and wildlife that can be enjoyed along the trail**



**Current volunteer projects:**

- **Invasive plant removal and management**
- **Opening tree canopy to regenerate rivercane understory**
- **Erosion control through reseeding and installing native plants**

## **GOAL**

**To provide an opportunity for our native middle Tennessee landscape to shine along our local greenway and connect with the community while doing it.**



# VOLUNTEER IMPACT

## CONNECTING THE COMMUNITY

The greenway is a connection point of three neighborhoods, a park, a soccer club field, and a local high school. Our restoration areas are in highly visible locations along the greenway, and **many residents have already started to appreciate and interact with the area we are restoring.**

After beginning invasive plant removal activities last fall, people in the area have noticed how we are opening the space, exposing the river cane and the naturally occurring wildflowers that exist but were previously hidden. **Many people stop to talk and ask about what we are doing, and they are very pleased to hear about the project.** Folks have started to walk into the restoration site and view the creek from areas that previously weren't accessible.

## PROJECT SUCCESS

Native plants in the site that were heavily suppressed prior to the invasive plant removal are growing back, and the river cane is showing increased growth.

At this time last year, there were very few wildflowers growing within the wooded area, but this year, they are throughout the area and I am excited to see their fall show.

# HOW IT STARTED

I am a local resident who enjoyed walking along Cedar Creek's woodland edge before the greenway was built. **After the installation of the greenway, a flush of invasive species have taken over in many areas, threatening the diverse native species that are occurring there.**

I approached the City of Mt. Juliet's Parks and Greenways Board in September of 2024 to ask if they had any land management plan for controlling the invasive plant species along the greenway. This opened up the conversation to invasive plants and native plants and the situation that was occurring along the trail. **They asked me if I would be willing to research what needed to be done, so I took it from there.**

The area along the greenway is only partially owned by the City, with the rest belonging to private HOAs. **I put together the community project named the Cedar Creek Greenway Restoration Project so there could be a single entity that could oversee the restoration.** I approached the HOAs, presented a proposal about how to improve the creek bank that runs through their property and two out of the three HOAs have said they will participate in the project.

# PERSONAL REWARD

## I'VE LEARNED SO MUCH!

- Conservation focused forestry practices
- Improving riparian buffers
- Methods for controlling invasive plants
- Plant identification skills
- More about beavers than I ever thought I would
- Realized that I LOVE taking out invasive plants

## **“I'VE BECOME A MORE CONFIDENT PERSON”**

**One thing that delayed my approaching the City about this project was my fear of public speaking.** After my first interaction at the board meeting, I have reached out to so many organizations to learn how to best approach this restoration project. I have also given several presentations about the Project to organizations in Wilson County and Nashville.

Two years ago, this level of speaking interaction would have been a nightmare for me, but I know that **each time I talk to people, it might spark interest in their natural spaces and might encourage someone to learn more about what natural spaces could be like and how they can help their community in their own way.**

# MY PASSION

**“I WANT TO SET AN EXAMPLE  
THAT WE CAN MAKE A  
POSITIVE IMPACT.”**



When I was young, **one of my favorite places to be was along a small creek** near my grandmother's property. I was able to explore the woods, enjoy the sounds of the water and, even as a small child, I found it to be **a place of peace and learning. I would like the people in my community to have a similar opportunity.**

Seeing invasive plant species choke out our beautiful native plants has been heartbreaking to me, knowing that as time goes on, invasive plants will become more normal to see than the flowers that should be there. The life that relies on native plants will suffer due to habitat loss, and the people in my community, particularly the youngest, won't see what the natural world could and should look like. **A world full of invasive plants and less life will be their "normal."**

I want help to create a space that can show them what it could look like and that human impacts on our environment don't always have to be negative.

# THE IMPACT OF TNP

Going through the TNP courses was a fantastic way to learn about many topics that I previously knew little about and to hopefully find some local Naturalists who might be willing to assist me in sharing that knowledge to my community and volunteers.

Several wonderful Tennessee Naturalists have volunteered with the Cedar Creek Greenway Restoration Project. I enjoy hearing about subjects they are passionate about and how they want to utilize what they learn through the Program. **I hope to connect with Naturalists that can help me build and create new opportunities for the Project.**

I recently connected with a city official who is interested in my assistance with a new greenway expansion in my community. This could be an amazing opportunity not only for this Project, but for protecting and improving habitat near the new greenway and providing an educational opportunity to city leaders on the importance of our natural spaces. **Having an opportunity of this level is one of the reasons I wanted to become a Tennessee Naturalist.** Being a part of TNP has given me more knowledge and confidence when connecting with others, which has created opportunities for me to make an impact in my community.

**I hope that the project I've started will, in turn, give back to the Tennessee Naturalist Program by providing a space for other Naturalists to learn, share and volunteer.**