"It's Time to Meet the Moment"

GWS ParkForum 2026
A conservation solutions workshop

GEORGE WRIGHT SOCIETY

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE KNOXVILLE

October 19–22

Program

Welcome to GWS ParkForum 2026

The George Wright Society and the University of Tennessee welcome you to the **UT Conference Center in downtown Knoxville** for the 2026 GWS ParkForum! We're glad you're here! If you need assistance, see us at the Registration Table anytime. • Download this Program and presentation Abstracts at georgewrightsociety.org/parkforum-2026-program • See the last page of this program for a list of Posters and Field Trip descriptions • Presentations in green are remote (pre-recorded)

Monday, October 19 8:45a–noon URBAN WILDERNESS FIELD TRIP • 10:00a–5:00p REGISTRATION, POSTER SET-UP

1:30–5:00p OPENING PLENARY SESSIONS

Plenary Session I
Ballroom 413ABC, 1:30–3:30p

Format: Panel Discussion

Welcome from the George Wright Society and the University of Tennessee / Indigenous Land Acknowledgment / Introduction to Today's Plenary Sessions
Fred Herling, GWS President; Dr. Adam Ahlers, Director, UT School of Natural Resources

Tennessee RiverLine: A Strategy for Restorative Recreation
Moderator: **Ryan Sharp,** Professor, University of Tennessee
Panelists: **Brad Collett,** Executive Director, Tennessee RiverLine; **Carrie Barske Crawford,** Professor, University of North Alabama; **Clay Guerry,** Land Manager, Tennessee Valley Authority; **Ryan Sharp,** Professor, University of Tennessee; **Lt. Col. Mike Walker,** Co-Chair, Bridgeport Local Leadership Team
Reframing the Tennessee River, adjacent public lands, and river communities as a 1.2 million acre 'River Park,' Tennessee RiverLine is an initiative of UT Extension that advances a novel concept of restorative recreation along the 652-mile Tennessee River. Join this session to learn how the RiverLine is leveraging the power of partnerships to inspire new generations of Tennessee River stewards in RiverTowns communities in four states through recreation programming, environmental education, infrastructure design and implementation, and tourism development.

Brad Collett is the Executive Director of the Tennessee RiverLine. Under his leadership, a team of UT Extension professionals collaborates with a consortium of partners across the region to realize the Tennessee RiverLine vision and the economic development, public health, resource stewardship, and access benefits it promises future generations. As a full professor in the UT School of Landscape Architecture, his teaching, research and creative activity centered on regional water resource stewardship through landscape planning and high-performance landscape design.

Clay Guerry grew up on the coast of South Carolina and attended Francis Marion University where he received a BS in Biology. After a few years as a primate biologist on the coast, he moved to the foothills of the Appalachians for graduate school at Clemson University, where he earned an MS in Zoology as well as an MS in Parks and Protected Area Management. He has worked as an outdoor guide, instructor, naturalist, and for the past 21 years as a public land manager for the Tennessee Valley Authority focusing on recreation and natural resource management.

Carrie Barske Crawford is an assistant professor of history at the University of North Alabama. A public historian specializing in cultural landscapes and environmental history, she contributed to Branching Out: The Public History of Trees (2025) and the forthcoming collection Public Historians and the Climate Crisis. From 2017 to 2024, she directed the Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area, building regional partnerships that connected communities with the Tennessee River's many stories.

Ryan Sharp is an Associate Professor in the Outdoor Recreation and Conservation Lab within the Outdoor Recreation and Park Management program at the University of Tennessee. He has had the opportunity to assist parks and protected areas managers internationally and domestically. Much of Dr. Sharp's work provides managers with tangible and legally defensible data to ensure experiential and ecological resources are maintained for quality visitor experiences while still protecting the integrity of the natural resources.

Lieutenant Colonel John M. "Mike" Walker retired from the US Army after 28 years and then retired from the Alabama school system after 11.5 years where he served as the Senior Army Instructor at Fort Payne High School. He became associated with the Bridgeport Local Leadership Team (LLT) of the Tennessee RiverLine's River Towns Program in 2020 and currently serves as the team co-chair. He is a historian, a re-enactor, and an advocate for teaching local school children about their culture, history, and historic ties to the Tennessee River in addition to exploring the outdoor activities to be had in the river valley. He is married to Jeanne, who is also a member of the Bridgeport LLT. They have two sons and four grandchildren.

REFRESHMENT BREAK 3:30–4:00p Atrium Hot & cold beverages

Plenary Session II
Ballroom 413ABC, 4:00–5:00p

Format: Panel Discussion

The State of History and Preservation in Our National Parks and Public Lands
Sarah Weicksel, Executive Director, American Historical Association; **Anne Mitchell Whisnant,** Professor, Duke University; **Alan Spears,** Senior Director for Cultural Resources, National Parks Conservation Association; *Moderator:* **Eboni Preston Goddard,** Southeast Regional Director, National Parks Conservation Association

The year 2025 saw unprecedented assaults on cultural resource management at the federal level. Research and programmatic grants were frozen or eliminated. Staffing levels for cultural resource professionals, already low, were drastically reduced in the name of government efficiency. And the administration's push to restore truth and sanity to American history began a process by which the National Park Service was forced to first list then, in some instances, sanitize or erase accurate and inclusive stories at park sites across the country.

Although the jury is still out on the impacts that bad policy and stiffening resistance to censorship are having on our parks and preservation generally, now is a good time to examine where we all are. This panel will draw upon the expertise of four leading advocates for national parks and historic preservation practitioners to share their views on what's happened, the impact over the last 15 months on preservation, and where historians, preservationists, and public lands advocates need to go now.

Dr. Sarah Weicksel is executive director of the American Historical Association. She has previously worked as the Association's director of research and publications and as a project historian at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History. Her book, *A Nation Unraveled: Clothing, Culture, and Violence in the American Civil War Era* (Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2026), is an object-based history that explores how making, wearing, saving, and destroying clothing was central to how people waged war and acutely experienced war's costs.

Dr. Anne Mitchell Whisnant is a historian with thirty years' experience working on the history of the U.S. national parks (especially Blue Ridge Parkway and other southeastern parks). She was lead author on the 2011 report, *Imperiled Promise: The State of History in the National Park Service,* co-sponsored by the NPS and the Organization of American Historians. She is currently on the faculty at Duke University, where she is Director of the Graduate Liberal Studies Program.

As NPCA's senior director for cultural resources, **Alan Spears** serves as an advocate for the interpretation, management, and preservation of cultural and historic resources and programs within the National Park Service's inventory. Alan helped win the designation of Fort Monroe, Harriet Tubman, Birmingham Civil Rights, and Emmett Till & Mamie Till-Mobley National Monuments. He is currently working to secure a new national park commemorating Julius Rosenwald and the Rosenwald Schools.

Led by a call to action, **Dr. Eboni Preston Goddard** is a management professional with a background in non-profit administration, program operations, partnerships, and workforce development. She currently serves as the Southeast Regional Director and National Park Service Diversity Lead for the National Parks Conservation Association. She also works as an adjunct professor and lecturer at the Georgia Institute of Technology, Georgia State University, and Southern New Hampshire University.

WELCOMING RECEPTION 5:00–6:00p Atrium Light hors d'oeuvres, non-alcoholic beverages

Tuesday, October 20 8:30–9:45a PLENARY SESSION Coffee & tea available in Atrium

Plenary Session III
Ballroom 413ABC

Format: Invited Speakers + Audience Participation

Protecting Karst Resources in Tennessee and the Greater Southeast: The Physical, Biological, and Cultural Elements
Moderator: **Chris Groves,** Western Kentucky University • *Speakers:* **Chris Groves**, "The Physical Setting: Karst Hydrogeology of Tennessee"; **Matthew L. Niemiller,** Professor, University of Alabama in Huntsville: Endangered Cave Species of the Southeast; **Jan Simek,** Professor, University of Tennessee Knoxville: Ancient Native American Art in Caves of the Southeast

Karst Landscapes and groundwater flow systems, developed within especially soluble bedrocks such as limestone, are home to caves, sinkholes, underground rivers, and large springs. Tennessee's karst systems, with more than 12,000 caves known and new ones still being explored, have fabulous diversity of ecosystems, in large part because of the "bonus" underground landscape where cave-adapted aquatic and terrestrial organisms thrive in complete darkness, along with waters especially rich in calcium and carbon from limestone dissolution. Karst landscapes and their associated ecosystems occur within several of Tennessee's physiographic provinces. Human use in Tennessee also goes back some 5,000 years. This session will bring together three scientists with decades of experience in (and beneath) Tennessee to discuss the physical, ecological, and cultural worlds of Tennessee's karst landscapes.

Chris Groves is University Distinguished Professor of Hydrogeology and Director of the Crawford Hydrology Lab at Western Kentucky University. He earned a PhD in Environmental Sciences from the University of Virginia in 1993 and since has led an international research program in hydrogeology and water resources, with fieldwork in 26 countries. He has been exploring and studying caves and karst landscapes in Tennessee since his first cave trips and groundwater studies there in 1982.

An archaeologist with a Ph.D. from Binghamton University, **Jan Simek** retired (2022) after 38 years at the University of Tennessee. While at UT, he served as Distinguished Professor of Archaeology and as the 24th President of the University. Simek's research focusses on ancient human use of caves for habitation, exploration, and religion. He has documented more than 90 southeastern Native American cave art sites, the first cave art tradition ever discovered in North America.

Matthew L. Niemiller is an Associate Professor of Biological Sciences at The University of Alabama in Huntsville, where he directs the Cave Biology Lab. A National Speleological Society Fellow, he earned his PhD from the University of Tennessee, where he studied cave fauna. For over two decades, he has surveyed the state's subterranean biodiversity, from fishes and salamanders to crayfishes and beetles, integrating field surveys, phylogenomics, and environmental DNA to document and conserve karst ecosystems across Tennessee.

REFRESHMENT BREAK & NETWORKING TIME 9:45–10:30a (45 minutes) Atrium Coffee & tea

10:30a–12:00p BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Session #1
Ballroom 413ABC

Information Sharing Session
Format: Panel Discussion

Science for Stewardship: Visitor Use Monitoring in the National Wildlife Refuge System
Chair: Matt Brownlee, Professor, Clemson University

This organized session highlights collaborative research with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to advance visitor use management (VUM) across the National Wildlife Refuge System. As visitation grows, refuges must balance quality visitor experiences with conservation goals. Presentations include national efforts to improve visitor monitoring and survey programs, a case study applying the VUM framework at Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, and research on how visitor surveys inform management decisions. The session also examines system-wide visitor trends. Together, these papers demonstrate how survey data, modeling, and applied frameworks support evidence-based, defensible decision-making for sustainable visitor use on refuges.

Matt Brownlee (Clemson University) - Advancing Visitor Use Management on National Wildlife Refuges: Insights from USFWS Research
Mark Gorman (Clemson University) - Rec on the Refuge: Examining Visitor Trends in the National Wildlife Refuge System
Kale Wernsing (Clemson University) - Data in Decision-Making: How Public Lands Use General Visitor Surveys to Inform Management Practices
Jessica Henry (Clemson University) - Giving Merit to Decisions at Merritt NWR: Application of the VUM Framework at a High-Visitation Wildlife Refuge

Attendees will learn how monitoring, surveys, and frameworks support data-driven decisions and sustainable management on refuges.

Session #2
Room 400A
Information-Sharing Session
Format: Author/Editor Presentations

10:30–11:15a • Book Talk — National Parks and the Supreme Court: Groundbreaking Legal Battles • *Carla Chung Mattix, Author/Former NPS Attorney*
My book talk will highlight the role that courts and lawyers play to achieve the mission of the National Park Service. "National Parks and the Supreme Court," published by the University of Nevada Press, America's National Park Series, examines five landmark Supreme Court cases involving national parks—Gettysburg, Yellowstone, Grand Canyon, Death Valley, and the National Mall. Each chapter blends legal analysis with historical context, tracing the origins of the parks and the disputes that brought them before the nation's highest court. Spanning nearly a century, these cases reveal how the Court has shaped park policy, land use, Native American rights, water law, and free speech. *Attendees/audience members will better understand how court decisions can influence the trajectory of the National Park Service.*

11:15a–12:00p • Discussion & Reading — Poetry and Stewardship • *Gary Machlis, Clemson University / Editor, "Verse in Place" section of the journal* Parks Stewardship Forum
Since 2020, *Parks Stewardship Forum* has published poems in each issue under a section titled "Verse in Place." Poems from leading American as well as international poets, along with poetry by young, emerging poets, have been brought to the Forum's readers. In this session, the Poetry Editor for the journal describes how poetry and stewardship are intimately linked, and how poems, in the words of Tracy K. Smith are "tools for careful listening."

Session #3
Room 406 The Stone Room

Information Sharing Session
Format:

From Leave No Trace to Relational Stewardship: Social-Ecological Approaches
Chair: Clara-Jane Blye, Assistant Professor, University of Utah

Leave No Trace principles have become a global standard for minimizing recreation-related impacts and shaping pro-environmental behaviours. While highly effective at influencing individual actions, current approaches often remain grounded in impact reduction and individual responsibility, limiting their ability to address broader social-ecological challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and inequitable access to outdoor spaces. This interactive workshop introduces relational stewardship as a framework that builds on the strengths of LNT while expanding its relevance for conservation. Drawing on Social-Ecological Systems thinking and Indigenous ways of knowing, relational stewardship positions people as embedded within dynamic ecological and cultural systems, emphasizing reciprocity, responsibility, and connection to place.

Attendees/audience members will explore how relational stewardship can expand LNT to address equity, connection to land, and social-ecological systems.

	Session Title & Chair	10:30–10:50a	10:50–11:10a	11:10–11:30a	11:30–11:50a	Q&A
Session #4 Room 404 Information Sharing Session Format: Contributed Papers	**Economic Values** *Fred Herling, chair*	Levi Tenen / Should Parks Be Profitable?	Emma Keinath-Lopez & Melissa Weddell / Counting the Uncountable: Estimating Visitation and Visitor Spending Across 1.5 Million Acres with Eight Traffic Counters	Ryan Sharp & Justine Cucchiara / Tearing Down Silos: The Tennessee Outdoor Partnership as a Driver of Economic Opportunity	Madison Janes / Public Park, Private Investment: Economic Value Through Partnership at Lakeshore Park	

Attendees will better understand the variety of roles economic values play in place-based conservation.

LUNCH BREAK 12:00–1:30p (90 minutes)

Tuesday, October 20 1:30–3:00p BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Session #5 Ballroom 413ABC Core Workshop Session Format: Hands-on Activity	**Mapping the Motivations and Impacts of NPS Heritage and Nature Volunteers** *Chair: Thomas Bryer, Professor and Director, Old Dominion University, Center for Civic Lands and Democratic Stewardship* This interactive workshop addresses the workshop theme of Integrating Natural and Cultural Heritage Conservation. It explores how volunteers in the National Park Service experience, interpret, and connect motivations and impacts across both natural and cultural heritage. Drawing on research with more than 200 NPS volunteers and rangers, participants will map volunteer motivations (e.g., stewardship, identity, community) alongside multi-level impacts (self, place, and democracy). Through facilitated small-group activities, attendees will co-create integrated "motivation–impact maps" that dissolve traditional silos between nature and culture. The session centers inclusive dialogue to identify practices that unite conservation and heritage work. *Participants will leave with tools to engage new partners, broaden participation in volunteerism, and advance boundary-spanning conservation outcomes.*
Session #6 Room 400A Core Workshop Session Format: Presentations + Audience Interaction	**Which approaches to live interpretation lead to better participant outcomes?** *Chair: Robert Powell, Professor, Clemson University* Presenters: Marc J. Stern, Virginia Tech; Kelley Anderson, Virginia Tech; Jess Henry, Clemson University Our team collected data at 419 interpretive programs across 62 NPS units. We systematically observed 70 characteristics of each program related to context, the interpreter, and program design and delivery. We then administered short written surveys to program attendees ages 14 and older that measured three outcomes: (1) Quality Assessment; (2) Resource Connection; and (3) Social Connection. We conducted multiple analyses to determine which characteristics were most strongly associated with each of these outcomes. Key findings highlight the importance of traditional interpretive practices in addition to novel techniques associated with better storytelling, grappling with sticky problems, engaging audiences in meaning-making, and building positive relationships. We will discuss implications for enhancing program delivery and for training. *Attendees/audience members will learn key principles for live interpretation that if implemented well consistently lead to better visitor outcomes.*
Session #7 Room 406 The Stone Room Information Sharing Session Format: Presentations & Discussion	**1:30–2:15p • Four Foundational Lessons from Four Decades with the National Park Service** / *Mike Tranel, USNPS, retired* After a 41-year career with the NPS in 9 different parks and 3 central offices, including roles as park ranger, chief of planning, park superintendent, group superintendent, and finally deputy superintendent of Yellowstone National Park, I will share 4 major lessons that are instructive for all levels of protected area management. 1. Success in protected area management requires building and maintaining relationships. 2. The NPS often underestimates the value of focusing on the enabling legislation for individual park units when dealing with controversial issues. 3. USNPS has much to share with the international community. At the same time, the agency can learn much from international partners. 4. Your team is critical to your success and the viability of the protected area you manage. Successful managers recognize potential and enthusiastically invest in developing people. **2:15–3:00p • Smokies All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory: Community Scientists Informing Conservation Decisions** *Will Kuhn, Director of Science and Research, Discover Life in America* Introducing the Smokies ATBI, highlighting how community science contributes to the inventory, and talking about a project where we're crunching baseline ATBI data on bees in the Smokies to inform natural resource management.

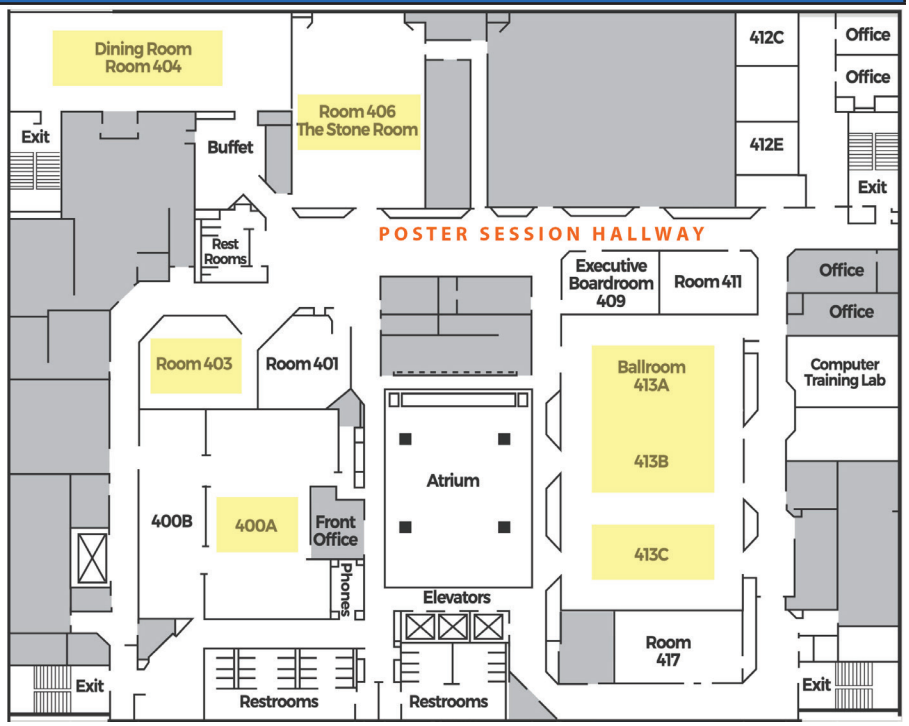
	Session Title & Chair	1:30–1:50p	1:50–2:10p	2:10–2:30p	2:30–2:50p	Q&A
Session #8 Room 404 Information Sharing Session Format: Contributed Papers	**Conservation Solutions I: Biosphere Regions** *Chris Groves, Chair*	John Kupfer / Mapping Stakeholder Perceptions of Conservation Benefits & Opportunities in the Congaree Biosphere	Guilherme Silva et al. / Socio-environmental Vulnerability in US Biosphere Regions	Tom Gilbert & Susan Schexnayder/ How the Great Smoky Mountains Region Served as an Example in the Creation of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves	Chris Groves et al. / 797 Very Special Places and Counting: UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Program Today	
	Attendees will learn about biosphere regions (aka biosphere reserves), an underappreciated designation that takes a unique approach to integrating conservation and community.					

REFRESHMENT BREAK 3:00–3:30p (30 minutes) Atrium Hot & cold beverages

UT Conference Center 4th Floor

GWS ParkForum meeting rooms highlighted in yellow

Posters will be presented in the space marked "Poster Session Hallway"



Tuesday, October 20 3:30–5:00p BREAKOUT SESSIONS

	Session Title & Chair	3:30–1:50p	3:50–4:10p	4:10–4:30p	4:30–4:50p	Q&A
Session #9 Ballroom 413ABC Information Sharing Session Format: Contributed Papers	**Multiple Values of Parks & Protected Areas** *Lincoln Larson, Chair*	Annabelle Mayes et al. / International Perspectives on the Values of Antarctic Wilderness	Lincoln Larson et al. / Mental health promotion via North Carolina State Parks	Wes Soward / Knoxville's Urban Wilderness, Connectivity, Culture, Conservation	Tatyana Feiner & Jason Wong / Understanding the Economic, Environmental, and Health Benefits of Canada's Protected Areas	
	Attendees will get a taste of the variety of values inherent in protected places, as well as the values humans assign to them.					
Session #10 Room 400A Information Sharing Session Format: Presentation with Audience Participation	**Toward a Unifying Vision of Collaborative Conservation** *Presenter: Gary Machlis, Clemson University* The branches of conservation—from natural resource protection, sustainability, indigenous knowledge, restorative agriculture, historical preservation, and more — work largely independently, often competitively, and sometimes at cross purposes. A more unified vision of conservation is needed to gain leverage and make progress in the years ahead. A Unifying Vision of Collaborative Conservation "Summit" is being organized for 2027, with the George Wright Society's assistance and engagement. This session, led by one of the summit organizers, is an opportunity to learn about the unifying vision concept and preparations for the summit.					
	Attendees/audience members will learn about the process leading to the summit, which is planned for 2027.					
Session #11 Room 406 The Stone Room Information Sharing Session Format: Presentation with Audience Participation	**Coastal Resiliency in Practice: Bridging Science, Policy, and Partnerships** *Chair: Ariel Kimberley, Park Institute of America* The Coastal Resiliency Research Symposium convenes researchers, park managers, policymakers, and community leaders to address urgent challenges facing coastal protected areas. The 2024 symposium highlighted emerging science, policy frameworks, and outreach strategies—from erosion and infrastructure loss to stakeholder-driven adaptation planning. A second symposium in 2026 will expand this work, deepening partnerships and advancing actionable solutions. This presentation will synthesize key findings across convenings, emphasizing how interdisciplinary collaboration improves resilience outcomes. It will also explore how integrating cultural and natural resource management, alongside community engagement, strengthens long-term conservation in dynamic coastal landscapes.					
	Attendees will learn how cross-sector collaboration can strengthen coastal resilience and inform park management decisions.					
	3:30–3:40p	3:40–3:50p	3:50–4:00p	4:00–4:10p	4:10–4:30 Q&A	
Session #12 Room 404 **New Perspectives from Emerging Researchers: Short Presentations** *Ryan Sharp, Chair*	Isabel Haake / Understanding Barriers and Facilitators to Appalachian Trail Thru Hiker Food Storage Behavior	Kyla Knauf / Can historic seed collection and climate data inform future restoration in Glacier National Park?	Mike Miller / From Image to Experience: Social Media Photography and Visitor Behavior at an Iconic Viewpoint	Vishal Kennedy / Assessing the Representation of U.S. Terrestrial Ecosystems in Protected Areas		

Poster Reception & Stand-by Time 5:00–6:00p Snacks, non-alcoholic beverages (Atrium/Poster Session Hallway)

WORKSHOP EVALUATION SURVEY

Your feedback matters! Please take 5–8 minutes to complete our anonymous survey. Your responses will help us improve future ParkForums and assess how well we are meeting the George Wright Society's goals. Thank you for helping shape future events!

Wednesday, October 21 8:30–10:00a PLENARY SESSION Coffee/tea & baked goods available in Atrium

GWS Awards Ceremony
Ballroom 413ABC (8:30–8:45a)

Plenary Session IV
Ballroom 413ABC
Format: Invited Speaker
(8:45–10:00a)

Presentation of George Wright Society Awards • *Lydia Kiewra & Linda Mazzu, GWS Board of Directors*
2026 AWARDEES — The GWS Social & Environmental Justice Award: Beth Kruse • The GWS Communications Award : Will Rice
The George Meléndez Wright Award for Excellence • Peter Keller

Names Are Never Just Names: Reconciliation, Revanchism, and the Struggle for Democratic Place-Making
Moderator: **Seth T. Kannarr,** PhD Graduate, University of Tennessee
Speaker: **Derek H. Alderman,** Professor, University of Tennessee

Place names are not innocent labels on maps or signs. They are civic resources that have become flashpoints in struggles over identity, memory, power, and harm. Drawing on decades of scholarship and public engagement with place (re)naming in America, as well as service on the Federal Advisory Committee on Reconciliation in Place Names, Derek Alderman examines two competing futures: renaming as reconciliation and renaming as revanchism. Centering the committee's Place Name Reconciliation Principles, he advances a participatory, research-driven, reparative framework accountable to communities. Alderman warns against top-down revanchist naming practices that settle political scores and grievances, advance personal branding, weaponize symbols, and restore racial, colonial, and nationalist hierarchies. At stake is the integrity of the shared American landscape and the democratic making of place.

Derek H. Alderman is Chancellor's Professor of Geography at the University of Tennessee. His cultural geography scholarship examines the racial justice dimensions of place naming and commemorative landscapes. Over a 28-year professorial career, he has partnered extensively with civil rights organizations, educators, museums, journalists, and government officials. Alderman is a Fellow and Past President of the American Association of Geographers and served from 2022 to 2025 on the U.S. Advisory Committee on Reconciliation in Place Names.

Seth T. Kannarr is a PhD Graduate from the Department of Geography and Sustainability at the University of Tennessee. His research specialties are in critical parks geographies, place naming studies, and geography education. He is a passionate teacher who loves to share his experiences visiting national parks and outdoor spaces with others.

REFRESHMENT BREAK & NETWORKING TIME 10:00–10:30a (30 minutes) Atrium Coffee & tea

10:30a–12:00p BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Session #13
Ballroom 413ABC

Information Sharing Session
Format: Panel Discussion

International Park and Protected Area Issues Dialogue: Institutions, Networks and Opportunities
Chairs: Jonathan Putnam, US National Park Service (retired) and Lauren Wenzel, NOAA (retired)

This interactive panel discussion will highlight some of the key current issues in international park and protected area management, including the 30x30 initiative, Indigenous-led conservation, and the status of U.S. involvement in international conservation through IUCN, World Heritage and the U.S. Biosphere Network. We will share examples of how participants can engage in the international protected area community, including through the World Commission on Protected Areas, the International Ranger Federation and other organizations, and major international events scheduled for 2027 (the World Congress on Protected And Conserved Areas, the International Marine Protected Area Congress and the World Ranger Congress). Participants will be engaged in the dialogue to share their questions, experiences and insights.

Attendees/audience members will understand the key issues and challenges in international park issues and how to engage with the world parks community.

	Session Title & Chair	10:30–10:50a	10:50–11:10a	11:10–11:30a	11:30–11:50a	Q&A
Session #14 Room 400A Information Sharing Session Format: Contributed Papers	**Connecting with and Delivering Benefits to Diverse Groups** *Lydia Kiewra, Chair*	Jennifer Thomsen et al. / Wildlands relevance: Fostering relationships between public lands and underrepresented groups	Sweta Dixit / Comprehensive Overview of Protected Area Benefit-Sharing Policy Impacts in Local Livelihoods in Asia	Rachel Baer & Melissa Weddell / Building the Bob: Volunteer Labor and Wilderness Stewardship	Lydia A. Kiewra / Rooted in Place: Understanding Place Attachment and Cultural Ecosystem Services in SWMAs	

Attendees will hear case studies and analyses of the challenges to making place-based conservation relevant to a wide range of groups.

Session #15
Room 406 The Stone Room

Information Sharing Session
Format: Affinity Group

Collective Capacity: Building Strength in Small Conservation Nonprofits
Chair: Ariel Kimberley and Scott Hall, Park Institute of America

This session convenes an affinity group for small conservation nonprofits to exchange strengths, strategies, and practical skills for increasing impact. Relevant to all Workshop Themes, this session takes a step back to understand not only what work is accomplished by small nonprofits, but also how that work is carried out. It centers peer learning to discuss strengths, such as capitalizing on flexibility, alongside challenges of funding and staffing. Participants will share tools, map their networks, and co-develop approaches for collaboration, resource-sharing, and resilience. Additionally, there is potential to incorporate voices from larger nonprofits, helping to identify blind spots and opportunities for collaboration. The interactive session will produce actionable takeaways and a framework for ongoing connection beyond the Forum.

Attendees will gain practical strategies, shared tools, and peer connections to strengthen small nonprofit impact and collaboration.

	Session Title & Chair	10:30–10:50a	10:50–11:10a	11:10–11:30a	11:30–11:50a	Q&A
Session #16 Room 404 Information Sharing Session Format: Contributed Papers	**New Approaches to Displacement and Crowding** *Will Rice, Chair*	Jeffrey Hallo & Louis Santiago / Addressing Visitor Displacement as a Critical Component of Protected Area Management	Min Kook Kim & Jessica Leahy / How Much Is Too Much? Agent-Based Modeling for Recreation Resource Management in NetLogo	Louis Santiago Brevan / Rethinking Park Capacity: Cultural Differences in Visitor Perceptions and Management Actions	William Rice et al. / Communitas, Crowding, and a new paradigm in Visitor Experience: Evidence from two national forests	

Attendees will hear new ideas on park visitor capacity — and whether some long-held beliefs in this space need to be reconsidered.

LUNCH BREAK 12:00–1:30p (90 minutes)

Wednesday, October 21 1:30–3:00p BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Session #17
Ballroom 413ABC

Information Sharing Session
Format: Panel Discussion

Beyond Boundaries: Air, Energy and Ecosystem Threats to Parks through Landscape and Policy Lenses
Chair: Ulla Reeves, Director, Clean Air Program, National Parks Conservation Association
Panelists: Olivia Porter, Southern Appalachian Landscape Project Director – Session Co-Organizer and Co-Presenter
George Ivey, Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation
Katie Allen or Shyla Miller, Appalachian Trail Landscape Partnership
Natalie Levine, Clean Air Campaign Director, National Parks Conservation Association (presenting remotely)

From energy and human development to air and water pollution and climate change, national parks face daily threats that undermine their integrity, ecosystems, wildlife and visitor experiences. Air pollution from outside park boundaries causes hazy views, harms human and ecological health and fuels the climate crisis that stresses nature. Development in and around park landscapes fragments habitat, disrupts wildlife movement and food security along natural corridors, increases runoff that degrades water quality, and allows invasive species to spread. At the same time, policies that have protected parks from air and climate pollution are being repealed and weakened; varied land use regulations governing development around parks exacerbates landscape fragmentation. Join us to learn from advocates working to address these myriad challenges.

Our audience will learn that parks aren't isolated. Pollution, development and policy decisions beyond their borders threaten ecosystems and wildlife.

Session #18
Room 400A

Core Workshop Session
Format: Hands-On Activity

Beyond the Breadlines: Research, Interpretation, & Contemporary Lessons Regarding New Deal Programs
Chair: Brian Forist, Senior Lecturer-Parks, Recreation, & the Outdoors, Indiana University

This session features research on New Deal employment programs for women and others on Michigan's Keweenaw Peninsula. Indiana University students assisting the research needed hands-on work relevant to their location The project now includes research on New Deal activities at the university and across Indiana. Research results are being used to inform site interpretation and consider contemporary lessons on the Keweenaw Peninsula and in Indiana. Participants will engage in sample primary source research with archival materials and will propose ways to interpret New Deal programs. Lessons from the New Deal applied to the present day will be discussed and examples provided by participants. Ways that New Deal programs demonstrate the integration of natural and cultural heritage conservation and their economic values will be discussed.

Participants will learn about New Deal programs, engage in study of archival materials, and apply lessons to interpretation and contemporary concerns.

Session #19
Room 406 The Stone Room

Core Workshop Session
Format: Presentation + Audience Participation

When Youth Don't Fit the Program: Using Cultural Density to Adapt Outdoor Recreation
Presenter: Alexandra Heida

The youth who benefit most are often the first ones excluded from outdoor programming. If youth don't fit the program, how can the program adapt to fit them? A successful program makes room for the youth it was created to serve while keeping everyone safe and supporting their growth. Cultural Density is a way of adjusting a program's structure, support, oversight, and autonomy to fit the youth and the setting. The Cultural Density Model is a developing framework designed to help create more inclusive outdoor leadership programs by focusing on the program environment, relationships, and organizational culture. In this workshop, attendees will learn about Cultural Density, apply the model to real-life scenarios, and contribute their own experiences and ideas to help develop the model.

Attendees/audience members will better understand more avenues of youth retention in their organization's outdoor youth programming.

	Session Title & Chair	1:30–1:50p	1:50–2:10p	2:10–2:30p	Q&A
Session #20 Room 404 Information Sharing Session Format: Contributed Papers	**Conservation Solutions II: Coexisting with Wildlife** *Dave Reynolds, Chair*	Kushaga Meshram & Lincoln Larson / Spatial Gradients of Development in the Peripheries of Tiger Reserve in India	Isabelle Staph / Coexisting with mountain lions in rural Nevada	Michele Remer / Understanding the risk of introducing new species from cruise tourism to Alaska's changing coasts	
	Attendees will gain insight into the reasons behind conflicts between people and wildlife, and what to do about them.				

REFRESHMENT BREAK 3:00–3:30p (30 minutes) Atrium Hot & cold beverages

Wednesday, October 21 3:30–5:00p BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Session #21 Ballroom 413ABC Information Sharing Session Format: Presnentations with Audience Participation	**Refoundation: Does Place-Based Conservation in America Need to Start Over? A Report from a Special Issue of the Journal *Parks Stewardship Forum*** *Chairs: Dave Harmon & Rebecca Conard, Co-Managing Editors, Parks Stewardship Forum • Essayist–Panelists: Fred Herling, Lydia Kiewra, Carla Chung Mattix, Jon Putnam, Stephanie Toothman, Lauren Wenzel, Anne Mitchell Whisnant* The theme of the current issue of *Parks Stewardship Forum* (published September 15) is "Refoundation," the term used by the George Wright Society to describe efforts to identify and fix systemic vulnerabilities that have been relentlessly exploited by the current administration to undermine place-based conservation in the United States – with impacts that have reverberated around the world. The fundamental premise of Refoundation is that trying to go back to the previous status quo will not be enough. Beyond that, a wide range of opinions and options are being explored, both here and elsewhere by a number of other groups. The 17 invited theme essays in this issue of Parks Stewardship Forum represent the first installment in an ongoing conversation in PSF on how to begin to repair the damage that has been inflicted, and what place-based conservation as a whole needs to do to become more resilient. This session will introduce the essays and then we'll have an open discussion on some of the ideas put forward. (On Thursday afternoon we'll host a Sharing Circle on Refoundation.)
	Attendees will be exposed to some of the thinking now going on in several venues on what the future of conservation holds.
Session #22 Room 400A Core Workshop Session Format: Hands-on Activity	**From Silos to Systems: Training Guides to Integrate Natural and Cultural Heritage in Practice** *Chair: Jon Kohl, Executive Director, PUP Collaboratory* Integration of natural and cultural heritage often focuses on dismantling disciplinary silos and building partnerships. While essential, these efforts overlook a less visible but equally important barrier: how guides and guards are trained. Training remains largely reductionist and fragmented, focusing on individual competencies rather than the broader conditions that shape performance. As a result, even well-designed integrative strategies struggle to translate into practice. A holistic training approach addresses this gap by aligning psychological, behavioral, cultural, and institutional domains, enabling guides to operate across nature–culture boundaries and contribute to conservation solutions. This session presents a framework for domain integration and practical steps to design holistic training interventions.
	Attendees will understand that integration fails not only due to institutional silos and weak partnerships, but because frontline training remains reductionist and fragmented.
Session #23 Room 406 The Stone Room Information Sharing Session Format: Sharing Circle / Affinity Meeting	**LGBTQIA2S+: Fostering Community by Sharing Faced Challenges and Successes** *Chairs: Cait Henry, Board Member, George Wright Society; and Brian Forist, Affinity Group Co-Lead, Indiana University* This sharing circle will be the second in-person George Wright Society LGBTQIA2S+ Affinity Group meeting, where the co-leads will discuss the challenges and successes from the inaugural year of the group. Most of the time will be spent welcoming current and new folks into the fray to discuss personal challenges and successes navigating spaces as an LGBTQIA2S+ person or an Ally.
	Attendees/audience members will feel refreshed by joining a community of folks with shared living experiences and feel welcomed in the Affinity Group.

	Session Title & Chair	3:30–3:50p	3:50–4:10p	4:10–4:30p	4:30–4:50p	Q&A
Session #24 Room 404 Information Sharing Session Format: Contributed Papers	**What Are They Thinking? Understanding Visitor Perceptions and Expectations** *Ryan Sharp, Chair*	Sophia Loureiro / Reading the Terrain: ORV User Characteristics and Site Perceptions	Elizabeth Perry & Hunter Lee / Navigating contested pasts: Heritage identity and interpretive shifts at Arlington House	Hardt Bergmann / Artist-in-Residence Programs and the Contemporary State of Art in U.S. Public Lands	Katie Smith & Ryan Sharp* / Sensory Condition Acceptability in Great Smoky Mountains National Park	
	Attendees/audience members will hear case studies on various ways to gain a better understanding of key audiences.					

AN INSIDE LOOK AT UT'S MCCLUNG MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY AND CULTURE 5:30–7:00p Appetizers, bevs

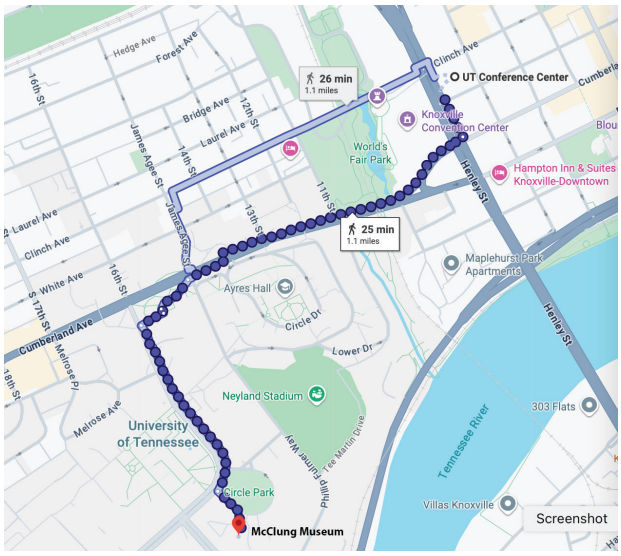
After the day's sessions conclude — and before you head out to dinner — join us for an early-evening visit to the University of Tennessee's McClung Museum of Natural History and Culture. No charge; complementary appetizers and non-alcoholic beverages. We'll hear short presentations from two museum personnel before having the chance to explore the museum.

The McClung Museum is UT's flagship museum; its mission is to "share stories and facilitate the exchange of ideas to awaken curiosity in service of the university and communities connected to Tennessee." The museum has a robust research program anchored to collections in archaeology, arts and culture, malacology, and paleoethnobotany.

Katy Malone, the museum's Manager of Education and Community Engagement, will provide a brief overview of the museum and then talk about its work in the repatriation of Native American materials to Tribal Nations. Then we'll hear from Kristen Womble, the museum's Malacologist. Malacology is the study of mollusks, soft-bodied invertebrates (such as freshwater mussels) that are extremely important to aquatic biodiversity, especially in the southeastern US. With 300,000 catalogued and uncatalogued specimens, McClung's malacology collection is the largest freshwater mollusk collection in Tennessee, and one of the largest in the US.

The Museum is a 25-minute, 1.1-mile walk (over hilly terrain) from the UT Conference Center (see walking map below). If you have a private vehicle, there is free parking adjacent to the Museum. You can also get to the museum using KATBUS's free Downtown Connector.

Looking for more experiences on the UT campus proper? Check out UT Gardens at the west end of campus, one of Tennessee's three state botanical gardens. Free and open to the public.



Thursday, October 22 8:30–10:00a BREAKOUT SESSIONS Coffee & tea available in Atrium

Session #25
Ballroom 413ABC

Core Workshop Session
Format: Hands-on Activity

Expanding the Experience: Integrating Natural and Cultural Heritage through Junior Ranger Programs
Organizer: Joy James, Appalachian State University

This research examines NPS Junior Ranger programs as an underutilized tool for advancing integrated natural and cultural heritage conservation through youth engagement. Analysis of Junior Ranger booklets shows they often rely on fragmented, question-based learning that separates ecological knowledge from cultural meaning. This study identifies experiential, place-based design strategies that connect landscapes, histories, and personal experiences. By emphasizing exploration, observation, and storytelling, these approaches strengthen cognitive and emotional connections to place. This work contributes to interpretation and conservation by positioning youth programs as a key pathway for breaking down silos, fostering holistic stewardship, and supporting more integrated, inclusive conservation outcomes.

During the session, participants will work with real Junior Ranger Booklet activity examples and create prototype modifications or interpretive twists that more intentionally connect natural and cultural heritage. In small groups, attendees will reimagine existing formats, test redesigned versions through quick peer walk-throughs, and reflect on how these interpretive shifts deepen youth meaning-making and stewardship.

Attendees will better understand how experiential Junior Ranger design can integrate natural and cultural heritage to foster holistic stewardship

Session #26
Room 400A

Information Sharing Session
Format: Contributed Papers

Session Title & Chair	8:30–8:50a	8:50–9:10a	9:10–9:30a	9:30–9:50a	Q&A
Responding to Climate Change *Dave Reynolds, Chair*	Rachel Layko et al. / Forecasted development and climate change increase flood risk to Mid-Atlantic battlefield parks	Peizhe Li et al. / Gamification for climate adaptation planning of cultural resources and landscapes	Ann Gallagher / Climate, Management, and Collaboration: Applied Leadership in Extreme Conditions	Katie Peek / Assessing the Vulnerability of National Park Service Infrastructure to Coastal Hazards	

Attendees will learn about innovative ideas to combat climate change … no "climate hushing:" here!

Session #27
Room 406 The Stone Room

Information Sharing Session
Format: Presentation with Audience Participation

Rooted: An Ecology of Gullah Geechee Memory Along the Coast
Presenters: Ariel Kimberley, Executive Director, Park Institute of America; Karen Kasmauski, Board Member, Park Institute of America

"Rooted" is a multimedia storytelling project supported by a 2024 National Park Foundation Storytelling grant. Through a short film and interactive virtual exhibit launching in June, the project centers Gullah Geechee voices and explores themes of home and land, language and voice, environment, community and resistance, and art and craft. These stories illuminate the deep interconnections between cultural heritage and coastal ecosystems, while confronting ongoing challenges including climate change, land loss, and systemic inequities. This panel will share the project's development, partnerships, and outcomes, and consider how storytelling can advance more just, integrated approaches to conserving living cultural landscapes. It would be helpful if participants brought an electronic device, with a preference for devices with larger screens (laptops, iPads, etc.).

Attendees will learn how storytelling advances equitable conservation and deepen their understanding of the Gullah Geechee Corridor.

Session #28
Room 404

Information Sharing Session
Format: Affinity Group Meeting

Publishing for Beginners
Chair: Craig Shafer, US National Park Service (retired); Respondent: Dave Harmon, GWS Executive Director & Co-editor of the open-access journal Parks Stewardship Forum

Trying to publish an article in a professional venue can be a frustrating experience for first-timers. You may not have an experienced coauthor to help you along. This topic is often not taught in graduate schools, but is learned the hard way. Many questions arise. What type of paper to write for a journal: original research, review, case study, or essay? Which journal to submit to? Dealing with journal gatekeepers, reviewers, and editors? What are the publication alternatives to journals? How to publish a scientific paper will not be addressed, but a few tips will be offered. Come prepared to ask questions.

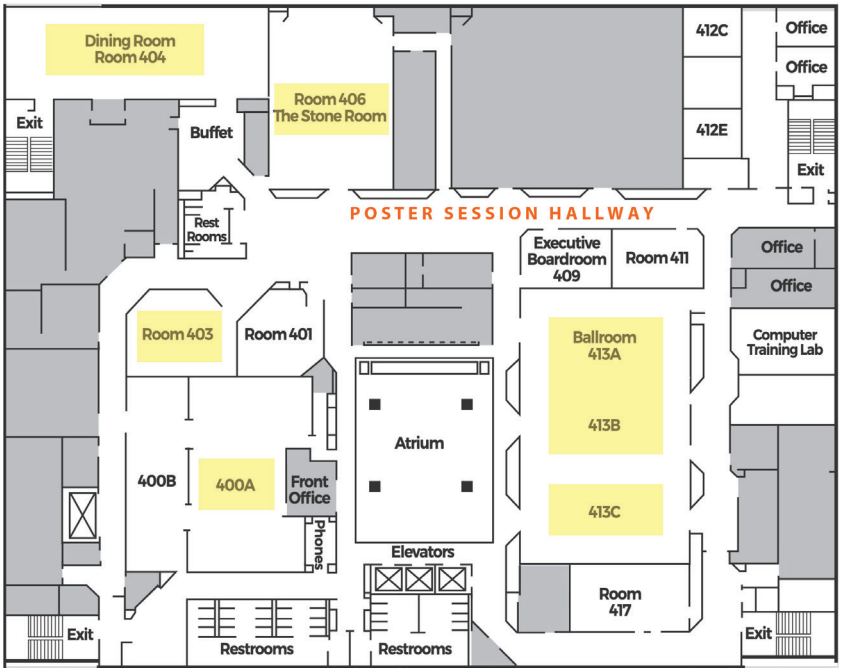
Attendees will be less naive and intimidated when seeking to submit their work to publication venues.

REFRESHMENT BREAK 10:00–10:30a (30 minutes) Atrium Coffee & tea

UT Conference Center 4th Floor

GWS ParkForum meeting rooms highlighted in yellow

Posters will be presented in the space marked "Poster Session Hallway"



Thursday, October 22 10:30a–12:00p BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Session #29 Ballroom 413ABC Core Workshop Session Format: Hands-on Activity	**Project Worthy: An Interactive Exploration of Redlining and Preservation** *Chair: Ariel Kimberley, Executive Director, Park Institute of America* Project Worthy examines how historic redlining continues to shape which places are deemed "worthy of preservation." Using GIS analysis across more than one hundred U.S. cities, the project reveals that National Historic Districts are systematically underrepresented in formerly redlined neighborhoods. This work highlights how cultural heritage designation, investment, and story-telling remain uneven—and why integrating cultural and natural resource stewardship is essential to more holistic, place-based conservation. This interactive workshop will guide participants through the data, invite them to interpret patterns in their own regions, and codevelop strategies to address disparities in preservation practice. Together, we will identify pathways to more equitable, integrated conservation outcomes. *Attendees will gain tools to identify redlining-linked preservation inequities, analyze their communities, and plan more equitable futures.*
Session #30 Room400A Information Sharing Session Format: Sharing Circle	**We Need to Tell a Better Story: Reframing Global Issues Through a Local Lens** *Elizabeth Metraux, Director of Content Strategy for the UN Foundation Better World Campaign* As skepticism toward global cooperation grows, the challenge is not only one of policy, but of language. For years, advocates have led with global impact—conservation wins, international partnerships and big-picture outcomes. That framing is increasingly missing the mark with domestic audiences. This conversation argues for a shift: translating global issues into what they mean closer to home, with a clearer focus on tangible value and economic return—from supply chain stability and disaster response to public health and environmental protection. Drawing on real-world campaign examples and message testing, we explore what resonates, what falls flat, and how reframing global work in local, meaningful terms can help build durable public support for international engagement to protect our shared spaces. *Attendees will see why global framing falls short—and how local impact messaging can sway public opinion.*

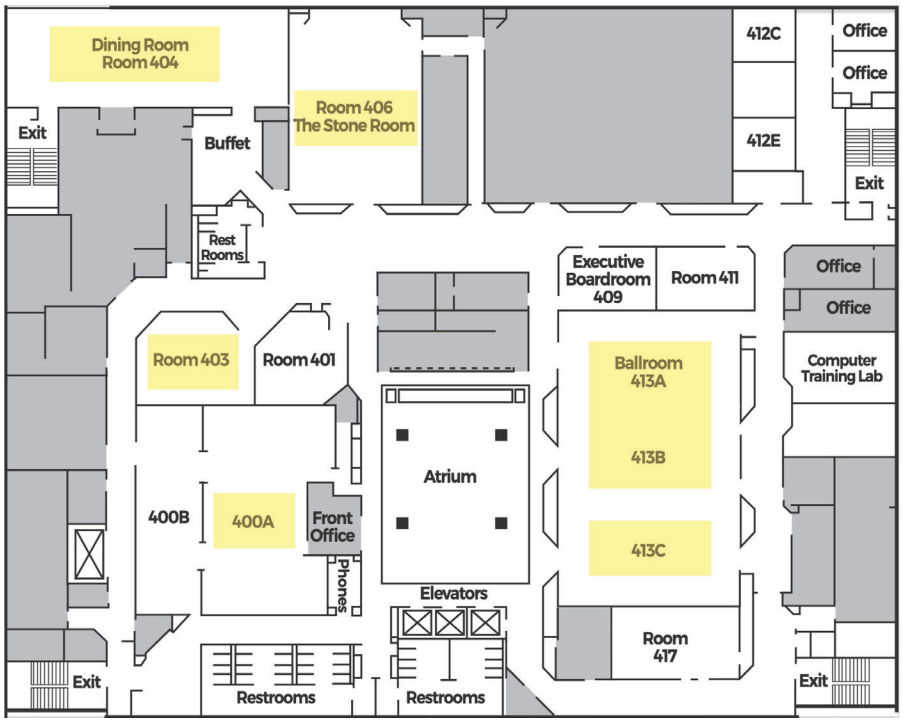
	Session Title & Chair	10:30–10:50a	10:50–11:10a	11:10–11:30a	Q&A
Session #31 Room 406 The Stone Room Information Sharing Session Format: Contributed Papers	**Conservation Areas Managed by Colleges and Universities** *Lauren Wenzel, Chair*	David White & Elizabeth Baldwin / Developing a Spatial Database for Signage Inventory and Management in a University Forest	Ann Gallagher / Academic Conservation Lands: Connecting People, Place, and Stewardship	Elizabeth Baldwin / Academic Forests in the US: building a database of understanding	
	Attendees will learn that protected spaces overseen by institutions of higher learning are more widespread and impactful than you might imagine.				

	Session Title & Chair	10:30–10:50a	10:50–11:10a	11:10–11:30a	11:30–11:50a	Q&A
Session #32 Room 404 Information Sharing Session Format: Contributed Papers	**Building Mutual Support** *Lydia Kiewra, Chair*	Zoey Crossley et al. / Scaled Place Attachment Across Campus Greenspaces	Niki Nicholas & Matt Hudson / Building Backyard Buy-In: Working to Ensure that Gateway Community Members are Park Advocates	Shelby Marocco et al. / People among Plants: Assessments of welcomeness and belonging at a Mid-Michigan Botanical Garden	David Huff / Trail Magic: The Cultural Infrastructure That Sustains Public Lands	
	Attendees will hear about various projects that achieve one of the ideals of place-based conservation: having the protected area and the surrounding community support one another.					

LUNCH BREAK, POSTER TEAR-DOWN 12:00–1:30p (90 minutes)

UT Conference Center 4th Floor

GWS ParkForum meeting rooms highlighted in yellow



Thursday, October 22 1:30–3:00p THE GWS STUDENT SUMMIT: PLENARY SESSION	
Ballroom 413ABC Facilitated, open-mic discussion	**The GWS 2026 Student Summit: Setting an Agenda to Meet the Moment (OPEN TO ALL REGISTRANTS)** *Facilitators: Cait Henry, Professor, Lake Superior State University; Seth T. Kannarr, PhD Graduate, University of Tennessee* We find ourselves at an extraordinary moment in conservation in the US ... one that is reverberating around the world. In this turbulent socio-political climate, the generation of conservation leaders who will soon emerge — our fledgling champions of place-based conservation — will be challenged like never before. In this, the final plenary session of the GWS ParkForum 2026 workshop, a few of our many incredible students within GWS will discuss their research and their visions for Meeting the Moment. Through a facilitated, open-mic discussion, these student summiteers will respond to a three-round prompt that will set the stage for the collaborative problem-solving that will begin to take shape in the Working Session later this afternoon. Students will respond to three questions: 1. What is the most pressing issue for you? 2. What solutions to that issue — and to other pressing problems — interest you most? 3. What components of the workshop have been most helpful to you in Meeting the Moment? Through this discussion, students will set the agenda for the Student Summit Working Session to follow in live time. *The session is open to all registrants.* For those non-students who are attending as observers, following the Refreshment Break you are invited to come to an informal Sharing Circle discussion on Meeting the Moment Through Refoundation — part of which will involve reflecting on the student summiteers's priorities as just revealed during this Plenary.

REFRESHMENT BREAK 3:00–3:30p (30 minutes) Atrium Hot & cold beverages

Thursday, October 22 THE GWS STUDENT SUMMIT: WORKING SESSION • SHARING CIRCLE DISCUSSION	
Ballroom 413ABC	**The GWS 2026 Student Summit: Working Session (3:30–6:00p)** *Facilitators: Seth T. Kannarr, PhD Graduate, University of Tennessee; Cait Henry, Professor, Lake Superior State University* Summiteers will continue their collaboration as they begin the initial stages of planning a thought piece on Meeting the Moment that will be published in the UC Berkeley/GWS open-access journal, Parks Stewardship Forum (https://escholarship.org/uc/psf). Pursuing the most pressing issue(s) as identified in the preceding Plenary, students will have a facilitated discussion on how to take their experience at ParkForum and use it as the launching pad for further cross-university student networking and gaining collaborative publishing experience. Our agenda: 3:30–3:45: Welcome and Expectations 3:45–4:30: Facilitated discussion on student experience at ParkForum and beyond 4:30-6:00: Break into smaller groups based on interest and bandwidth; food/refreshments provided
Room 406 The Stone Room	**Meeting the Moment Through Refoundation: A Conversation on the Future of Place-Based Conservation in America (3:30–4:30p)** *Facilitators: Dave Harmon, Executive Director George Wright Society; Fred Herling, President, George Wright Society* Those workshop participants not involved in the Student Summit are invited to come and join an informal, collegial discussion on the future of the parks, protected/conserved areas, cultural sites, and other forms of place-based conservation in the US and beyond. Come share your ideas on where place-based conservation needs to go! We'll start off with a short introduction to Refoundation, the term GWS uses to denote a thorough reconsideration of our systems for protecting natural areas and cultural sites (for more, see Session #21), before opening the circle to your sharings — and reflecting on what we heard from the student Summiteers in the preceding Plenary.

Thank you

The George Wright Society acknowledges that the land upon which the University of Tennessee-Knoxville is built is part of the traditional territory of the Tsalagi peoples (now Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, and United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians), Tsoyahá peoples (Yuchi, Muscogee Creek), and Shawnee peoples. We thank them all for taking care of this place down the centuries. GWS also thanks our host institution, the University of Tennessee, for welcoming us to Knoxville.

GWS ParkForum 2026 was planned by a Program Team convened by the GWS. We are deeply grateful to the following Team members, who spent many hours over the past year putting the program together, including evaluating submissions, arranging field trips, and much more:

Ashley D'Antonio • Chris Groves • Clay Guerry • Cait Henry • Fred Herling • Seth Kannarr • Lydia Kiewra • Linda Mazzu • Ryan Sharp • Alan Spears • Isabelle Staph

About the George Wright Society

GWS honors the legacy of George Meléndez Wright, who founded the science program of the US National Park Service and was the first person of Hispanic heritage to hold a professional position in the agency. We strive to be the premier organization connecting peoples, places, knowledge, and ideas to foster excellence in cultural and natural resource management, research, protection, and interpretation in place-based conservation. Drawing on core values of integrity, respect, inclusion, and collaborative curiosity, we unite diverse communities around a common passion for protecting Earth's natural and cultural heritage. If you aren't already a GWS member, please consider joining! Visit us at georgewrightsociety.org.

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POSTER SESSION Monday, October 19, 1:30p through Thursday, October 22, 12:00p Poster Session Hallway

Poster Session
Poster Session Hallway (see map)

Set-up: Monday, October 19, 10:00a–1:30p

Posters available for continuous viewing between Set-up and Tear-Down

Poster Reception and time for presenters to stand by their posters: Tuesday, October 20, 5:00–6:00p

Tear-down: Thursday, October 22, 12:00–1:30p

POSTERS IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER BY LEAD AUTHOR

Dylan Crysler et al. / Metropark delights today and tomorrow: Recreation and conservation draws in Southeast Michigan
Julia Daniell / From Dispatch to Data: Predictive Modeling & Trends in Search & Rescue in Grand Canyon National Park
Mikael Deliyski et al. / Appreciating Values: Climate's Impact on Visitor Use Perception in Huron-Clinton Metroparks
Gary Davis & Dorothy A. Davis / The Photographer's Frame: Visual Stories of Protected Area Stewardship
Sweta Dixit et al. / Comparing the Drivers of Public Tolerance for Red Wolves and Florida Panthers
George Wright Society / The Stewardship Archive
George Wright Society / The RISE Declarations Project
Isabel Haake / Understanding Barriers and Facilitators to Appalachian Trail Thru Hiker Food Storage Behavior
David Huff / Photography as Stewardship: George Masa and the Cultural Infrastructure of Conservation
Joy James / Youth as Stewards: Junior Ranger Engagement as a Pathway to Integrated Conservation Outcomes
Madison Janes / Public Park, Private Investment: Economic Value Through Partnership at Lakeshore Park
Vishal Kennedy / Assessing the Representation of U.S. Terrestrial Ecosystems in Protected Areas
Carly Knudson et al. / Feasibility of Viewshed Analysis as a Visitor Use Management Tool Along the Blue Ridge Parkway
Abigail Lourdraj et al. / Understanding Mt. LeConte Trail System Visitation in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park
Annabelle Mayes et al. / How Do People Define Antarctic Wilderness?
Cordelia Norris / Coloring Wonder: Enlivening Environmental Education Through Art, Community, and an Optional Pint
Hassan Salem et al. / Understanding Visitor Characteristics and Visitation Patterns at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore: A Case Study of Crystal River

FIELD TRIPS Monday, October 19 & Friday, October 23 (advance registration required)

Monday, October 19 • 8:45a–Noon • Knoxville's Urban Wilderness ($10) • Trip Leaders: Wes Soward & Clay Guerry

Knoxville's Urban Wilderness is a national example of how recreation, conservation, and economic development can successfully coexist to enhance quality of life. Envisioned in 2018 and completed in 2026, Urban Wilderness Gateway Park serves as the grand entrance and welcoming front door to the Urban Wilderness system. The park features playgrounds, a bike park, and traditional park amenities designed to serve visitors of all ages and abilities. Our tour of the Urban Wilderness begins here, setting the stage for the diverse outdoor experiences that follow. From the Gateway Park, we will head to Augusta Quarry to explore one of Knoxville's most striking examples of industrial reuse—reimagined today as a vibrant recreational destination that blends the area's industrial heritage with natural beauty and outdoor recreation.

Gather 8:45am at: the workshop Registration Table. We'll then proceed as a group by UT van to Gateway Park. • **Bring:** Backpack or similar to carry your water bottle, snacks, other personal items • **Wear**: Appropriate attire/shoes for walking, including warm clothing and/or raingear as necessary • **Difficulty:** Easy. The walking tour will be punctuated with stops. • **Return:** The trip will be back at the Conference Center by 12:00 noon to give participants time for lunch before the Opening Plenary Sessions start at 1:30pm. *The trip will go rain or shine. POSTED OCTOBER 2: THIS TRIP IS NOW FULL.*

Friday, October 23 • 9:00a–5:00p • Great Smoky Mountains National Park ($25) • Trip Leaders: Ryan Sharp & Seth Kannarr

Great Smoky Mountains National Park (official map here) is one of the world's premier protected areas — and a very crowded place. Our trip to the Smokies will begin with a stop in Townsend, one of the park's three principal gateway communities and least commercialized. We'll stop here for a discussion of their approach to mass tourism before proceeding to a local establishment for lunch (pay on your own). Then we head into the park for the afternoon. The in-park itinerary is still being finalized, but may include a stop at Elkmont/Metcalf Bottoms. When we exit the main park proper via Wear Valley Road, we may stop at the historic Little Greenbrier Schoolhouse site, and then head back to Knoxville via Gatlinburg and Pigeon Forge — providing a contrast with Townsend's approach as a gateway community.

Gather 9:00am at: the main entrance to the UT Conference Center • **Provided:** Transport by UT van • **Bring:** Daypack or similar along with your water bottle, snacks, binoculars, other personal items • We'll have **Lunch** as a group at a local establishment where you can order off the menu (pay on your own) • **Wear**: Appropriate attire/shoes for walking, including warm clothing and/or raingear as necessary • **Difficulty:** Easy. Once within the national park we will make some stops and provide time for participants to take short walks, all easy. • **Return:** The trip will be back at the Conference Center by 5:00pm. *The trip will go rain or shine. POSTED OCTOBER 2: THIS TRIP IS NOW FULL.*