



a vision for north america's next great regional trail system



a publication by the  
**Tennessee RiverLine Partnership**



# THE TENNESSEE RIVER

From Knoxville, TN, to Paducah, KY, the Tennessee River stretches 652 miles and touches four states: Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi and Kentucky. Its 41,000 square mile watershed is home to more than 4.5 million residents, over half of which live in communities along its banks.

The Tennessee River, its tributary system and its contributing watershed form a diverse territory defined by celebrated and iconic landscapes. High mountains, rolling hills and gentle valleys, highland rims and coastal plains bid the river passage from its origin in East Tennessee to its confluence with the Ohio River in Western Kentucky.

A river of such splendor deserves to be seen and experienced by all. The Tennessee River, as one of North America's great rivers, merits the development of a great river trail.



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# STORIES WORTH TELLING

The Tennessee River Valley is home to some of our nation's most important histories, modern accomplishments and ecological treasures.

It was on the banks of the Tennessee River where the Cherokee Indians began their journey westward, forced from their ancestral lands on the Trail of Tears, a landscape that was later host to pivotal battles of the American Civil War.

The landscape of the Tennessee River is also home to important works of the Works Progress Administration and Civilian Conservation Corps, and the monumental, multi-functional infrastructures of the Tennessee Valley Authority. The initiatives of the TVA helped change the course of world history and continue to shape the development of an entire region.

There are more fish, insects, mussels, snails and other forms of life in the Tennessee River and its tributary waterways than there are in any other river system in North America. More than 100 species of freshwater mussels and 270 species of fish call the Tennessee River system home, including threatened and endangered species, as well as species not found anywhere else in the world.

The stories of the Tennessee River are stories worth telling.



# A RIVER AT RISK

Rivers are the foundations of our communities, sustaining populations and economies that have sought to tame and harness them over time. The Tennessee River Valley has become one of the most desirable places to live, work and play in the country. However, the demands that communities place on the river, coupled with a changing climate, threatens its future health and resiliency, and in turn our own.

Land use patterns along the river separates it from the communities it supports. This separation limits the public's ability to experience the river and witness its beauty, while the degradation of the river's banks and water quality compromises the health of its fragile ecosystems.

When our social consciousness and economies drift away from our river heritage, communities once intimately linked by this conduit of commerce, people and ideas stand to lose their sense of connection to one another, to the river and to their identity as part of something much larger: the Tennessee River Valley.

The great challenges of the river's present offer great opportunities for its future. By reintroducing the valley to its great river, the Tennessee RiverLine seeks to inspire new thinking amongst its many generations of committed stewards—both young and old—about our relationship with this valuable resource.







# IMAGINE A PROJECT THAT...

**Provides** unprecedented public access to the Tennessee River

**Connects** existing river experiences

**Enhances** the visibility of river communities and destinations

**Reveals** the rich history of the river system, its watershed, and the people who have called it home

**Reforges** relationships between communities and the river

**Connects** isolated experiences

**Stimulates** new interests and investments in the river's future

**Protects** threatened resources and aquatic biodiversity

**Heals** degraded landscapes and ecosystems



PADUCAH, KY

on water

on wheels

on foot

652  
miles long

# THE TENNESSEE RIVERLINE

KNOXVILLE, TN

A continuous, multi-modal system of trail experiences stretching along the Tennessee River from Knoxville, TN, to Paducah, KY, that...



**celebrates** the beauty, diversity, and history of the Tennessee River Valley



**connects** the people and communities of the valley to each other, to our river heritage, and to the Tennessee River landscape



**catalyzes** new investments, economic opportunities, social health, and ecological stewardship

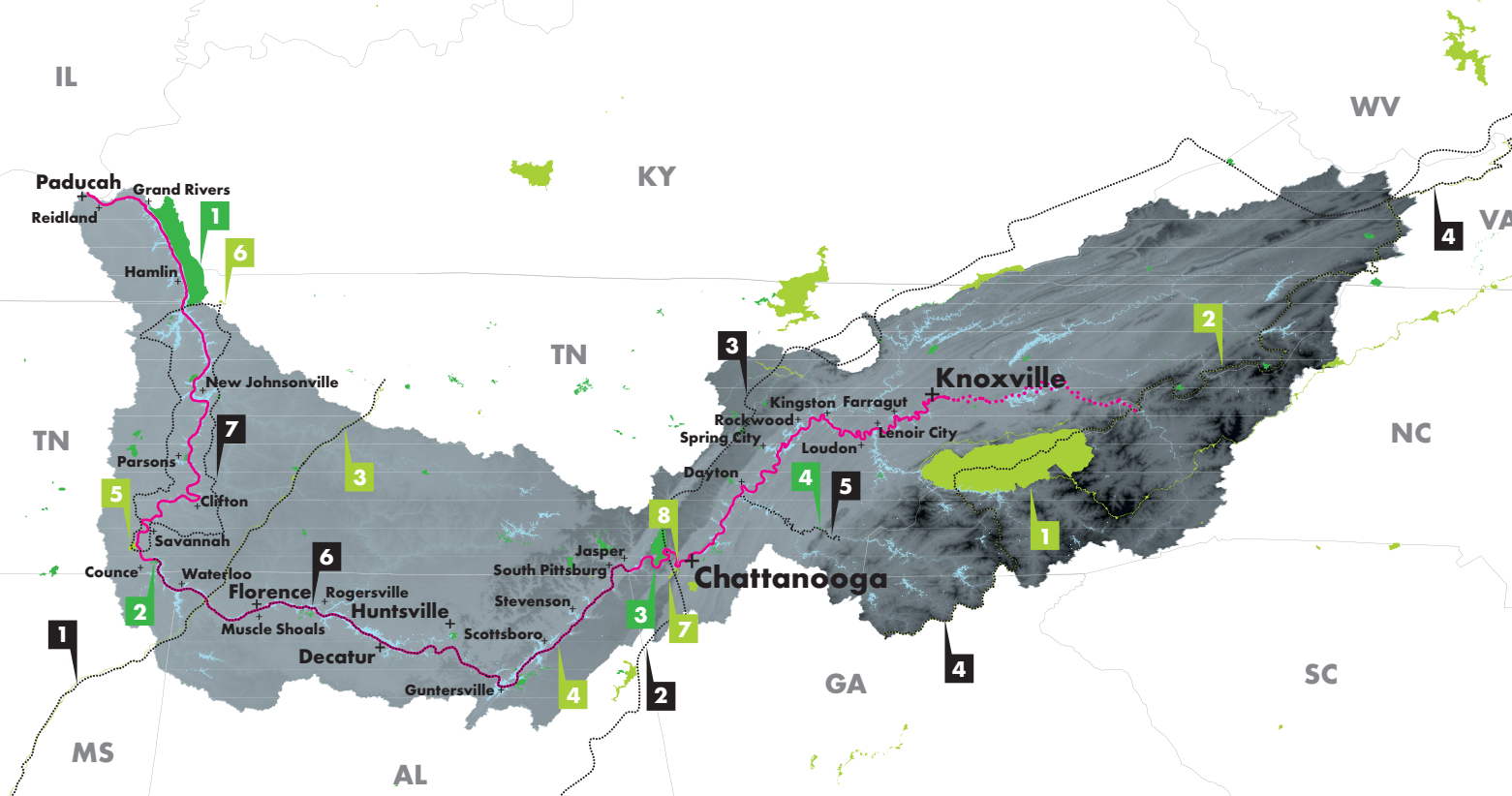


# RIVER CONNECTIONS

The Tennessee RiverLine seeks to reconnect people and communities in the Tennessee River Valley by initiating regional and watershed-wide partnerships, reestablishing upriver and downriver relationships, and reclaiming the river's edge across urbanized, rural and natural landscapes to provide for an unprecedented level of public access.







# A VISION

The Tennessee RiverLine is a continuous system of hiking, biking, and on-water experiences along the 652-mile reach of the Tennessee River from Knoxville, TN, to Paducah, KY.

The system will serve as a catalyst for economic, social and environmental impact in the four states and dozens of cities, towns and rural communities along the Tennessee River, as well as the more than 4.5 million residents who call the Tennessee River Valley home.

Beyond recreational, environmental and economic potential, the project embodies the spirit of innovation and regional collaboration that is our legacy in the Tennessee River Valley.

- 1 Great Smoky Mountain National Park
- 2 Appalachian Trail
- 3 Natchez Trace PKWY + National Scenic Trail
- 4 Trail of Tears National Historic Trail
- 5 Shiloh National Military Park
- 6 Fort Donelson National Battlefield
- 7 Chickamauga + Chattanooga National Military Park
- 8 Moccasin Bend National Archaeological Park

- 1 Natchez Trace
- 2 Great Eastern Trail
- 3 Cumberland Trail
- 4 Appalachian Trail
- 5 Hiwassee River Blueway
- 6 Alabama Scenic Rivers Trail
- 7 TN River Scenic Byway

- 1 Land Between the Lakes SP
- 2 Pickwick Landing SP
- 3 Prentice Cooper SP
- 4 Hiwassee Ocoee SP

- Tennessee RiverLine
- ..... Priority Extension
- Existing Trails
- National Park Service Units
- State Parks



# A TRAIL UNLIKE ANY OTHER

The Tennessee RiverLine is unlike any other trail system of similar length. It will connect and expand access to the Tennessee River Valley's scenic public lands, including those managed by the Tennessee Valley Authority, the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, State Parks, and local governments. The project also interfaces deliberately and strategically with the landscapes where 21st century challenges posed to the vitality of the river system manifest, as it is in these landscapes where the opportunities to mitigate or overcome those same challenges can be found.

Initial stretches of the trail will be comprised of existing trails, greenways and blueways that agree to be identified as part of the larger trail system.

Investments in new recreational trails and multi-modal transportation routes, as well as shared use agreements with public and private property owners fill trail system gaps. Reinvestment in existing trails, greenways and blueways will enhance user safety, experience and connection to the Tennessee River landscape.





# TRAIL USERS

From adventure enthusiasts to casual bike-riders, there is a trail experience on the Tennessee RiverLine for everyone.

For a local user, the experience might become an integral part of a daily commute or exercise routine. As a result of the RiverLine's pedestrian orientation and the supporting networks of multi-modal infrastructures and lifestyle amenities it catalyzes, residents of trail communities benefit daily from enhanced mobility, social connectivity and increased physical activity.

Week[end] warriors may spend a weekend or longer on the Tennessee River, experiencing an extended section of the trail during a single trip. The RiverLine enables these adventurers to discover remote river reaches and unique destinations to which access has previously been limited.

Trail heroes seek the ultimate adventure of conquering the entire RiverLine in one continuous trip. Recreation enthusiasts from around the world will be invited to travel to the valley and conquer North America's next great long-distance trail, one that provides an east-west connection between other regional trails such as the Cumberland Trail and the Natchez Trace.



# PAVILIONS

Ranging from basic shelters in remote campgrounds to architectural icons in Tennessee River communities, RiverLine pavilions will provide shelter, river access and experiences, and provisions for trail users, while also serving as multi-purpose economic drivers and tourism destinations for host communities.

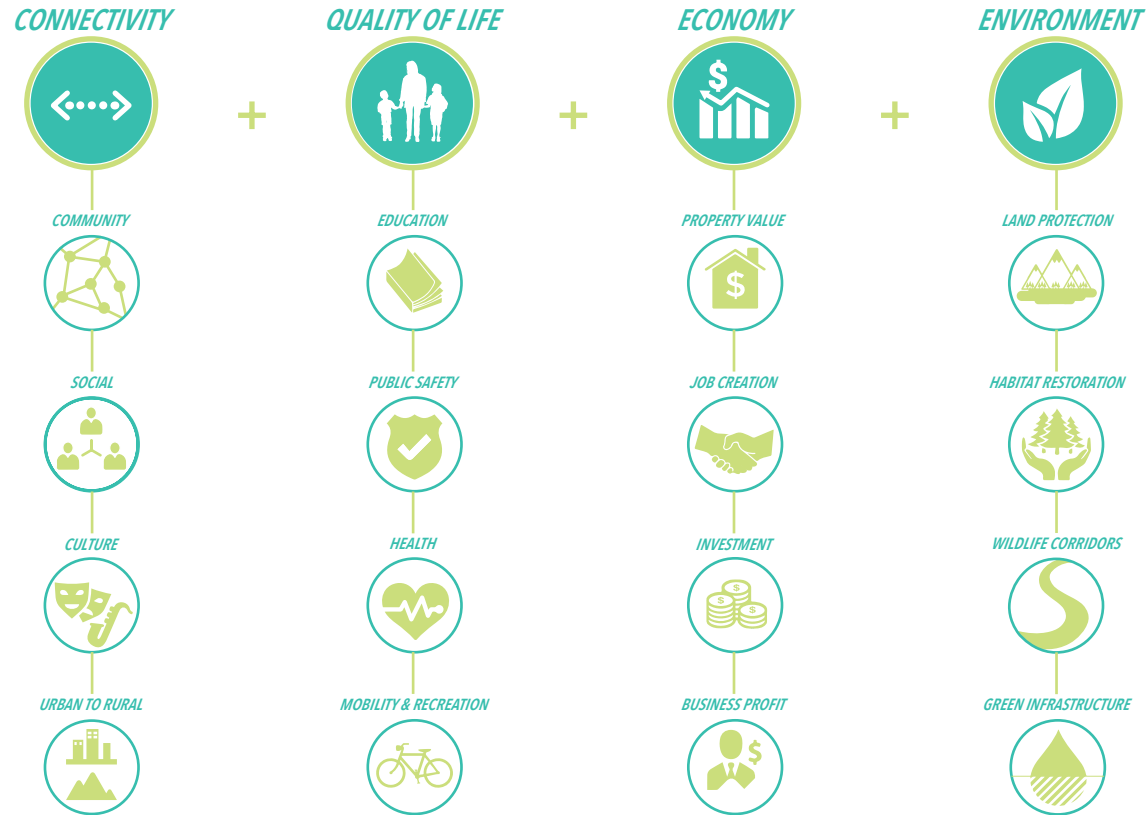
Pavilions are programmed and designed to suit the needs and contexts of the trail communities in which they are located, serving the trail users and residents that visit them. It is at a trail pavilion where a local user rents a kayak for an afternoon paddle or attends a gallery opening of river-inspired art; where a week[en]d warrior soaks in a panoramic view or beds down for an evening's rest; and where a trail hero replenishes supplies or learns about an important cultural landmark. Pavilions can function as

- observatories and scenic overlooks
- overnight shelters and hostels
- bathroom/restroom facilities with potable water
- bike and kayak staging, storage and rental
- trail mode (hike, bike, paddle) transition points
- multi-use exhibition and event spaces
- classrooms and laboratories
- interpretive visitor centers on water or land
- retail centers for trail provisions and gear



Kayak Pavilion at Long Dock Park  
by Architecture Research Office

## A CATALYST FOR...



# MORE THAN A TRAIL

The Tennessee RiverLine is much more than a recreational trail: it is a strategic investment in economic, social and environmental infrastructure that has the potential to transform communities and the river landscape.

Investments in local trails and regional systems will stimulate new economies, businesses and amenities that benefit the project's diverse user groups and communities. Large cities and small towns alike will benefit from tourists who come to enjoy river, its diverse communities and unique cultural resources. Residents will appreciate enhanced transportation and recreation systems that promote social connectivity and healthy lifestyles.

As access to and enjoyment of the river is enhanced, trail users gain a heightened recognition of the contemporary challenges it faces. The Tennessee RiverLine ushers in an era of renewed awareness, ownership, and stewardship of the Tennessee River, its threatened landscapes and cultural resources, and unrivaled aquatic biodiversity.



# TRAIL BLAZERS

The Tennessee RiverLine Partnership is a diverse group of river advocates committed to building a shared vision for the Tennessee RiverLine and stewarding it toward implementation.

This growing partnership, comprised of tourism professionals, scholars, planners, agency leaders and non-profit directors, is driven by the support of the following entities for the Tennessee RiverLine vision:

- The Nature Conservancy
- Tennessee Valley Authority
- Tennessee River Valley Stewardship Council
- Southeast Tennessee Tourism Association
- University of Tennessee School of Landscape Architecture
- UT Chattanooga Interdisciplinary Geospatial Technology Lab
- Tennessee Department of Health
- Tennessee State Parks
- City of Knoxville
- Lose & Associates
- River Discovery Center (Paducah, KY)
- Tennessee Aquarium

The initial phase of trail planning and organizational development is being conducted with the assistance of the National Park Service through the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program.





# THE PATH FORWARD

The Tennessee RiverLine is an idea in early developmental stages that will be shared with and shaped by individuals and organizations across the river valley. It is a long-term initiative that will require time, talent and financial backing from a range of stakeholders, as well as engagement and commitment from the states, counties and communities it will touch.

The Tennessee RiverLine Partnership welcomes your support to:

**Share** the project concept with others  
**Communicate** your own ideas, insights and suggestions  
**Connect** us with allied initiatives & potential partners  
**Participate** in project outreach meetings and events  
**Contribute** financially

Want to keep up to date about the vision, the partnership and upcoming opportunities to support the RiverLine? Feel free to email us at [info@tnriverline.org](mailto:info@tnriverline.org), or visit us at [tnriverline.org](http://tnriverline.org).

Find us on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter @tnriverline.







# A SYMBOL

The Tennessee RiverLine is a symbol of what is possible as we renew the spirit of innovation and regional collaboration that is our legacy in the Tennessee River Valley. This vision inspires us to reconnect with that legacy as stewards for one of North America's great rivers into the 21st century.



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KNOXVILLE LOUISVILLE FARRAGUT LENOIR CITY LOUDON KINGSTON  
ROCKWOOD SPRING CITY DAYTON CHATTANOOGA SIGNAL MOUNTAIN  
JASPER KIMBALL SOUTH PITTSBURGH • **ALABAMA** • BRIDGEPORT STEVENSON  
SCOTTSBORO LANGSTON GUNTERSVILLE HUNTSVILLE DECATUR ROGERSVILLE  
KILLEN FLORENCE MUSCLE SHOALS WATERLOO • **MISSISSIPPI** • EASTPORT  
IUKA • **TENNESSEE** • RED SULPHUR SPRINGS COUNCE CRUMP SAVANNAH  
SALTILLO CLIFTON PARSONS NEW JOHNSONVILLE JOHNSONVILLE BIG SANDY  
• **KENTUCKY** • HAMLIN GRAND RIVERS CALVERT CITY REIDLAND PADUCAH