

# editorial

Tennessee Conservationist Magazine, July 1974

NPS  
#234

## Save Our Streams

by Mack S. Prichard, *Asst. Director, Educational Services*  
*Department of Conservation Division*

"In 1760 D. Boone cilled a bar on tree," in what is present-day Sullivan County. The ancient beech on which Daniel carved his cryptic words has since blown down, but nearby is another place that also served him well.

Shortly after that "bar cill" Boone was surprised by a band of Cherokees. The Indians hotly pursued him for hunting on their land. In his race for life, Daniel got ahead and waded through creek water to throw the attackers off his trail. Running down each bank to spot his tracks, the Indians passed a low waterfall and continued down the stream. Left behind, squeezing under a rocky ledge, lay Boone and his rifle, safely hid beneath the water's spray.

Just off U.S. 23 near Boone Creek School, this landmark of human ingenuity still flows, draining a pastoral valley. A few maples, elms and white-limbed sycamores shade its rapid-flowing and quiet pools. Today, cows drink where Boone hunted bear, and boys wade where he hid. Sun perch and stoneroller minnows live in its clear water. Violets and Star-of-Bethlehem bloom in abundance along the banks.

For years, only a red barn graced the scene, and although the school and highway were nearby, Boone's Falls remained a peaceful retreat amid the congested Tri-Cities. But more people needed more land to develop. Lately, a packing house and several new brick homes have been built overlooking the creek. Boone would find it harder to hide from their view than the Indians'.

Thoughtless "libations" of beer cans and picnic litter left behind make "No Trespassing" signs necessary. Silt and foam in the water are mute testimony to the fact that eroding fields upstream are losing valuable nutrients to the Gulf of Mexico. Wood ducks find it harder to feed without disturbance and have fewer hollow trees to

nest in.

All these changes are gradual to us and hardly noticeable. They would be shocking to Boone or the Indians. Boone or Crockett would want to move on for elbow room.

Our problem today is that the frontier has disappeared from Tennessee—if not from the world. "Be it ever so humble, there is no place left . . . but home." Only those tag ends of our great wilderness, like Boone Falls, remain.

We need to preserve these landmarks of our heritage as a source of inspiration. A stream is a stimulator. It wets us with daring and floats ideas on its surface. Its variety and serenity give us vitamins of wilderness essential to great character. America needs more Boone- and Crockett-type leadership. We must start by saving our streams.

John Drinkwater put it very aptly when he said:

"When we defile the pleasant streams  
And destroy the wild bird's abiding  
place

We massacre a million dreams  
And cast our spittle in God's face."

How fragile are the streams with their slender corridors of life-giving waters! Here grow the lushest flowers, the tallest trees; here lies the most fertile soil; here lives the wildlife. And here, too, are the oldest campsites of man. What an irretrievable mistake to mess up these living corridors with pollution, pavement, dredging and dams!

The NASA moon trips have shown how lifeless space can be and how fragile "spaceship" earth is. How round and finite is our world, how limited our clean air, water, and green space. How interconnected all things are.

How quickly we can lose it all.

Daniel Boone could go west; we can't.  
We have only here and now.



# editorial

## AS LONG AS THE RIVER SHALL RUN

Guest Editorial

by Mack S. Prichard\*

\*State Archaeologist  
Tennessee Conservation Department  
Conservationist Magazine  
March -1973



We laughed at the Indian's price for Manhattan—\$24 in trinkets. But the Indians laughed at the paleface notion of selling the land. "The land is our mother; the river is the source of life; how could we sell this?" The Indians lived what Aldo Leopold advised in his *Sand County Almanac*: "Only when we regard nature as a community to which we belong, rather than a commodity which belongs to us, will we make progress in conservation."

"As long as the river shall run and the grass shall grow" was the binding agreement in many United States/Indian treaties. Although the Red Man kept his word, we could not—and even today we covet Alaskan oil in the last Indian territory. Our early western migration plowed the prairies; now it has turned back to dam the rivers, at times callously insensitive to nature's laws and Indian rights.

The land ethic of White and Red Man contrasted vividly in Tennessee. In 1759 the first English settlers at Fort Loudoun found the Cherokee living comfortably within their means in scattered towns along the Little Tennessee River. The men hunted and fished for their meat in the rich valley, and the women worked garden vegetables which later became our staples. But our pioneers began to clear the forests and plow the slopes to improve the land. So many settlers crowded into Tennessee that by 1838 there was "no room" for the Indians; consequently they were brutally evicted by order of President Andrew Jackson. More than 4,000 Cherokees died on the infamous Trail of Tears to Oklahoma.

Less than one hundred years later the consequences of our improvements began to evict us. Disastrous floods and depleted soil forced resettlement and then TVA dams to meet the emergency. The dams stopped the floods but unfortunately covered many scenic and historic sites as well. Even now the Tellico Dam under construction near

Lenoir City threatens to flood the last concentration of Overhill Cherokee heritage.

Concerned that the old ways were dying out, the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Nation petitioned Governor Winfield Dunn to stop the destruction of their sacred towns and burial grounds. The Governor had already urged TVA to shelve the project because it entails loss of fertile soil, a productive trout fishery, and historical sites. Governor Dunn said that, with its proximity to the Smokies, "The Little Tennessee could best serve all Tennesseans by remaining a scenic river gateway to the wilderness lands beyond. I will do all I can to stop this dam."

TVA declined his request; but a citizen lawsuit—filed by the Association for the Preservation of the Little Tennessee and the Environmental Defense Fund—has obtained a temporary injunction to stop work on the dam.

We hope Americans may live more gently on Mother Earth, for today's inflation is a consequence of our own waste. In the past, great empires have fallen from their abuse of the land. Archaeology shows that where mankind has ignored nature's laws he has left desert mountains and dried-up rivers.

Perhaps history will view the Tellico controversy from the Indian's perspective who wrote:

"Paleface, he cut down trees, make too big tepee, plow hill, water wash, wind blow soil, grass gone, stream gone, squaw gone, whole place gone to hell. No pig, no pony, no corn, no chuckaway.

"Indian, he no plow the land, keep grass, buffalo eat grass, Indian eat buffalo, hide make plenty big tepee, make moccasins. All time Indian no hunt job, no work, no hitchhike, no ask relief, no build dam, no give damn.

"White man—he is crazy." ●