



## DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION

401 Church Street  
Nashville, TN 37243-0435  
(615) 532-0109  
*TN.gov/environment*  
**Jim Fyke, Commissioner**

Tennessee is one of the most bio-diverse inland states in the nation. The Volunteer State features the lush peaks and valleys of the Southern Appalachian Mountains, the rolling hills and pastoral landscape of Middle Tennessee and the rich floodplains of the Mississippi River. Protection of these natural resources and the health and safety of Tennessee citizens from environmental hazards are the responsibilities of the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation.

The Department of Environment and Conservation is legally required and ethically committed to protecting and improving the quality of Tennessee's air, land and water. The department meets its mission through managing regulatory programs that set standards for air, water and soil quality; providing assistance to businesses and communities in areas ranging from recreation to waste management; and through a series of programs to inventory, interpret and protect Tennessee's rich natural, historical and archaeological heritage.

Department programs and initiatives promote personal and corporate environmental accountability, education of citizens and the regulated community regarding natural resource issues, and strong and effective enforcement of state and federal environmental laws.

The department also oversees one of the state's greatest treasures: the award-winning Tennessee State Parks system. Tennessee is home to 53 state parks that provide a full range of recreational opportunities and experiences for the nearly 25 million visits they host each year. Whether one is seeking a quiet hike in the woods, a safe and friendly campground for their family, a natural setting for a company conference, or a good night's rest in a modern inn — it can be found in a Tennessee State Park.

Unique areas with rare or unusual flora, fauna or other ecological features are set aside as state natural areas. In 2009, Tennessee has 80 state natural areas totaling more than 116,000 acres. State natural areas are set aside and managed for the protection of the natural resources they contain, whereas state parks are managed for many uses including recreation.

In addition to protecting natural resources, Tennessee State Parks and natural areas are economic engines for the communities they border and for the state in general. In fact, all of the department's work is directly tied to the economic well being of Tennessee. Families and businesses are drawn to Tennessee because of its abundant clean water, its beautiful natural scenery and its proximity to the economic centers of the Southeast. Meeting increased demand for environmental protection while ensuring a strong and growing economy requires balance and creative solutions to complex, ever-changing concerns.

Information and services regarding environmental programs may be obtained from the department's eight Environmental Field Offices conveniently located across the state by calling toll free 1-888-891-TDEC (8332) or by accessing the

department's Web site at [www.TN.gov/environment](http://www.TN.gov/environment). Information about Tennessee State Parks is available by calling toll free 1-888-TN-Parks (867-2757) or online at [www.tnstateparks.com](http://www.tnstateparks.com).

## History

Modern regulation of environmental quality began in the late 1960s. At that time Tennessee was experiencing severe environmental problems, particularly in its urban areas. Large stretches of rivers, such as the Ocoee, were "dead." Air quality in Chattanooga was so bad that drivers had to use their headlights during the day; and in Nashville visibility was reduced to less than 100 yards on particularly bad days. A suite of state and federal environmental laws were passed beginning in the late 1960s to address these massive problems.

Congress passed the National Environmental Policy Act in 1969, spurring President Richard Nixon to establish the United States Environmental Protection Agency. Numerous federal environmental laws followed, using a "command and control" system to reverse large, obvious problems. Parallel with the development of federal laws in the 1960s and 1970s, the state enacted a body of state law, regulations, permit programs, and monitoring systems and expanded inspection and enforcement systems.

The Tennessee General Assembly had previously created the Stream Pollution Control Board in 1945, making Tennessee the first state in the South to pass a water pollution control law. This board undertook a proactive program to protect streams and develop a network of wastewater treatment systems. Tennessee then passed the state Water Quality Act in 1971 and established the Water Quality Control Board. The federal Clean Water Act was passed in 1972.

The Tennessee Solid Waste Disposal Act passed in 1969, giving the state authority to regulate local landfills and to manage solid waste disposal. A new Solid Waste Management Act passed in 1991.

The state also passed laws to protect air quality and support recreation and resource management, including the Air Quality Act, the Scenic Rivers Act, the Scenic Trails Act and the Natural Areas Act.

One of the most significant developments in resource conservation in Tennessee since 1900 was the establishment of the state park system. The State Government Reorganization Act of 1937 established in the Executive Branch a Department of Conservation. In the same year, another act was passed that brought management of all state areas used as parks, monuments or recreation under a Division of Parks in the Department of Conservation. Today the Tennessee State Parks system includes 53 parks encompassing more than 134,000 acres.

The current Department of Environment and Conservation was created in 1991. This department is comprised of the environmental programs formerly housed in the Department of Health and Environment and most of the programs previously located in the Department of Conservation.

## Commissioner's Office

The Commissioner's Office oversees all departmental operations. Deputy and assistant commissioners for Parks and Conservation, the Bureau of Environment and Business Services work closely with and report directly to the commissioner. Also reporting directly to the commissioner are the department's offices of general counsel and legislative, communications and public affairs.

The Office of General Counsel houses the department's attorneys and is responsible for providing guidance and legal services for all aspects of the department's operation, including enforcement, permitting, legislation development and interpretation, and other services as needed.

The department's legislative liaisons work with the governor's office and the General Assembly on legislation that may impact the department and address constituent concerns. Communications manages media relations, and public affairs oversees the department's Web site, graphic design services and the *Tennessee Conservationist* magazine.

## Environment

**Air Pollution Control.** Air Pollution Control staff work to ensure that state air quality standards are upheld. Monitors across the state are checked frequently, complaints are investigated, and violators are brought into compliance. Other staff activities include planning and assessing whether new or expanded industries can fit within the air quality limits for specific areas of the state. The state Air Pollution Control Board establishes state regulations for air quality and hears enforcement cases for violations of state laws.

**Environmental Assistance.** This group provides information and non-regulatory support to businesses, schools, local governments, industries, organizations and individuals in order to prevent and reduce negative environmental impacts. The staff utilizes a range of outreach techniques and partnerships to enhance knowledge and environmental awareness for individuals and organizations through two major programs: the Small Business Environmental Assistance Program (SBEAP) and the Pollution Prevention and Environmental Awareness Program (P2EA). The Fleming Training Center in Murfreesboro is responsible for the technical training and licensing of water and wastewater treatment plant operators.

**DOE Oversight.** This division ensures that the environmental impacts associated with past and present activities at the U.S. Department of Energy Oak Ridge Reservation are thoroughly investigated and that appropriate cleanup action is taken as necessary to protect the public health and environment.

**Radiological Health.** This quality control program seeks to protect Tennesseans and the environment from excess exposure to radiation. Among their many duties, Radiological Health staff inspects X-ray equipment in medical offices and hospitals to ensure patients receive only safe exposures to radiation.

**Geology.** Department geologists map and study the geologic formations of the state, particularly as they relate to the discovery, potential use and conservation of mineral resources and to the quality of the environment.

**Remediation.** This program identifies and investigates sites that pose a chemical threat to public health or the environment and works to resolve that threat through remedial action, cleanup and control of potential hazards. Staff members address contamination from past manufacturing sites, spills and storage sites where no other environmental permits are available to require cleanup of contamination.

**Solid/Hazardous Waste Management.** Solid and Hazardous Waste Management staff ensure that wastes are stored, treated and disposed of in environmentally safe ways. Activities include investigating old dump sites that may pollute water or land, managing the state's Hazardous Waste Disposal Tracking System, and helping cities and counties handle solid waste disposal problems.

The Solid Waste Disposal Control Board establishes state regulations and hears enforcement cases for violations of state laws.

**Subsurface Septic Systems.** This program is responsible for permitting septic tank installations and for licensing water well drillers.

**Underground Storage Tanks.** Staff members ensure that the thousands of underground petroleum storage tanks in use in Tennessee meet federal and state standards to prevent ground and water contamination from leaking tanks. They regulate the type of tanks installed, investigate and determine the source of petroleum when tanks are suspected of leaking, and require cleanup when tanks leak. The Underground Petroleum Storage Tank Board establishes state regulations and hears enforcement cases for violations of state laws.

**Water Pollution Control.** The staff in this program issue permits for municipal and industrial wastewater discharges, investigate complaints, examine fish kills and spill sites, and conduct inspections of permitted activities. Other responsibilities include monitoring the water quality of streams and lakes across the state, protecting wetlands and issuing permits for such activities as stream channel modifications and sand and gravel dredging. This program also investigates and enforces laws regarding water quality impacts from coal mining and other mineral surface mining activities.

**Water Supply.** The Water Supply program ensures that Tennessee's public water supplies comply with state health standards to protect the users through development of groundwater and wellhead protection plans. It also regulates most of the dams across the state. The division also administers the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Loan program to provide low interest loans to municipalities in need of new or expanded drinking water or wastewater facilities.

**West Tennessee River Basin Authority.** The Obion-Forked Deer Basin Authority was established by statute as an agency of state government in 1972. On July 1, 1996, it became attached to the Department of Environment and Conservation, and the name was changed to West Tennessee River Basin Authority. The agency is charged with water resources management in the 17-county area drained by the Obion, Forked Deer and Hatchie River systems.

## Parks and Conservation

**Archaeology.** The department's archaeologists are responsible for the identification, survey, protection and excavation of important archaeological sites in Tennessee.

**Natural Areas.** This division is charged with protecting and restoring Tennessee's natural biological diversity through identification, conservation and communication. Program areas include Natural Heritage Inventory, 80 State Natural Areas, Rare Plant Protection, 13 State Scenic Rivers, Ginseng Management and Environmental Review. These programs work together and in partnership with the public and private sector to identify and protect Tennessee's most rare and important plant and animal species and natural communities.

**Recreation Educational Services.** This section administers technical, planning and financial assistance services to state, local and private providers of public recreation systems across the state. It also encourages the development of local recreation systems.

**Tennessee Historical Commission.** The Tennessee Historical Commission is responsible for recording, preserving and interpreting the history of Tennessee. It promotes historical preservation through the selection of and research on historical

sites and administers state-owned historic properties and all programs established under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966.

***Tennessee State Parks.*** The mission of Tennessee State Parks is to preserve and protect, in perpetuity, unique examples of natural, cultural and scenic areas and provide a variety of safe, quality outdoor experiences through well-planned and professionally managed systems. The majority of Tennessee's 53 state parks offer interpretative and resource-based recreation activities resulting in more than 16,000 learning programs annually that are attended by more than 600,000 participants. State parks possess approximately 1,000 miles of hiking trails, 2,814 campsites and provide abundant opportunity for aquatic activities. Details on features and activities at each state park are available at [www.tnstateparks.com](http://www.tnstateparks.com).

***Tennessee State Parks Hospitality Operations.*** This program manages retail operations in Tennessee State Parks including six resort parks: Fall Creek Falls, Henry Horton, Montgomery Bell, Natchez Trace, Paris Landing and Pickwick Landing. These parks provide restaurants, cabins, group lodges, conference centers, marinas, recreational rooms, swimming pools, outdoor sporting facilities and inns. Hospitality Operations also manages the eight traditional and three Bear Trace golf courses that make up the Tennessee Golf Trail.

## Business Services

***Fiscal Services.*** This division provides a full range of financial management and support services. The division has responsibility for preparing the department's budget request, procuring goods and services, managing and coordinating motor vehicles plus handling all other financial transactions. The division administers the performance-based budgeting initiative, oversees the business continuation planning process and is responsible for leasing and managing the department's office space, furnishings and equipment throughout the state.

***Human Resources.*** Human Resources is responsible for managing all department personnel transactions, classification and compensation issues, training, recruitment and placement, insurance and employee relations. Human resource support is provided to all divisions, program areas, offices and parks in the department. In addition, staff responds to various inquiries from the public as well as government and legislative officials.

***Information Systems.*** Comprised of Applications Development/Support and Technical Services, the Information Systems Division provides services under the guidance of the Management Advisory Committee that helps organize data into meaningful information to employees and aids personnel in managing data as a vital asset.

## Boards, Commissions and Councils

The following boards, commissions and councils may be contacted through the Department of Environment and Conservation:

- Air Pollution Control Board
- Board of Ground Water Management
- Commissioner's Council on Greenways and Trails
- Conservation Commission
- Dry Cleaners Environmental Response Board
- Great Smoky Mountains Park Commission
- Municipal Solid Waste Advisory Committee
- Petroleum Underground Storage Tank Board
- Solid Waste Disposal Control Board
- State Oil and Gas Board
- State Review Board
- Tennessee Archaeological Advisory Council
- Tennessee Commission on Indian Affairs
- Tennessee Heritage Conservation Trust Fund Board
- Tennessee Historical Commission
- Water and Wastewater Operators Certification Board
- Water Quality Control Board
- Water Resources Technical Advisory Committee
- West Tennessee River Basin Authority

### Commissioner James H. "Jim" Fyke

Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation



**Jim Fyke** was appointed Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation by Governor Phil Bredesen on April 14, 2005. A true parks and conservation professional, he has a distinguished career with more than 40 years of successful public service. Prior to his appointment as Commissioner of the department, Fyke served as Deputy Commissioner of Parks and Conservation. Through his leadership as Deputy Commissioner, all state parks and facilities were reopened and the management structure was reorganized into a regional system that better reflects and is more responsive to local community needs. In 2003, Fyke retired from the Metropolitan Nashville Board of Parks and Recreation after 25 years leading the Board as Parks Director and 39 years of total service. Under his leadership as Parks Director, Nashville's award-winning system increased from 57 to 100 parks, and the amount of acreage increased from 5,800 to 10,237. During the eight years of the Bredesen Administration in

Nashville, more than 2,500 acres of parks and greenways were added across Davidson County. One of the single largest additions was along the Cumberland River with the 800-acre urban park and greenway system known as Shelby Bottoms. He is a board member of the TVA Regional Resource Stewardship Council, Nashville Sports Council, Nashville Predators Foundation and Charles Davis Foundation. He has received numerous national and state awards for his achievements in and support of parks, recreation activities and youth sports. A native of Old Hickory, Tenn., Fyke holds a Bachelor of Arts in Business Management from Peabody College of Vanderbilt University. He is married to Becky, father to Claire, stepfather to Rebecca and Ryan, and proud grandfather to Kacey, Joshua and Andrew.

