



In early October, the five largest paddling clubs in Tennessee, the Appalachian Paddling Enthusiasts, the Bluff City Canoe Club, the Chota Canoe Club, the Tennessee Scenic Rivers Association, and the Tennessee Valley Canoe Club came together on the banks of the Nolichucky River, hosted by Matt Moses and USA Raft, for a historic meeting to better align on key policy issues that affect paddlers in the state of Tennessee. Under the leadership and guidance of ACA Tennessee State Director, Andrea White, and with the participation of ACA Public Policy Chief, Brett Mayer, and American Whitewater National Stewardship Director, Kevin Colburn, the five clubs discussed a variety of issues. This letter highlights key points of the discussion.

- **Paddling in Tennessee State Parks**
 - The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) has implemented a new impounded lake usage fee for people bringing their own boat to certain state parks. Although new fees may seem negative at first glance, paddlers actually enjoy a net gain in access because these impounded lakes were not previously available for paddling.
 - There is, however, expressed concern that state parks may see private boaters as revenue sources rather than as constituents.
 - TDEC is willing to work with paddling organizations to help bring ACA-certified instructors to help with state park programming (functionally classes/instruction).
- **Proposed Rulemaking and Outfitter Fees**
 - There is a current moratorium on outfitter fees until 2021. Outfitters operating under permit from Cherokee National Forest or TDEC as well as state universities are exempted from these regulations and excluded from any fees.
 - In the coming season, 2020, outfitters will need to apply for a Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) permit and submit quarterly reports to the TWRA on the number of vessels (canoes, kayaks, paddle boards or tubes) in their fleet and put-in/take-out location information.
 - The data collection will inform rule making next year to determine a new outfitter fee structure that will go into effect in the 2021 season.
 - Currently, there are no formal proposed regulations of the private boating community, but in public testimony to the Joint Committee on Government Operations at the state legislature, the TWRA indicated they foresee private regulation might be necessary in the future. ACA members can take a proactive stance by contacting their TWRA Commissioner to tout the benefits of outdoor recreation to Governor Lee's Rural Tourism initiative, and to highlight that floating public waterways should not require additional regulation or fees.
- **Designating the Nolichucky as a Wild and Scenic River**



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- A functional coalition of grassroots support is advocating for the establishment of the Nolichucky as a Wild and Scenic River under the 1968 Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.
- Designating the Nolichucky as a federally protected Wild and Scenic River would permanently protect eight miles of the Nolichucky River to forever remain, wild, free, and unimpeded by any future dam proposals.
- This would require support from both TN and NC legislators.
- [Click here to read the joint letter from all five canoe clubs to state and federal legislators, and to learn more about this amazing paddling resource in your state.](#)

YOU can also be a part of helping this initiative by adding your personal endorsement to the #NoliWildandScenic movement. By using the link below, you can contact your local Congressional Representative and both of Tennessee's Senators. They will receive an email asking them to carry a bill and support Wild and Scenic designation for the Nolichucky: <https://www.noliwildandscenic.org/take-action/>

Moving forward, all five paddling clubs have high hopes that more collaboration will result in more effective outreach on key policy issues that affect paddlers throughout the state. The joint letter from all five clubs to state and federal legislators asking for support to establish the Nolichucky as a Wild and Scenic River, serves as a tangible and direct outcome from the meeting. Thank you for your continued support of the ACA. If you have further questions, or would like to be more involved in any of our efforts, please contact Andrea White, ACA Tennessee State Director, at tnstatedirector@americancanoe.net.

Sincerely,

Brett Mayer
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