

Local partnership drives projects improving the Harpeth River

By Paul Sloan, Deputy Commissioner, TDEC

One of the department's continuing priorities is to support local efforts to enhance and protect watersheds. Such efforts work best when county and city governments partner with the state and local residents to establish a coordinated and long term plan. A working example of this is the Harpeth River Watershed Initiative (HRWI), part of a Memorandum of Understanding among three governmental entities - TDEC, the City of Franklin and Williamson County government.

This agreement, the first of its kind in Tennessee, has established a process for the identification and evaluation of projects that will benefit the Harpeth River and its tributaries. Staff from the city, county, TDEC and the Harpeth River Watershed Association meets quarterly to review, collect and develop information concerning potential environmental projects that will improve, remediate or protect the Harpeth River Watershed.

On a recent Friday afternoon along Carnton Creek outside downtown Franklin, I joined leaders from the City of Franklin and Williamson County Government to celebrate completion of their first project under this partnership. Restoring two creeks flowing through Eastern Flank Battlefield Park in Franklin was identified in 2007 as a viable project for the new HRWI. With funds from the Tennessee Department of Transportation, TDEC led a project restoring historic creeks at the Eastern Flank Battlefield to their original condition.

During the celebration Franklin Mayor John Schroer noted, "Restoring these creeks to their original state has accomplished two significant goals. It aids in our preservation of this historic site and also helps to protect the Harpeth River Watershed. Protecting the Harpeth River and its tributaries is very important to this community and combining the resources of various agencies has enabled us to accomplish that."

Results of stream restoration at the Eastern Flank Battlefield made the Harpeth a better a river for everyone in the community. Impoundments were removed and flow has been increased from the creeks to the Harpeth River. Riparian buffer zones along the streams were established to reduce erosion and sedimentation reaching the creek. These buffers ensure increased flow will also be carrying fewer pollutants as it reaches the main stem of the Harpeth River less than a mile away.

The benefits of this effort have demonstrated what is possible for water quality when partners work together. It is my goal to build on this particular success as we seek other worthy restoration projects in the Harpeth River Watershed and to utilize this initiative as a model for other communities in Tennessee.



Courtesy of DEC

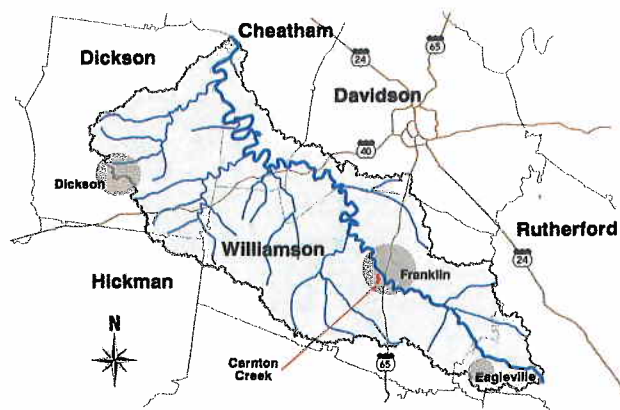
BEFORE (above) Stream restoration for Carnton Creek involved complete channel re-construction in the areas of former golf course ponds. **AFTER (below)** Included bank stabilization, instream habitat amendments and riparian restoration with the historic theme of returning the site to the near 1860s era layout.



David Owenby

About the Harpeth River Watershed

The Harpeth River Watershed includes more than 1,300 miles of streams where at least one-quarter are impaired by environmental contamination. More than 50 percent of this watershed exists in Williamson County, a fast-growing, affluent suburban county outside Nashville. The Harpeth River watershed is a priority for TDEC due to the percentage of stream miles on the 303(d) list, a compilation of streams and lakes in Tennessee that don't meet water quality standards and support all their intended uses.



About the Harpeth River Watershed Initiative

The Harpeth River Watershed Initiative seeks to identify streams in Williamson County that can benefit from water improvement projects and to work with willing landowners toward that goal. Projects are evaluated on a regional watershed basis as well as by individual tributary basis. More information is available on Franklin's Web site at www.franklin-tn.gov/engineering/hrwi.html