



Alabama Strategic Habitat Units that extend into Tennessee. These watersheds support some of the highest aquatic biodiversity in the nation.

A rivers and streams network for Tennessee?

The Water Center is exploring development of a Tennessee Rivers and Streams network (TRSN) based on an approach that has been highly successful in Alabama. A rivers and streams network is a conservation planning tool that brings researchers, managers, and stakeholders together to identify and implement strategic conservation in the right places at the right scale. Faunal experts identify watersheds and stream reaches that are high priority, and those places are mapped as Strategic Habitat Units (SHUs) or even Strategic River Reach Units (SRRUs). The value in this approach is that many conservation planning efforts are large-scale (often Statewide), but restoration projects tend to be local. The SHUs provide that middle ground that allows local efforts to be more strategic and coordinated. This helps ensure that scarce restoration dollars are spent as efficiently as possible on projects that are as effective as possible. In particular, it

brings together the people who work on different organisms (fish, mussels, and others) to look for conservation actions that can benefit multiple species.

We hope to build consensus for a TRSN during 2021. Tennessee has over 300 fish species—almost more than any other State. Conservation of our natural heritage is a priority for every Federal, State, Regional, and non-governmental entity with a natural resources mission, and we suggest that a TRSN would be an effective tool.

However, success occurred in Alabama because there was consensus among researchers and managers that the network had value. During 2021, we will canvas collaborators to see if this approach would be helpful. If so, the Water Center will coordinate Network development.