



TENNESSEE  
AQUARIUM

CONSERVATION INSTITUTE



# We all have a river story.

Every day, we impact water, and water impacts us. The many ways that water shapes and enriches our lives is at the core of the Tennessee Aquarium's nonprofit work. Our dynamic exhibits showcase the life that floats, crawls and darts just below the surface of our surrounding rivers and streams. Our educational programs teach each day that the fresh water coursing through our community's landscape is as integral to life and human health as the blood that pulses through our veins. If each guest leaves the Aquarium more informed, engaged and inspired to share a personal story connected to water, we've taken a first step toward freshwater conservation.

Conservation begins when we share our stories, but it also necessitates action. Today, far too many river stories highlight the rapid loss of wildlife that makes our region so unique. Many businesses, government agencies and community-minded citizens seek guidance on how to best protect our natural character as our region continues to grow. With the construction of a riverfront facility for the Tennessee Aquarium Conservation Institute, the Aquarium is growing its capacity to actively protect the health of our water and the amazingly diverse animals in our region. A convening place, a living laboratory, a training ground, and an educational center, our conservation hub will be a place that adds to everyone's river story for generations to come.

Adventure enthusiasts, weekend anglers and students of nature, both young and old, are invited to join the Aquarium during this exciting time of expansion. We all have a personal connection to water. We all have a story to share. And we must all work together, in the wisest ways we can, to ensure that our story today is the beginning of an even better one yet to be told.



Anna George, PhD  
Director, Tennessee Aquarium Conservation Institute



Charles L. Arant  
President and CEO, Tennessee Aquarium

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## Expanding Our Commitment to Conservation

Since 1992, the Tennessee Aquarium has helped our community understand and value the incredible animals that live in our backyard. Our work to inspire wonder, appreciation and protection of water and all life that it sustains has cultivated a community-wide consciousness of environmental stewardship, while strengthening the Chattanooga community as an educational, environmental and economic driver of positive change. As we enter our third decade of success, we continue to build Chattanooga's commitment to and capacity for freshwater conservation.

The Tennessee Aquarium Conservation Institute (TNACI) complements the Aquarium's focus on aquatic exhibitry by conducting scientific studies, restoring our region's natural ecosystems and educating members of the public to take conservation action. Each year, TNACI coordinates hands-on conservation work in ways that would not be possible for the Aquarium to do alone. Much like the iconic peaks of the Tennessee Aquarium now symbolize Chattanooga's pride in its natural heritage, a new facility for the Conservation Institute will soon demonstrate Chattanooga's commitment to conserving its future.

# A Setting That Demands a Story



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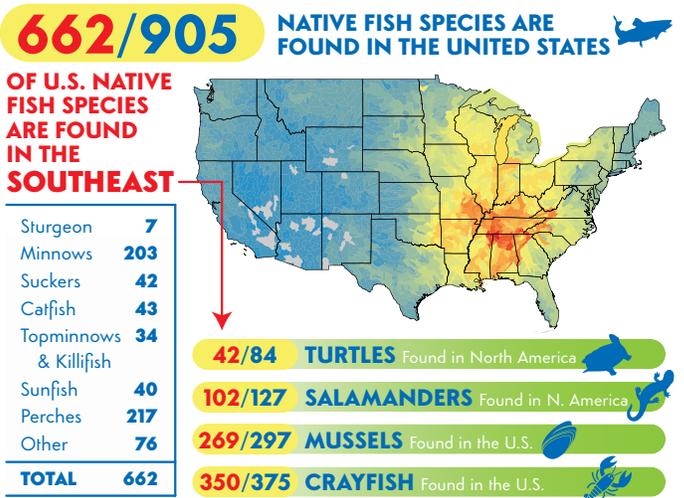


TODD STALLEY

The Southeast, our backyard, is home to the highest diversity of freshwater animals in North America. In order to protect them, we must first understand them. No single nonprofit, government agency, corporate entity or coalition of citizens has the authority, resources or responsibility to conserve the freshwater ecosystems upon which we all rely. Those actively engaged in environmental protection need a space to share their latest scientific research and to cultivate conservation strategies for a brighter future. The Aquarium's long-term strategy for expanding our region's conservation capacity is built upon the construction of a multi-million dollar permanent facility for TNACI to meet these needs.

Situated on the banks of the Tennessee River near downtown Chattanooga, the site of the Conservation Institute will be a pioneering living river laboratory for the Southeast. Scientists, academics, conservation professionals, regulatory agencies and other environmental advocates will convene to examine conservation issues, to work toward innovative solutions and to share the story of the special place we call home.

## Southeastern United States Biodiversity





## Building Our Conservation Capital

Serving as a freshwater field station for scientists and students alike, TNACI's 14,000 square foot facility will offer fully-equipped lab space in which researchers can physically work in proximity to each other to advance conservation science. TNACI's existing work in the captive propagation of sensitive species, including Lake Sturgeon, Southern Appalachian Brook Trout and Barrens Topminnows, will move to the new facility, and additional propagation space is planned to accommodate expanding efforts. A large teaching lab on the first floor will allow advanced science students from throughout the region to study with leading freshwater scientists and educators.

The new facility is planned to be LEED-certified and will be used as a demonstration site for conservation-minded design. We will showcase water-sensitive design, including the expansion of existing wetlands adjacent on the site, landscaping with native plants found in the Tennessee River Gorge and gathering rainwater from the roof in a 6,000 gallon cistern to supply grey water for reuse in the building. A dashboard system for accurate monitoring of water and energy use will allow the building to tell its own story to teach and inspire future stewards of our environment.

# Focusing On Our Future Stories



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For nearly 20 years, TNACI's scientific expertise has guided initiatives to research and renew crucial parts of our region's most sensitive watersheds. Our work focuses on five areas: Research, Restoration, Science Communication, Conservation Planning and Educational Outreach.

## Advancing Conservation Science

Our science is aimed at understanding what animals live here and why, as well as building knowledge around how a changing environment affects our ecosystems. The research of TNACI scientists helps us understand the dynamics of the animal communities that live in our rivers and streams.

## Protecting Our Natural Treasures

TNACI is pioneering restoration protocols that allow our unique aquatic communities to thrive in their native habitats. We work with partners across the Southeast to keep our region's waters healthy enough to support both sensitive aquatic animals and human needs.

## Synthesizing Scientific Discoveries

Because scientists aren't often trained to share their research with the general public, TNACI works to translate complex discoveries into topics that are personally meaningful. The Aquarium, as the most trusted conservation voice in the Southeast, helps share the best scientific stories to motivate a broad and diverse audience to act.

**1993**

Tennessee Aquarium hosts national conference, "Aquatic Fauna in Peril: The Southeastern Perspective"

**1996**

Southeast Aquatic Research Institute (SARI) forms to study and conserve southeastern aquatic animals

**1997**

SARI begins work to restore freshwater mussels in our region



DR. PAUL JOHNSON

**1998**

Barrens Topminnow restoration program established

**2000**

First Lake Sturgeon released into the upper Tennessee River



DR. GEORGE BENZ



THOM BENSON

### Building Our Best Future

TNACI's participation in collaborative conservation planning allows our research to have a direct and lasting impact. We work with other conservation managers in the Southeast to ensure that as our region grows, we are able to preserve the freshwater habitats that support our high quality of life.

### Mentoring the Next Generation of Leaders

TNACI scientists work alongside other field experts to inspire today's youth to protect fresh water. Through experiential learning opportunities and research partnerships, we help the next generation understand our region's complex environmental issues and develop solutions for a better future.

#### 2002

Tennessee River Gorge turtle study begins in partnership with the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

#### 2007

Lake Sturgeon program honored with an award from the Association of Zoos and Aquariums for Significant Achievement in North American Conservation

#### 2009

Our name changes to the Tennessee Aquarium Conservation Institute (TNACI) to reflect our commitment to our mission

#### 2012

Launch of Southern Appalachian Brook Trout recovery program

#### 2016

New state-of-the-art facility for TNACI's work opens



DR. ANNA GEORGE

**What life do our waters sustain?**

**Why are the rivers and streams  
of the Southeast so special?**

**How can we balance economic growth  
with protection of our natural treasures?**

These are the questions that guide our work at the Tennessee Aquarium Conservation Institute. We need your help to answer them to build our best future. Help us write the next chapter in our community's river story.



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