

BOONE WATERSHED PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL AQUATIC STEWARDSHIP AWARDS

The purpose of this annual award is to recognize extraordinary contributions that improve and/or protect the aquatic ecosystems of the Boone Watershed. Three entities have been selected for the respective 2019 BWP Aquatic Stewardship Awards.

Industry/Business Aquatic Stewardship Award—Prosim Engineering
K-12 Aquatic Stewardship Award – Jeff and Angie Keeling
Local Government Stewardship Award –Shannon O’Quinn, TVA

Industry/Business Aquatic Stewardship Award—Prosim Engineering

Prosim Engineering is being recognized for in-kind donation of engineer time to certify architectural drawings of a pavilion for the Outdoor Classroom with a Living Roof in Jacob's Nature Park at Sinking Creek. This in-kind match of at least \$2,000.00 enabled BWP to obtain a \$25,000 grant contract from the Tennessee Department of Agriculture in 2018 to be used toward the construction costs.

This pavilion is a structure of its own standing that will explain its environmental benefits to the aquatic ecosystem. Rather than offering another asphalt or metal roof, this venue's roof will encourage the biodiversity of birds, bees, butterflies, and other invertebrates for miles around. In the long-term, a living roof is effective protection and enhancement of the aquatic ecosystem in the area by reducing the volume and rate of stormwater runoff. As the gathering place to share environmental education near the popular Tweetsie Trail, this structure promotes public awareness about the importance of water quality in the Boone watershed.

K-12 Aquatic Stewardship Award – Jeff and Angie Keeling

Jeff Keeling, a longtime volunteer at Jacob’s Nature Park at Sinking Creek. Recently, Jeff and his wife Angie recruited an enthusiastic group of 4th, 5th, and 6th graders from Grandview Christian Church to develop plaques identifying trees and plants along the trails in the park. As part of their project the Grandview Christian Church 456 Crew decided to create in Jacob's Nature Park a Level I Certified Arboretum through the Tennessee Urban Forestry Council.

The group toured the trails tagging certain trees for approval by the City Arborist, Pat Walding. tagging over thirty healthy species for an official marker containing identifying information. The name of a pollinator who depends on the particular tree for its survival is also included on the respective plaque. This arboretum enables the visitor to better understand the interdependent biodiversity of the plants and pollinators within the wetlands and forested ecosystems of the park. Taking advantage of technology, additional tree and pollinator information found on the identifying plaques can be accessed on site through QR codes. The QR codes can be scanned with a smartphone app, which converts the codes to a website URL link to Jacob's Nature Park found at plantsmap.com. The combined effect of onsite information with digital links encourages citizen science every day in Jacob's Nature Park. The arboretum and the environmental education within the park create long-term, life- changing memories that will encourage the individuals to protect and enhance the aquatic ecosystem of Sinking Creek and beyond.

Local Government Aquatic Stewardship Award –Shannon O’Quinn/TVA

Shannon O’Quinn is a Watershed Process Specialist for TVA. He has been with TVA for 19 years. He holds a Bachelors in Environmental Science from Radford University and a Masters Degree in Geosciences from ETSU. His focus, at TVA, is to improve and protect water quality and species biodiversity in the Tennessee Valley which covers portions of seven states (Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Kentucky). Shannon accomplishes water quality improvements by partnering with community groups and natural resource agencies to assess water conditions, develop improvement plans, leverage funding, and implement quality enhancement projects. These efforts impact local communities by improving drinking water supplies, aquatic habitat, recreational opportunities, human health, and economic development. Shannon is the key component for protecting all the waters between the dams. Locally, he partnered with the Fish and Wildlife Service to replace a small channel with a larger passage for connectivity of native Brook Trout in the Cherokee Forest. He worked with Tennessee Wildlife Resources Association to hydroseed the exposed banks on Boone Dam and also assisted with minimizing overgrowth of fauna while Watauga Lake is in drawdown. He also does lots of outreach events such as: Cast for Kids, which allows children with disabilities a chance to spend a day out on the lake and fish, Kids in the Creek, which works with the STEM program at ETSU and gets the kids in the creek to electroshock the fish for identification. In addition, he created an annual Tennessee River Basin Network meeting to bring like-minded individuals from all over the Tennessee Valley together to discuss water related projects. Shannon O’Quinn’s love of conservation and dedication to keeping our waters protected is recognized today and will be for future generations.