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## **Tennessee Clean Water Network Honors East TN Hero**

*Frank Hensley Named 2006 Bill Russell River Hero*

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(Knoxville, TN) Tennessee Clean Water Network presented Frank Hensley with the 2006 Bill Russell River Hero Award Thursday night at the Foundry at World's Fair Park. Each year, the River Hero award is presented to an individual who strives to protect, restore and enhance Tennessee's waters and the communities who depend on them. Mr. Hensley has played an active role in protecting the watersheds of the Cumberland Plateau for over thirty years.

"Frank Hensley motivates others to follow in his foot steps to protect the waters we live with and love." Stated Renee Hoyos, TCWN Executive Director. "TCWN is honored to present him with the 2006 River Hero Award."

Frank Hensley spearheaded a mandate to limit pollutant loads from entering the Obed River from the City of Crossville to breathe life back into the Obed. Frank also played a key role in preserving 10,000 acres of land in Pickett and Fentress Counties that hold the headwaters of the Big South Fork and Wolf River.

"I am especially humbled to receive this award because it is in honor of the greatest river hero of all, Bill Russell." Said Hensley at Thursday night's celebration. "Without him we would have two deep lakes where the Big South Fork and the Obed Wild and Scenic Rivers now flow free."

Frank's admirers say his love of whitewater paddling seems to be infectious for the scores of individuals he introduces to the activity. They rave one of his most significant contributions to the protection of Tennessee's streams is the degree to which he has been successful in inspiring others to act to keep our waters wild and clean.

"Tennesseeans can look to our River Hero's, like Frank Hensley, for inspiration." Noted Hoyos. "Successfully protecting our waters is possible when our communities come together to hold polluters and our governments accountable to protecting our clean water."

Dr. Liane Russell, wife of the late Bill Russell and retired Oak Ridge National Lab geneticist, presented the River Hero Award to Hensley Thursday night in honor of her late husband, Bill.

"I can't think of anyone more deserving of an award named in Bill's honor than MY hero, Frank Hensley." Said Russell. "I know Frank would have been Bill's hero, too!"

Hensley's love of water started in West Virginia during World War II. The Ohio and the Big Sandy Rivers were the places he spent his free time.

All of the cities dumped raw sewage and garbage into the rivers. A cross-tie creosoting plant dumped a steady stream of creosote into the Ohio River, and all of the sand and gravel downstream was coated with the gummy substance.

Frank swam on these rivers having to dodge sewage from municipalities and coal sludge from the mining industry.

"The water is cleaner now than it was in the 40's and 50's. However, rivers are still not treated as public property because the coal, oil and chemical companies utilize rivers as if they were the owners." Added Hensley.

The Tennessee Clean Water Network organizes communities who, like Frank, are facing threats to their clean water. TCWN provides organizing assistance, networking opportunities and access to their expert referral system to communities who are working to protect their right to clean water.

Tennessee Clean Water Network honored all River Hero nominees as 2006 River Champions. They include: James McMillan, JR Shute and Pat Rakes of Conservation Fisheries Inc, Nelson Ross, Judy Boston, John Brittle Jr., Barry Sulkin, Dixie Coutts and Kathy Krone.

### **The Man Behind the Award**

William (Bill) Russell was a world-renowned geneticist and long-time advocate for Tennessee waters. Together with wife Liane, he founded Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning (TCWP) in 1966, an organization dedicated to the protection of land and water through public ownership. Bill co-authored and facilitated the passage of the Tennessee Scenic Rivers Act in 1968, the first such comprehensive act in the nation, preceding the national act.

"Bill worked tirelessly to prevent the construction of a dam on the Obed River, a river he had come to love above all others." Said Cortney Piper, Director of Development and Communications for TCWN. "He eventually succeeded in not only saving the Obed from the dam, but in having it designated a National Wild and Scenic River in 1976."

Bill Russell died on July 23, 2003 shortly after his 93<sup>rd</sup> birthday. Tennessee Clean Water Network is honored to add this award to his amazing legacy.

Tennessee Clean Water Network wishes to thank the 2006 Bill Russell River Hero sponsors including: World Wildlife Fund, John Noel and Southern Alliance for Clean Energy, Tennessee Scenic Rivers Association, Monfee Medical Clinic, Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning, The Nature Conservancy, National Parks Conservation Association, Axel Ringe and Tennessee Parks and Greenways Foundation.

For more information about the Tennessee Clean Water Network and the Bill Russell River Hero Award call 865.522.7007 or visit <http://www.tcwn.org/riverhero/>

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