

Press release from the Southern Environmental Law Center and Harpeth Conservancy  
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## **Settlement aims to fix bacterial growth, better protect Middle Tennessee waterway**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — The Harpeth Conservancy, represented by the Southern Environmental Law Center, reached a settlement with the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation and the Water Authority of Dickson County intended to clean up a [large bacteria and algae bloom](#) polluting a waterway in White Bluff, Tennessee.

Last year, citizens discovered a putrid bloom of bacteria and algae in Trace Creek, a tributary of the Harpeth River. Sampling revealed sewage-loving bacteria and algae which persisted in the creek for months, filling the waterway with stringy, smelly scum and slime. The growth formed directly below a discharge pipe from the Water Authority of Dickson County's White Bluff Wastewater Treatment Plant, and the scum continued downstream for several hundred yards.

The settlement agreement between the Harpeth Conservancy, TDEC, and the Water Authority of Dickson County aims to eliminate the bacteria and algae scum and better protect Trace Creek from pollution in the future. As part of the settlement, the Water Authority of Dickson County commits to undertaking efforts to eliminate the growth in Trace Creek. Representatives from the Harpeth Conservancy, TDEC, and the Water Authority of Dickson County will also meet at least four times a year to monitor Trace Creek and discuss operational changes made at the plant.

“Trace Creek may seem small, but like all small streams it plays a big role in our river systems,” **Grace Stranch, CEO of the Harpeth Conservancy**, said. “We look forward to working together to restore Trace Creek. These collaborative science-based solutions are central to our mission, and we hope the efforts made to resolve the issue are successful and can be used as a model statewide to prevent similar issues.”

The settlement comes after the Southern Environmental Law Center, on behalf of Harpeth Conservancy, filed an administrative lawsuit demanding that the pollution be stopped. While that case was pending, the Water Authority of Dickson County made operational changes at its sewage treatment plant intended to correct the problem.

“This settlement is a major victory for Trace Creek and the people who enjoy it,” **SELC Senior Attorney George Nolan said**. “This collaborative solution can and should serve as a model of how stakeholders can work together to better protect our state’s incredible waterways from harmful pollution.”

Under the agreement, SELC and the Harpeth Conservancy can take further legal action as necessary to protect Trace Creek in the event that the Water Authority’s efforts to clean up the creek are not successful.

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The Southern Environmental Law Center is one of the nation's most powerful defenders of the environment, rooted in the South. With a long track record, SELC takes on the toughest environmental challenges in court, in government, and in our communities to protect our region's air, water, climate, wildlife, lands, and people. Nonprofit and nonpartisan, the organization has a staff of 200, including 100 attorneys, and is headquartered in Charlottesville, Va., with offices in Asheville, Atlanta, Birmingham, Chapel Hill, Charleston, Nashville, Richmond, and Washington, D.C.  
[southernenvironment.org](http://southernenvironment.org)

Founded in 1999, Harpeth Conservancy's is a science-based non-profit conservation organization. Its mission is to restore and protect clean water and healthy ecosystems for rivers in Tennessee by employing scientific expertise and collaborative relationships to develop, promote, and support broad community stewardship and action. Harpeth Conservancy works with landowners, businesses, community, local, state, and federal decision-makers and members to foster solutions that reduce pollution and maintain healthy areas.

The rivers in Tennessee, including the Harpeth, are part of the unique freshwater river systems of the Southeast which contain some of the greatest variety of aquatic life in the world. Harpeth Conservancy has expertise in a range of disciplines including water quality science, environmental and conservation law and policy, sustainable land use planning, agricultural best management practices, volunteer and community engagement, and others.  
[www.harpethconservancy.org](http://www.harpethconservancy.org).