

The Catalyst

Activating TN's Sustainable and Resilient Future

Office of Sustainable Practices



News Articles

[8 Tennessee State Parks Add Adult-Sized Changing Tables](#)

[Lee, TDEC Announce \\$231,000 Loan for Plateau Utility District Water Improvements](#)

[Gleaners Are Measuring America's On-Farm Food Loss](#)



How Large Events Are Embracing Sustainability

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Large events like music festivals and concerts are often known for massive crowds and massive waste, but a growing number of venues and festivals are working hard to turn the tide, building sustainability into the heart of the experience.

One standout example is the Bonnaroo Music and Arts Festival in Manchester, Tennessee. Long celebrated for its music and community spirit, Bonnaroo also hosts “Planet Roo,” a hub for environmental education, wellness, and social responsibility. A key part of this programming is Clean Vibes, the festival’s waste management and recycling partner. Through their unique incentive program, attendees can earn a free t-shirt by collecting a bag of litter from the grounds. It’s a simple way to get festivalgoers involved in keeping the farm clean while promoting environmental stewardship.

In Nashville, Ascend Amphitheater has taken on the challenge of reducing event waste in a hands-on way. After every concert, staff meticulously sort through all waste to ensure that recyclables, compostables, and landfill materials are properly separated. It’s a time-intensive process, but one that ensures minimal contamination and maximum diversion from the landfill.

TURN Systems, a company changing the way drinks are served at events, is also supporting sustainability initiatives at large events. Rather than single-use plastic cups, TURN provides durable, reusable cups. Patrons drop their used cups into designated bins, which are then collected, washed, and returned for reuse at the next event. This closed-loop system reduces plastic waste and promotes a culture of reuse.

As public awareness grows and more events adopt sustainable practices, the music and entertainment industries are proving that even large-scale gatherings can be part of the solution. These efforts show that small actions, when done on a big stage, can have a lasting impact.

Celebrate the 4th Sustainably This Year

As we prepare to celebrate the 4th of July, let's also consider how we can make our festivities more sustainable. Fireworks and get-togethers are great for the soul, but not always great for our environment. Fireworks release pollutants, microplastics, and greenhouse gases, and large gatherings usually result in large amounts of plastic and single-use waste. Here are several ways we can make this year's celebration more sustainable.



- Instead of fireworks, consider other celebratory activities, such as one at a TN State Park. Try a

Hiwassee Ocoee State Park for homemade ice cream while learning about the history of the American flag or visit Paris Landing State Park to make your own red, white, and blue tie-dye t-shirt. You can find more events at the [TN State Parks Events Page](#).

- If you're set on seeing fireworks, consider attending a public display. They're often more efficient and less harmful to the environment.
- An estimated 126 million pounds of food will go uneaten this 4th of July. Use the [Guest-imator](#) to predict the amount of food to serve at your gathering and plan to send leftovers home with guests. Learn more about [food waste on the 4th of July](#).
- Opt for reusable plates, cutlery, and cups instead of disposables to significantly reduce waste.
- Remember to properly dispose of any waste and recycle where possible.

Beating the Heat Sustainably This Summer in Tennessee

Tennessee summers can be scorching, but staying cool doesn't have to substantially increase your carbon footprint. Start by embracing natural ventilation—open windows during cooler mornings and evenings. Invest in energy-efficient fans and switch to LED bulbs, which produce less heat. Shade your home with blackout curtains or strategically plant trees to block direct sunlight. Learn more about [keeping your house cool in the summer](#).

Choose lightweight, breathable natural fiber clothing and stay hydrated with reusable water bottles. Avoid peak afternoon energy use by running major appliances early in the morning or late at night. Take advantage of local splash pads and natural swimming spots like [Cummins Falls](#) or [Center Hill Lake](#) for eco-friendly cooling.

These small changes add up, helping you stay comfortable while conserving energy.



Small Business Environmental Assistance Corner



The two main types of permits issued by the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) are individual permits and general permits. An individual permit is for an individual facility with site-specific conditions, while general permits cover industry groups with similar activities under a common permit. If a facility within an industry group meets the requirements of the general permit, they can apply for coverage under that common permit. These general permits can be a quicker and less expensive option than getting an individual permit.

General permits expire regularly, which allows TDEC to review how well the permit requirements control or reduce pollution. When the general permit is updated, it undergoes a public comment period during which businesses, consultants, or individuals can provide input. The draft permit is updated to reflect comments, and a final version is issued. If you're interested in providing input for future draft permits, make sure to check out the [Public Participation](#) page for opportunities to contribute.

Sustainable Recipe

Don't throw away your cilantro stems! Use them to make this cilantro stem green sauce and turn what's usually discarded into a tasty addition for tacos. With vinegar, cumin, and oil blended in, it's a sustainable and flavorful way to use every part of the herb. [Click here for the recipe.](#)



Events:

[Tennessee State Parks Independence Day Event](#)

Webinars:

[TDEC Reducing Food Waste in Schools Webinar](#)
August 26

Funding Opportunities:

[TDEC Grants and Programs](#)

[Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program](#)

[Grants.gov](#)

Conferences, Workshops, & Training Opportunities:

[TDEC Solid Waste Grants Workshop](#)
Knoxville, TN
July 10

[TDEC Waste Tire Workshop](#)
Montgomery Bell State Park
July 17

[Tennessee Sustainability Conference](#)
Gatlinburg, TN
August 20-22

[Clean Memphis Circular Summit](#)
Memphis, TN
October 22

[green|leader - The Nation's First Localized Sustainability Certificate](#)
Ongoing opportunity



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