

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
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EAST TENNESSEE DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT HOLDS ANNUAL DISTRICT CELEBRATION

The East Tennessee Development District (ETDD) held its Annual District Celebration Banquet on Tuesday evening, September 26, 2023, at the Hilton Knoxville Airport in Alcoa, Tennessee. The Celebration was attended by over 150 people including local and state elected officials, Federal legislative representatives, Federal, State and private partners, and ETDD team members.

Each year at the District Celebration, the East Tennessee Development District recognizes local governments and other agencies for the completion of projects that have special local or regional significance. During the award ceremony, ETDD presented the inaugural George Masa Environmental Stewardship Award. Named in honor of the conservationist George Masa who played a vital role in the establishment of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, this award is an effort to honor the legacy of a man whose impact on the Eastern Tennessee / Western North Carolina region lies in relative obscurity. The East Tennessee Development District and First Tennessee Development District of Tennessee and Land of Sky Regional Council and High Country Council of Governments of North Carolina will collaboratively honor each year the efforts of individuals with a demonstrated impact on the environment and/or outdoor resources of the multistate region. These individuals could represent a variety of organizations, including academics, local governments, state parks services, national parks services, nonprofit organizations, and environmental or recreational groups. Eligible awardees should live and work in the Eastern Tennessee / Western North Carolina region and have a demonstrated impact through environmentalism, conservation, or outdoor recreation

The award was accepted by UT Professor and Director of Environmental Studies Dr. Michael McKinney, who has taught over 10,000 students in his 38-year career. His research is focused on the larger watershed of East Tennessee, with a focus in preservation of endangered freshwater mussels. Dr. McKinney is also editor-in-chief of *Urban Ecosystems*, and he provides watershed education programming to rural counties of the region through the East Tennessee Environmental Educators in partnership with ETDD.