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The sanitary sewer
rehabilitation
project is underway.
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Stay Cool for Less

Smart summer habits add up on your energy bill

Tennessee summers are no joke, and your air conditioner knows it. The good news? A few simple habits can keep your home comfortable without sending your energy bill through the roof.

SET YOUR THERMOSTAT STRATEGICALLY. The U.S. Department of Energy recommends 78 F when you're home and higher when you're away. Every degree lower can add 6% to 8% to your cooling costs.

USE CEILING FANS THE RIGHT WAY. In summer, fans should spin counterclockwise to push down cool air. Remember—fans cool people, not rooms. Turn them off when you leave.

BLOCK THE HEAT BEFORE IT ENTERS. Close blinds and curtains on south- and west-facing windows during the afternoon hours. This simple step can significantly reduce indoor heat gain.

SHIFT CHORES TO THE EVENING. Dishwashers, dryers and ovens add heat and strain the grid during peak hours. Running them after 8 p.m. helps your utility and your wallet.

Small changes made consistently can add up to real savings all summer long.



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Beyond

Energy

The blue star is the standard, but how else can consumers make efficient choices?

By Drew Woolley

If you're in the market for major appliances, you've probably noticed the Energy Star logo. It may appear on the bright yellow EnergyGuide labels that make it easy to compare one model's annual energy use to another's, or as a blue label setting apart products that meet especially high energy-efficiency standards.

Buying an Energy Star-certified appliance not only ensures your home saves energy and leaves a smaller environmental footprint, but it can also save you money in the long run.

While the program has undergone some recent changes, including the sunseting of

federal rebates, looking for the Energy Star label is still the best way to be sure you're investing in an efficient appliance that will lower your energy bill without sacrificing performance. But it isn't the only way to keep track of how much energy your new purchase uses.

Following are ways you can ensure you're choosing the best new appliances and equipment for your home.

By the Numbers

Many appliances in your home or on the market have efficiency benchmarks you can track on your own. Even if they aren't conveniently displayed on a label, you can still compare them between different models, as long as you know what to look for. Here are just a few examples:



▼ **Heating, ventilation and air conditioning equipment.** Heating and cooling accounts for nearly half of the energy used in most homes, making it an area where greater efficiency can have the most noticeable impact. Much like cars have a miles-per-gallon rating, air conditioners and heat pumps have a seasonal energy-efficiency ratio. A higher SEER rating means a unit is more efficient and uses less energy over the course of a typical season.

You may also run into energy-efficiency ratios. While similar, SEER ratings measure average efficiency over an entire season, whereas EER ratings judge cooling capacity performance during peak periods of extreme hot temperatures.

Washing machines. Similarly, the modified energy factor accounts for energy and hot water consumed during each wash cycle.

It also accounts for how much moisture the washer leaves on clothes for a dryer to remove. The higher the MEF, the more efficient.

If you're concerned about water use, the water factor is also worth keeping an eye on.

Windows. As one of the largest sources of heat gain and loss in a home, the efficiency of windows can't be overlooked. If you're in the market to upgrade, keep an eye on the U-factor, which measures how well a window insulates, and the solar heat gain coefficient, which tells you how much heat the window lets through. Whether you prioritize U-factor or SHGC largely depends on your area's climate and which direction the windows are facing.

In the market for something specific? Most major household products and appliances have efficiency ratings just like these. Visit the Department of Energy or Environmental Protection Agency's websites for more information on which ones to look to as a guide for making your own energy-efficient purchase.

Ways to Save

There are still ways to get help with

energy-efficient investments.

Rebates established under the Inflation Reduction Act on the state level are still options, but availability depends on where you live. Some states have started offering their own point-of-sale or mail-in rebates, so be sure to check what is available in your area.

In addition, your local electric utility may offer rebates of its own. Many have rebate pages on their websites where you can find forms to save on smart thermostats, efficient HVAC units, heat pumps and more.

While buying an Energy Star-certified appliance may still be the easiest way to make efficient purchases for your home, it isn't the only option. By paying extra attention to efficiency ratings for specific appliances and staying on top of rebates and tax incentives in your area, you can cut back on your upfront costs and energy bills over time. ■

What's Behind the Star?

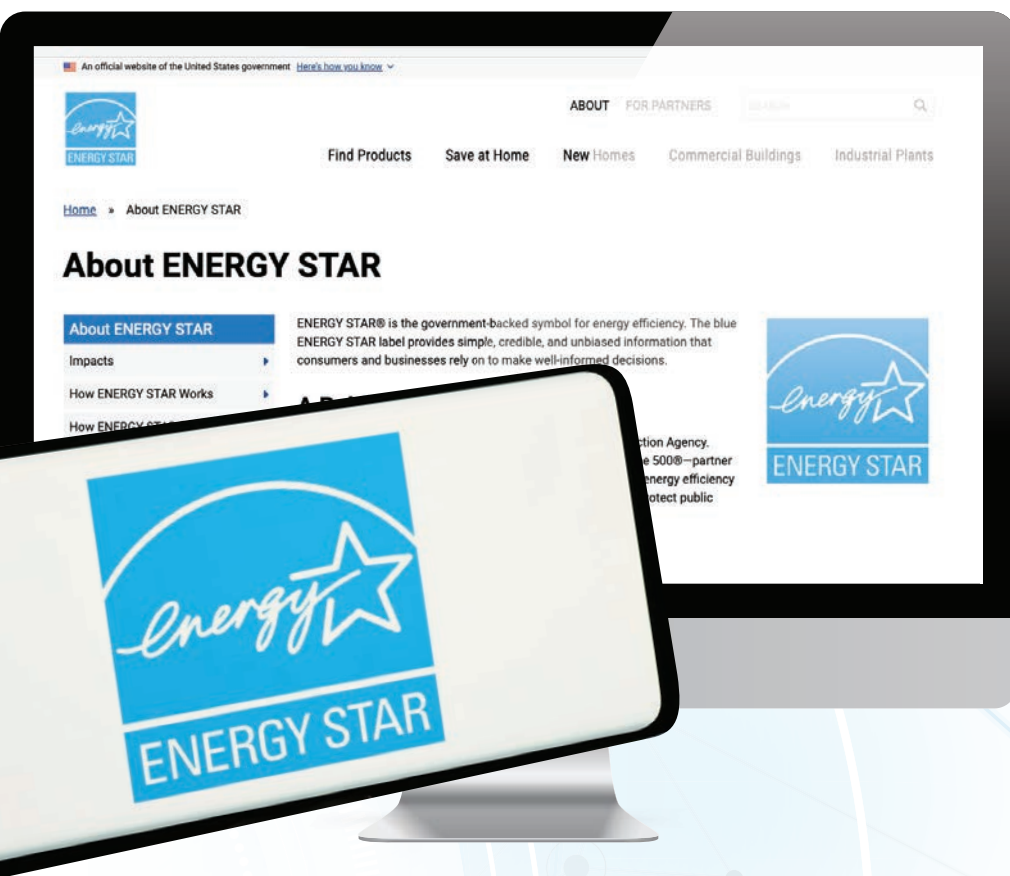
Whether it's a label on your new appliance or a logo on the EnergyGuide label, Energy Star certification gives buyers confidence they're investing in long-term savings. But what does that blue star actually mean?

Energy Star is a program established by the U.S. Department of Energy and the Environmental Protection Agency to help consumers find energy-efficient products and reduce their impact on the environment.

To earn the certification, products must perform more efficiently than the average model while providing the same level of performance. But that isn't where the process ends.

Each product is tested in EPA-recognized labs using standardized procedures to make sure it meets Energy Star requirements. Once testing is complete, a third-party certification group reviews and verifies it before a product gets the Energy Star label.

Earning that certification still isn't the end. The EPA conducts random, off-the-shelf testing of Energy Star products to make sure they still meet those high standards. If a product fails one of these verification tests, it may ultimately be disqualified and lose Energy Star certification.



Building Back Stronger: **How Erwin Utilities Is Saving Customers Millions While Protecting the Environment**

Since 2023, Erwin Utilities has quietly undertaken one of the most ambitious infrastructure campaigns in its history—investing \$15.8 million in water and wastewater projects across Unicoi County. Remarkably, thanks to an aggressive grants strategy led by the in-house engineering staff, customers will only pay about \$560,000 of that total. The rest—approximately \$14.4 million—is covered by state and federal grants.

For the average residential customer, that translates to roughly **\$9.95 per month**, or about **\$120 per year** over a 40-year payback period. Without grant funding, that monthly figure would have been many times higher.

What the Projects Address

At the heart of the effort is the fight against inflow and infiltration, known as I&I, which

describes the seeping of stormwater runoff and groundwater into sanitary sewer lines through cracks, broken joints and deteriorated manholes. I&I is the primary driver of sewer overflows, sewage surcharges into homes and businesses, and treatment bypass events at the wastewater treatment plant.

Through its Sanitary Sewer Rehabilitation Project, Erwin Utilities crews and contractors clean, video-inspect, and evaluate sewer mains throughout the collection system, then repair or replace the most critically damaged sections. The \$10.8 million rehabilitation effort—the largest of current projects—is being carried out in partnership with McGill Associates, Portland Utilities, and the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation's State Water Infrastructure grants team, and the First Tennessee Development District.

Recovering from Hurricane Helene

These projects have not taken place under normal circumstances. In September 2024, Hurricane Helene devastated Erwin and Unicoi County. The Nolichucky River—a 115-mile waterway that flows through the heart of the community and is a candidate for National Wild and Scenic Rivers Designation—rose an estimated 30 feet above its normal level. The flooding destroyed homes, businesses, the county hospital, and critical utility infrastructure including water mains and sewer lines, in the Erwin Industrial Park.

Erwin Utilities paused sewer rehabilitation work to focus on emergency recovery before resuming in August 2025. In the meantime, the utility completed several hurricane-related projects included in its overall investment:



Part of the sewer infrastructure program includes rehabilitating the manholes, above right. Once repaired, above left, crews will rehabilitate the failed lateral to resume proper flow.

- **Rock Creek Interceptor**—Replacement of 2,400 linear feet of undersized sewer interceptor to reduce overflows in the Rock Creek basin. *Cost: \$1.1 million.*
- **South Industrial Lift Station**—Replacement of a failing dry-pit lift station with a modern wet-well submersible station, eliminating dangerous working conditions and high I&I. *Cost: \$900,000.*
- **Industrial Park Water Mains**—Replacement of 5,500 linear feet of water distribution lines destroyed by Hurricane Helene. *Cost: \$1.5 million.*
- **Industrial Park Sewer Mains and Lift Station Restoration**—Replacement of 2,800 linear feet of sanitary sewer mains lost in the hurricane and restoration of the South Industrial Lift Station. *Cost: \$1.5 million.*
- **Systemwide Sewer Rehabilitation**—Ongoing repair, replacement, and rehabilitation of sewer mains, manholes, and service laterals across the system. *Cost: \$10.8 million.*

Additionally, Erwin Utilities restored a water main on Wilson Road that was washed from a streambank during 2023 flooding, and repaired another on Norton Hollow Road damaged by Hurricane Helene's floodwaters.

Environmental Benefits That Reach the River

Every gallon of stormwater kept out of the sewer system produces a cascade of environmental benefits. Reducing I&I means fewer raw sewage overflows into

local waterways, fewer instances of sewage backing up into homes and businesses, and less untreated wastewater bypassing the treatment plant before its discharged into the Nolichucky River.

The Nolichucky is far more than a local waterway. Flowing from the high peaks of western North Carolina through the Cherokee and Pisgah National Forests, it supports diverse ecosystems, serves as a drinking water source, and draws thousands of visitors each year for world-class whitewater rafting and recreation—generating millions of dollars in tourism revenue for Unicoi County. Protecting this river is protecting the community's economic future as well as its natural heritage.

Improving the water distribution system also means less water lost through leaking or failing pipes, conserving the region's drinking water resources and improving service reliability for every customer.

A Strategy That Works for Customers

The financial model behind these projects is straightforward but takes dedicated work to execute. Erwin Utilities' water and wastewater engineering staff members, led by Director Jason Foster, meticulously track I&I data, identify the most critical infrastructure needs, prepare engineering analyses, and apply for state and federal grants. Administrative and consulting partners—including McGill Associates and the First Tennessee Development District—support grant applications and project management.

The result: Of \$15.8 million invested since 2023, grants cover over 91% of project costs. The residential customer share—approximately \$6.87 million spread across nearly 2,904 residential accounts over 40 years at 4% interest—is roughly \$119 annually per household.

Under the leadership of Jason and President and CEO Lee Brown, Erwin Utilities demonstrates that a small utility can control expenses by investing in the right staff and the right strategy. EU and its partners have built a grants pipeline that consistently delivers results.

The utility's engineering team included Engineering Technician Josh Peterson and Water and Wastewater Foreman Chuck Edney. Key partners included Christina Wichlin, at the First Tennessee Development District, and McGill Associates team members Jamie Carden, Bill Hunigan, Keith Webb, Chase Givens, Keith Rhodes and Chase Carden.

The Bottom Line

Erwin Utilities is doing what many larger utilities struggle to accomplish: modernizing aging infrastructure, responding to a historic natural disaster, protecting a treasured river, and keeping costs manageable for customers—all at the same time. For water and wastewater customers, the message is clear: Your utility is working to ensure safe, reliable service at the lowest possible cost, and the investments being made today will pay dividends for decades to come. ■

Best Tasting Water

Erwin Utilities was awarded Best Tasting Water in the region. Pictured from left are Green County Mayor Kevin Morrison; Nick Castle, with Sen. Bill Hagerty's office; Bill Forrester, with the First Tennessee Development District; Clay Hepburn and Luke Cole, with Erwin Utilities; and Shelly Adkins with Rep. Diana Harshbarger's office.



The MOTHER ROAD TURNS 100

Celebrations rev up America's iconic Route 66

By Jim McCarty

It's midday at Missouri Hick Bar-B-Que along Route 66 near Cuba, Missouri. The lunch rush is almost over when the staff springs into action, moving tables together, preparing for a big gathering.

Soon, the restaurant walls vibrate with the two-cylinder thump of a dozen or so Harley-Davidson motorcycles. The door opens, and the happy sounds of a group that's experiencing the time of their lives reverberate—in Swedish.

Scenes like this play out every day along what remains of the most famous highway in the world. It's called the Mother Road, Main Street of America and the Highway That's the Best. It once traversed eight states

along 2,448 miles, stretching from the shores of Lake Michigan in Chicago to a pier at the Pacific Ocean in Santa Monica, California.

Its official name is Route 66, and it's about to get busier than it's been since it was decommissioned in 1985.

This year, Route 66 fans from around the world will look for new kicks as the celebrated road turns 100. Springfield, Missouri, was in the spotlight in April as the site of the national kickoff of America's Route 66 Centennial Celebration.

The Queen City of the Ozarks earned that honor through a competitive process, but also due to its status as the birthplace of Route 66. On April 30, 1926, John Woodruff, a Springfield businessman, sent a telegram to Washington, D.C., requesting the new road be named U.S. Route 66. The

idea for the road didn't originate here, but its iconic name did.

"This recognition is a testament to Missouri's deep roots in the history of America's most iconic highway and the vibrant spirits of the communities that keep that legacy alive today," Missouri Gov. Mike Kehoe says.

The governor's farm sits along Route 66 in Jerome.

"We have some of the original roadway in Pulaski County that you can still drive on," he says. "People come from all over the world to drive on that. This roadway is so historic, and it has made millions of memories for not just Americans but for people all over the world."

Kickoff festivities included five satellite cities: Joliet, Illinois;



ROUTE 66



DON'T MISS THIS!

Here's the top attraction for each of the eight states.

ILLINOIS—GEMINI GIANT (WILMINGTON)

If you only stop once before leaving Illinois, make it here. The 30-foot-tall Muffler Man is one of Route 66's most iconic photo ops and a perfect start to the journey.

MISSOURI—MERAMEC CAVERNS (STANTON)

A road-trip classic since the 1930s, billboards and barn roof signs for this cavern once lined the entire Mother Road, and the attraction still feels like pure Americana.

KANSAS—CARS ON THE ROUTE (GALENA)

Kansas has only 13 miles of Route 66, but this restored Kan-O-Tex gas station—home to the truck that inspired Mater in "Cars"—is its standout.

OKLAHOMA—BLUE WHALE (CATOOSA)

An absolutely essential stop is the giant, smiling blue whale beside a pond. It is one of Route 66's most beloved and quirky landmarks.

TEXAS—CADILLAC RANCH (AMARILLO)

Ten Cadillacs sit nose-down in the desert. They're covered in spray paint, and you're encouraged to add your own. It's irreplaceable Route 66 kitsch.

NEW MEXICO—BLUE SWALLOW MOTEL (TUCUMCARI)

See the best neon on the entire route. It is a family-run motel with beautifully preserved rooms, and a true 1940s motor court experience. Even if you don't stay, stop for photos.

ARIZONA—PETRIFIED FOREST AND PAINTED DESERT (HOLBROOK)

This is the only national park the Mother Road drives straight through where classic roadside nostalgia meets staggering natural beauty.

CALIFORNIA—ROY'S MOTEL & CAFÉ (AMBOY)

A surreal desert time capsule features a legendary retro-futurist neon sign. Nothing captures the lonely, romantic end stretch of Route 66 like Roy's.

St. Louis, Missouri; Amarillo, Texas; Albuquerque, New Mexico; and Santa Monica, California.

In preparation for the yearlong celebration, communities all along the historic route are sprucing up their landmarks, planning events, relighting neon signs and prepping for a major influx of visitors who plan to motor west.

"I struggle to make a specific prediction, and part of that is because it's really hard to track specific routes," Oklahoma Route 66 Association President Rhys Martin says. "But I would be surprised if traffic didn't double just because of the attention and the people planning their trips."

Nikki Terlesky, Historic Route 66 Association of Arizona director of operations, agrees travelers are coming in a big way.

"I think Route 66 is on a lot of visitors'

bucket lists," she says. "And I think whenever there's a big milestone to be celebrated, people want to be a part of that and come experience Route 66 as it's turning 100. I know a lot of Facebook groups I follow are just buzzing with people voicing their travel plans."

While Missouri can claim the creation of the name, an Oklahoma man is known as the Father of Route 66. Cyrus Avery, a Tulsa real estate developer and owner of a coal company, saw the need for a roadway from the Midwest to the West Coast, connecting small towns and cities along the way.



Appointed in 1925 to the Joint Board of Interstate Highways, Cyrus managed to steer the route south from Illinois through Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California instead of a more northern route through Nevada.

Along with Missouri's John Woodruff, Cyrus helped launch the U.S. Highway 66 Association in 1927 to encourage its use.

"One hundred and thirty-seven delegates from 32 cities of the Southwest, meeting here today, organized the National Highway No. 66 Association and elected

John T. Woodruff of Springfield, Mo., its first president," read a Springfield Daily News story. "From Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas and New Mexico, the delegates gathered in Tulsa today determined that Highway 66, which runs from Chicago via St. Louis to Los Angeles, shall in fact become the 'Main Street of America.'"

At the beginning, the route joined various existing state roads, many of which were still gravel. Besides paving the highway, the association's

leaders also marketed Route 66 over other transcontinental routes.

One of the first efforts to popularize the road was an epic foot race that followed Route 66 from its start in California to St. Louis, then on to New York City. The distance was 3,400 miles over just three months. It started with 275 runners, but 77 dropped out on the first day. Only 55 finished. The winner was 20-year-old Andy Payne of Claremore, Oklahoma.

Through publicity like this, the nation learned of the new route, and traffic grew exponentially. Truckers favored its flat terrain, with elevations measured in hundreds of feet compared to thousands crossing the Rocky Mountains.

Here are the most iconic attractions along historic U.S. Route 66 through several of the eight states it passes through. These highlights combine classic roadside Americana, natural wonders, must-see towns and famous photo stops.



In the 1930s, Route 66 became a pathway for migrants fleeing the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression, heading west in search of opportunity.

When World War II gripped the nation, the route became strategic for moving troops and materials to support the war effort. This led to a major effort to rebuild the roadway for Fort Leonard Wood, an Army base in St. Robert, Missouri.

The highway was no match for the heavy trucks supplying the base. So, in 1941, construction began on a four-lane divided highway between it and Rolla. A deep cut bypassed a steep grade near Devil's Elbow. Hooker Cut became and the deepest highway excavation in the nation to date, and the four-lane, divided highway was the first of its kind. The improved roadway was fully open to traffic by September 1945—ironically, the same month the war ended.

Other improvements included rerouting to avoid a series of dangerous hairpin curves in Arizona, dubbed the Sidewinder.

This 8-mile roadway has 191 curves with no guardrails and 12% grades. Today, it is often visited by adventurous travelers.

Bourbon Water Tower
Arguably the best selfie stop on Route 66, the town's water tower is one of the most photographed and featured sites on the road.

Ted Drewes Frozen Custard
This Mother Road staple has been served upside down since 1929.



St. Louis



THE ULTIMATE ROUTE



(Ordered for the drive)

PLAYLIST

DEPARTURE: CHICAGO (WINDOWS DOWN)

- Route 66 - Chuck Berry
- Sweet Home Chicago - The Blues Brothers
- Start Me Up - The Rolling Stones
- Good Times Roll - The Cars
- Real Gone - Sheryl Crow
- Life Is a Highway - Rascal Flatts
- Born to Be Wild - Steppenwolf
- Runnin' Down a Dream - Tom Petty
- Drivin' My Life Away - Eddie Rabbitt
- On the Road Again - Willie Nelson

HEARTLAND MILES:

MISSOURI → OKLAHOMA → KANSAS

- Missouri River Run - Chloe Hoecker
- If You Wanna Get to Heaven - Ozark Mountain Daredevils
- King of the Road - Roger Miller
- Boys From Oklahoma - Cross Canadian Ragweed
- Oklahoma Smokeshow - Zach Bryan
- Carry On Wayward Son - Kansas
- Dust in the Wind - Kansas
- Ain't Going Down (Til the Sun Comes Up) - Garth Brooks
- Ain't No Love in Oklahoma - Luke Combs
- Cadillac Ranch - Chris LeDoux

OPEN COUNTRY AND FREEDOM

- Wide Open Spaces - Dixie Chicks
- Follow Your Arrow - Kacey Musgraves
- Wagon Wheel - Old Crow Medicine Show
- Copperhead Road - Steve Earle
- Midnight Rider - The Allman Brothers Band
- Ramblin' Man - The Allman Brothers Band
- Blue Sky - The Allman Brothers Band
- Born to Run - Bruce Springsteen

DESERT STRETCH:

TEXAS → NEW MEXICO → ARIZONA

- Amarillo by Morning - George Strait
- I've Been Everywhere - Johnny Cash
- A Horse With No Name - America
- Ventura Highway - America

- Take Me to the River - Talking Heads
- Running on Empty - Jackson Browne
- Take the Long Way Home - Supertramp
- Drive - The Cars

DUSK, MOTELS AND LONG THOUGHTS

- Fast Car - Tracy Chapman
- Angel From Montgomery - John Prine
- Into the Mystic - Van Morrison
- Gypsy - Fleetwood Mac
- Landslide - Fleetwood Mac
- The Mother Road - Alan Rhody
- Here I Go Again - Whitesnake
- Peaceful Easy Feeling - Eagles
- Take It to the Limit - Eagles

CALIFORNIA ARRIVAL

- Bad Moon Rising - Creedence Clearwater Revival
- California Dreamin' - The Mamas & the Papas
- Hotel California - Eagles
- Go Your Own Way - Fleetwood Mac
- California Girls - The Beach Boys
- Everyday Is a Winding Road - Sheryl Crow
- Beverly Hills - Weezer

SUNSHINE, CELEBRATION AND LETTING LOOSE

- Party in the USA - Miley Cyrus
- Hot to Go - Chappell Roan
- Paradise City - Guns N' Roses
- Getaway Car - Taylor Swift
- Good Time - Owl City & Carly Rae Jepsen
- Born in the USA - Bruce Springsteen

THE MEANING OF THE JOURNEY (CLOSING STRETCH)

- This Land Is Your Land - Woody Guthrie
- Take Me Home, Country Roads - John Denver
- Kyrie - Mr. Mister
- The Long and Winding Road - The Beatles
- Travelin' Thru - Dolly Parton
- Running on Empty - Jackson Browne
- What a Wonderful World - Louis Armstrong
- End of the Line - Traveling Wilburys

By the 1950s, Route 66 was the byway of a nation in love with the automobile. Cabins, motels, roadhouses and all manner of highway kitsch sprang up to lure motorists off the pavement. Among them was the first fast-food restaurant, believed to be Red's Giant Hamburg in Springfield, Missouri.

Route 66 came to represent everything Americans hold near and dear: freedom,

adventure, nostalgia and small-town values. Those themes were shared in the 1960s TV series "Route 66," which helped fuel today's nostalgia for the road.

Championed in songs such as Bobby Troup's "(Get Your Kicks on) Route 66" and the Eagles' "Take it Easy," immortalized by John Steinbeck's "Grapes of Wrath" and introduced to and new

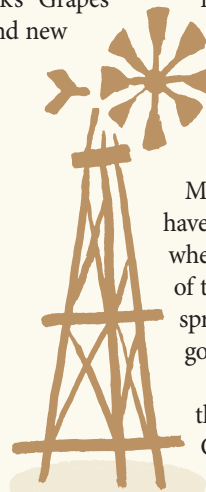
generation through Pixar's "Cars" movie, the Mother Road continues to fascinate those who prefer life in the slow lane.

The demise of Route 66 came with the rise of the new Interstate Highway System—including interstates 55, 44, 40, 15 and 10. Small towns where Route 66 was the main road were bypassed, and many businesses couldn't survive as traffic moved away.

Route 66 was decommissioned in 1985. But the road never truly disappeared.

Mother Nature and the wrecking ball have taken their toll, but if you know where to look, you can still find remnants of the old route. New businesses have sprung from the ashes of those long-gone oases on the road.

So, as the song says, "get hip to this timely tip, when you make that California trip," and make this the year to get your kicks—on Route 66. ■



THE ULTIMATE ROUTE 66 QUIZ



Q: WHO ORIGINALLY SANG "ROUTE 6?"

A: Nat King Cole, with the King Cole Trio, first recorded the song in 1946 at Radio Recorders in Los Angeles. Capitol Records released it as a single, which reached No. 11 on Billboard's pop chart.

Q: WHO IS CONSIDERED THE FATHER OF ROUTE 66?

A: In the early 1900s, Cyrus Avery of Tulsa, Oklahoma, a real estate developer and owner of a coal company, began acquiring oil leases. With the need to reach the barren lands around him and the need for a roadway from the Midwest to the western lands connecting cities along the way, the road became a reality. With John Woodruff of Springfield, Missouri, Cyrus promoted the idea of a highway connecting the Midwest to the West Coast.

Q: WHAT TOWN IS CONSIDERED THE BIRTHPLACE OF ROUTE 66?

A: Springfield, Missouri, is widely recognized as the birthplace of Route 66. A passionate advocate for the "Good Roads" movement, Springfield businessman John Woodruff promoted highway development across Missouri. While the road itself did not begin in Springfield, the idea of the route was born here, making Springfield the home for the Main Street of America. John was elected the first president of the Route 66 Association.

Q: WHAT WRITER MADE ROUTE 66 FAMOUS?

A: John Steinbeck proclaimed Route 66 the Mother Road in his 1939 book, "The Grapes of Wrath."

Q: WHERE DID THE ORIGINAL ROUTE BEGIN AND END?

A: Route 66 began in downtown Chicago and ended in Santa Monica, California, near the Pacific Ocean. The official start is at Adams Street and Michigan Avenue, with classic spots like Lou Mitchell's diner nearby.

Q: HOW LONG WAS HISTORIC ROUTE 66?

A: It is generally accepted that, from beginning to end in 1926, Route 66 traversed 2,448 miles. However, as the route evolved over its 60 years of existence with new, improved alignments, the mileage varied over time.

Q: WHAT WAS THE ORIGINAL NAME FOR ROUTE 66?

A: John and Cyrus also played a key role in the naming the road. It had first been named Route 60, as all main east-to-west highways at the time ended in zero. However, the pair felt Route 66 would be easier to promote, especially with the flow of having two of the same number. Thus, on April 30, 1926, a telegram was sent to the Bureau of Public Roads asking for the name to be changed to Route 66.

Q: WHAT DISTINCTION DOES RED'S GIANT HAMBURG, A SPRINGFIELD, MISSOURI, ROUTE 66 RESTAURANT, HOLD?

A: It is considered the first drive-in fast-food restaurant. Red's opened in 1947 and operated until 1984. In early 2019, Red's Giant Hamburg made a comeback, 35 years after the original restaurant's closure. The new restaurant, on Route 413, was a recreation of the original Route 66 location. It opened in August 2019 and operated for almost six years, closing its doors in May 2025. In 2013, a fundraising campaign was established to recreate the Red's Giant Hamburg sign. The sign, shaped like a cross, was installed in 2015.

Q: WAS U.S. ROUTE 66 PAVED?

A: When Route 66 officially opened in 1926, only 800 miles were paved, the rest being graded dirt, gravel, bricks or wood planks. It took 11 more years before the road would become the first national highway to be completely paved.

Q: WHAT STATES DOES ROUTE 66 TRAVEL THROUGH?

A: Route 66 traverses eight states: Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California.

Q: WHEN WAS ROUTE 66 DECOMMISSIONED?

A: With the advent of the Federal Interstate Highway System, U.S. Route 66 was gradually decommissioned, with the last segment, in Arizona, removed from the federal system June 27, 1985.

Q: WHAT STATE HAS THE MOST MILES OF ROUTE 66?

A: New Mexico has the most miles, and Kansas has the fewest—Illinois, 301; Missouri, 317; Kansas, 13; Oklahoma, 432; Texas, 186; New Mexico, 487; Arizona, 401; and California, 314, for a total of 2,448 miles.

Q: WHAT ANIMATED MOVIE IS BASED ON ROUTE 66?

A: The 2006 animated movie "Cars" tells the story of Route 66 through characters Lightning McQueen and Sally and their escapades at Radiator Springs, a fictionalized representation of all Route 66 towns. Sally liked to say, "Those were the days we traveled to have a great time, not to make great time." In the movie, Ramone's House of Body Art looks similar to the U-Drop Inn in Shamrock, Texas. Other real-life locations that inspired parts of the movie include Cadillac Ranch, Wigwam Motels and Wagon Wheel Motel.



ADOBE STOCK IMAGE BY
ACENTO CREATIVO

Hot Summer; Cool Wraps



Mix and match favorite ingredients

When the Tennessee sun is doing its best to chase you out of the kitchen, a wrap is one of the easiest ways back to the dinner table. Soft tortillas, a quick filling and a few minutes of assembly are all it takes to turn deli meats, leftover chicken, fresh vegetables and pantry staples into a satisfying handheld meal. The recipes that follow are meant to be mixed, matched and made your own—pack them for a picnic at the lake, slice them into pinwheels for a porch supper or stash one in a cooler for the long way home.

CHICKEN CAESAR WRAP

- 1 cup creamy Caesar salad dressing
- ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 4 cups cubed cooked chicken breast
- 2 cups torn romaine lettuce
- 1 cup croutons, coarsely chopped
- 8 tortillas

In a large bowl, combine the dressing, cheese, garlic powder and pepper. Add the chicken, romaine and croutons. Spoon ⅔ cup chicken mixture down the center of each tortilla, then roll up.



SOUTHWESTERN VEGGIE WRAPS

Place all ingredients except romaine and tortillas in a large bowl. Toss to combine. To serve, place romaine leaves on tortillas. Top with bean mixture, then roll up.



- 15-ounce can black beans, rinsed and drained
- 2 large tomatoes, seeded and diced
- 1 cup frozen corn, thawed
- 1 cup cooked brown rice, cooled
- ½ cup sour cream
- ½ cup minced fresh cilantro
- 2 shallots, chopped

- 1 jalapeno pepper, seeded and chopped
- 3 tablespoons lime juice
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin
- ½ teaspoon chili powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 8 romaine lettuce leaves
- 8 tortillas

CHOPPED ITALIAN WRAP

- 8 tortillas
- 4 cups iceberg lettuce, chopped
- 16 slices red onion
- 16 thin slices salami
- 16 thin slices ham
- 24 to 32 slices pepperoni
- 8 slices provolone cheese
- Banana peppers
- 4 tablespoons mustard
- 8 tablespoons mayonnaise
- 4 tablespoons Italian dressing
- 4 teaspoons Italian seasoning

Place lettuce, onion, salami, ham, pepperoni, provolone cheese and banana peppers on a cutting board. Use a large knife to chop up all items into bite-sized pieces. Place in a bowl. Mix with mustard, mayonnaise, Italian dressing and Italian seasoning. This should resemble a chopped salad. Add filling to each tortilla, then roll up.

HAM AND CHEESE WRAPS

- 16 ounces cream cheese, room temperature
- 1½-ounce packet ranch seasoning mix
- 1 cup shredded extra-sharp cheddar cheese
- 8 flour tortillas
- ½ pound finely chopped ham
- ½ cup chopped green onion

In a medium bowl, mix together cream cheese, ranch mix and shredded cheese. Spread cream cheese mixture onto each tortilla in a ¼-inch layer.

Sprinkle each tortilla with ham and onion. Roll each tortilla tight to make sure the cream cheese blend binds the tortilla together. Refrigerate until fully chilled, about 1 to 2 hours.

CRANBERRY TURKEY WRAPS

- 11-ounce can mandarin oranges, drained
- 1 medium tart apple, peeled and diced
- 3 tablespoons dried cranberries
- ¾ cup plain yogurt
- 2 tablespoons mayonnaise
- 8 tortillas
- 8 romaine lettuce leaves
- 1 pound thinly sliced deli turkey
- 8 slices mozzarella cheese
- 2 tablespoons chopped pecans, toasted

In a bowl, combine oranges, apples and cranberries. In another bowl, combine yogurt and mayonnaise, then spread over tortillas. Layer each tortilla with lettuce, turkey, cheese, fruit mixture and pecans. Roll up tightly.

**SPINACH TURKEY WRAPS**

- 8 tortillas
- 8 ounces cream cheese
- 1½ cups sour cream
- 2 celery stalks, finely chopped
- ½ teaspoon dill weed
- 1 teaspoon onion flakes or dry onion soup mix
- 4 cups fresh spinach
- 1 pound sliced turkey breast
- Salt and pepper, to taste

In a bowl, mix together cream cheese, sour cream, celery, dill and onion flakes. On a flat surface, lay out tortillas. Spread with cream cheese mixture. Layer spinach leaves over cheese mixture. Layer turkey slices over spinach mixture, then roll up.

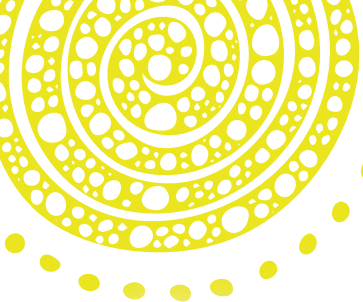
CLUB WRAP

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| 3 ounces cream cheese, softened | 2-ounce jar diced pimientos, drained |
| ½ cup ranch salad dressing | 8 tortillas |
| 8 bacon strips, cooked and crumbled | 8 thin slices deli ham |
| 2.25 ounce can sliced black olives, drained | 8 thin slices deli turkey |
| ½ cup finely chopped onion | 8 thin slices deli roast beef |
| | 2 cups shredded cheddar cheese |

In a small bowl, beat cream cheese and ranch dressing until well blended. In another bowl, combine bacon, olives, onion and pimientos.

Spread cream cheese mixture over tortillas. Layer with ham, turkey and roast beef. Sprinkle with bacon mixture and cheddar cheese, then roll up.





TENNESSEE CONNECTIONS PLANNER

Make the most of summer across Tennessee with these family-friendly festivals and community celebrations. From small-town traditions to lively fairs and food-filled gatherings, these events offer plenty of ways to enjoy the season close to home



BELL BUCKLE

June 20

RC Cola-MoonPie Festival

Join this quirky and beloved tradition that celebrates the iconic Southern pairing of RC Cola and MoonPies. The event runs 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. and features live music, clogging performances, fun contests, a colorful parade and the ceremonial cutting of the World's Largest MoonPie. Kick off the day with the morning's 5K and 10-mile races. bellbucklechamber.com

PHOTO COURTESY OF BELL BUCKLE
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

MANCHESTER

Aug. 2

Manchester Watermelon Festival

Visit Manchester the day before National Watermelon Day for the Manchester Watermelon Festival. Taking place from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., the event features a full day packed with all things watermelon, including a watermelon-eating contest, a watermelon crawl, a foam party and plenty of wild new watermelon creations. Other highlights include live music, free watermelons and a kids' zone. Plan on bringing the children a towel, water shoes and a change of clothes. Admission and parking are free. tnhomeandfarm.com/tennessee-events/manchester-watermelon-festival

MURFREESBORO

Aug. 8

Peach Cobbler Festival

The fifth annual Peach Cobbler Festival welcomes more than 100 vendors to Murfreesboro. The event is 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Lane Agri Park and includes a \$5 peach cobbler contest, food trucks, a kids' zone, and a petting zoo. Admission and parking are free. tnhomeandfarm.com/tennessee-events/peach-cobbler-festival

WHITE BLUFF

Aug. 15

World Honeybee Day Festival

Celebrate the importance of honeybees at the sixth annual festival hosted by Dickson Bee Club. The

SPRINGFIELD

June 5, Aug. 7, Sept. 4

1st Fridays

On the first Friday of each month through October, downtown Springfield comes alive from 6-9 p.m. with free, family-friendly festivities. Enjoy live music, food trucks, a kids' zone, a specialty vehicle cruise-in, and more than 80 local vendors offering produce, crafts and unique merchandise. Stroll the square, connect with friends and savor the small-town charm that makes Springfield special. realspringfieldtn.com/main-street/1st-fridays

OAK RIDGE

June 20

Lavender Festival

Experience a fragrant day at historic Jackson Square from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., featuring more than 200 artisan vendors, live music, interactive workshops on lavender cultivation and uses, and fun children's activities such as sidewalk chalk art and train rides. This event is brought to you by Grow Oak Ridge.

jacksonsquarelavenderfestival.org

DICKSON

June 27

Robert Spicer Tennessee State Buck-Dance Championship

Honor Dickson County native Robert Spicer at the annual buck dancing championship at Grand Old Hatchery on Main Street. Registration begins at 10 a.m., followed by a dance workshop. Competitions start at 11 a.m. across various age divisions and dance categories, showcasing talented performers competing for state titles. facebook.com/robertspicerdancecompetition

RIPLEY

July 10-11

Lauderdale County Tomato Festival

This annual festival at Ripley City Park celebrates the area's juicy, homegrown tomatoes and honors local tomato growers. Activities begin at 10 a.m. July 10 and include a tomato contest, talent show, car show, food and craft vendors, a kids' zone, baby crawling contest and lots more entertainment and fun. lauderdalecountyttn.org

event includes live music, local beer and mead tastings, more than 60 vendors, abundant local honey and educational sessions for all ages from 9 a.m. until 2 p.m. at Bibb White Bluff Civic Center. dicksonbeeclub.com

MORRISTOWN

Aug. 15

David Crockett's 239th Birthday Celebration

This birthday party for Tennessee's favorite son includes blacksmithing demonstrations, storytelling, reenactors, music, museum tours and birthday cake from 2-5 p.m. at the Crockett Tavern Museum. Admission is free.

crockettavernmuseum.org

SPARTA

Aug. 28-Sept. 5

White County Fair

Celebrate community traditions at the White County Fair with nine days of family-friendly fun. The fair features livestock shows, 4-H exhibits, pageants, agricultural displays, and a full midway with carnival rides and games. Nightly events often include truck and tractor pulls, live entertainment and competitions, while food vendors serve classic fair favorites. Gates typically open in the evenings on weekdays and earlier on weekends.

whitecountygafair.com

DICKSON

Sept. 3-7

Dickson County Fair

A classic county fair featuring carnival rides, livestock shows, food vendors and family entertainment, as well as a demolition derby at the Dickson County Fairgrounds. Opens at 6 p.m. every day with armbands and tickets available and rides provided by Kissel Entertainment.

kisselentertainment.com/events/32



ADOBE STOCK IMAGES BY GOGA, GRAPHIXERA

SPRINGFIELD

July 3

Freedom Fest

Celebrate Independence Day at the Robertson County Fairgrounds beginning at 4:30 p.m. Enjoy carnival rides, live music performances, inflatables, local food vendors and a spectacular fireworks finale around 9 p.m. Admission is free, and parking is available at Legion Park. A clear-bag policy is enforced.

springfieldtn.gov

PHOTO COURTESY OF CITY OF SPRINGFIELD



Include Your Upcoming Event

Want to share an event with the readers of Tennessee Connections? Please visit tinyurl.com/TennesseeEvents or scan the QR code to submit the details. Thank you.



OLD SEVIERVILLE

Sept. 1-7

Sevier County Fair

Get ready for seven days of fun for the entire family by marking your calendar for the 91st Sevier County Fair on Old Knoxville Highway. A true agricultural fair, this event has something for everyone, including livestock shows, rodeos, exciting rides, games, free laser tag and nightly contests. Parking is free and children 10 and younger are admitted for free.

seviercountyfair.org

PHOTO COURTESY OF SEVIER COUNTY FAIR



For a complete list of what's happening in Tennessee, visit tnvacation.com/calendar.

Climate View Installed to Provide Real-time Weather Information

Employees from the National Weather Service (NWS) along with a representative of Campbell Scientific installed the first-in-the-United States, 12-parameter, all-in-one weather module called a Climate View 50 G2. The weather module communicates via cellular network protocol to the “CampbellCloud” and relays real-time information to users.

Erwin Utilities has partnered with the NWS since the mid- 1990s as a Co-op weather site, reporting precipitation and temperature daily. In addition, this unit measures relative humidity, barometric pressure, wind direction, wind speed, lighting average distance, lightning strike count, and solar radiation in real time.

For this pilot project, installation of another 10 units is planned across the country, including Hawaii, by August 2026. ■



Water Treatment Supervisor Clay Hepburn stands with our new NWS Weather Module.



From left are James Enlow, Axiom Consultants; Kyle Snowdin, NWS Morristown meteorologist; Sam Roberts, NWS Morristown meteorologist; and Janine Scianna, NWS chief of staff, based in Alexandria, Virginia.

Employee Spotlight



Jo A. Cole

Chamber recognizes Cole for Distinguished Service

The Unicoi County Chamber of Commerce honored Jo A. Cole as the recipient of the 2026 Best of Unicoi County Distinguished Service to the Community Award.

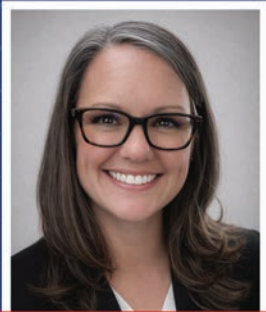
This lifetime achievement honor recognizes individuals whose selfless, consistent service has left a lasting impact on the community. Jo Cole exemplifies this through decades of quiet dedication, compassion, and humility.

Known professionally for her work at Erwin Utilities, Jo is defined even more by her kindness and care for others. She has supported numerous community efforts, including Kiwanis' Christmas for Kids, No Trash November, PTO leadership, and Relay for Life. She has also provided meals, gifts, and encouragement to neighbors and nursing home residents, often through simple, meaningful acts of kindness.

Guided by faith and the values instilled by her parents, Jo has lived a life centered on serving others. Her steady presence, generosity, and servant's heart have touched countless lives." ■

WELCOME to our team!





Katherine Gouge
Marketing & Public Relations Coordinator






Frank Kerns

BOARD MEMBER

Welcome Frank Kerns

Erwin Utilities would like to welcome Frank Kerns as our newest board member. Frank joined the team in April 2026. Currently with BWXT, Inc., Frank's professional background makes him a great addition to our board. We look forward to the valuable perspective he will provide. ■



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www.tenn811.com.

Pet, play and explore at Lucky Ladd Farms

What Is It?

Lucky Ladd Farms in Eagleville blends a classic petting farm with activities such as mega slides, pony rides and sunflower-picking. Known as Tennessee's largest petting farm, it offers an outdoor experience where visitors can interact with animals, explore nature and enjoy farm-style fun. Summer brings splash pads, sunflower fields and wide-open spaces perfect for a full day of play.

A Bit of Background

Owners Jason and Amy Ladd began hosting small groups at their Franklin property in 2007 before buying land in Eagleville and opening the farm to the public in 2009. In addition to raising crops—such as strawberries, sunflowers and pumpkins—the farm is home to more than 500 animals representing dozens of species, including rare and endangered livestock breeds.

What to Do

The heart of the experience is Lucky's Barnyard, where visitors can pet, feed and interact with a wide range of animals—from goats and sheep to llamas, alpacas and miniature cattle. Beyond the barnyard, the farm features more than 70 attractions, including mega slides, playgrounds, pedal carts and nature trails. Pony and wagon rides add a classic touch, while the walk-through aviary lets guests feed birds by hand. In summer, splash pads and water features offer a break from the heat, and sunflower fields provide one of the farm's most popular photo ops.

PHOTO COURTESY OF
LUCKY LADD FARMS

Beyond the Farm

Pair your visit with a stop in nearby Murfreesboro, where local favorites such as The Alley on Main serve up Southern comfort classics. For something quick and casual, Slick Pig BBQ is known for its smoked meats and laid-back atmosphere. History lovers can explore Stones River National Battlefield, while The Avenue Murfreesboro offers shopping and treats before heading home.

More Info

Lucky Ladd Farms operates seasonally, typically open several days a week with extended hours for festivals and summer events. Admission includes access to most attractions, with optional add-ons such as animal encounters and pony rides. Tickets are often cheaper when bought online in advance, and parking is free on-site. For current hours, seasonal event details and ticket options, visit luckyladdfarms.com.

Summer TIPS for Lawns

ADOBE STOCK PHOTO BY NEMANJA

It's finally summer. School is out, the temperatures are warm and beloved summer activities are in full swing. For many homeowners, summer sparks the energy and enthusiasm to tackle those seemingly endless yard projects. Trimming hedges, pruning tomatoes, mulching and watering—the list is unending.

One task commonly on that list is improving the lawn, which can be an intimidating project. Whether you are an experienced yard enthusiast or a beginner, understanding how to manage your lawn through the summer is essential to its success. Following are some tips to help keep your lawn going through the heat.

Know Your Grass

One of the most basic things to consider—but arguably most important—is the type of grass you have. The management strategies you use can vary greatly depending on whether it's a cool- or warm-season variety and time of year.

A few common grasses found in Tennessee lawns include:

- **Cool season:** Tall fescue, fine fescue, Kentucky bluegrass, perennial ryegrass
- **Warm season:** Bermudagrass, zoysiagrass, centipedegrass

If you're not sure what type, or types, of grass you have, some great resources are available to help with identification. Try using apps such as Google Lens and iNaturalist. Alternatively, taking a sample to the local University of

Tennessee-Tennessee State University Extension office is always worth the effort, as each office has a trained agent who can help. Some counties have Master Gardener volunteers who can identify plants and answer questions about managing turfgrass.

Irrigation

Watering a lawn sounds simple, but it can be a complex task. During the summer, a lawn needs about 1 inch of water per week, including rainfall. This is best achieved by deeply irrigating two to three times a week, which encourages the grass roots to grow deeper into the soil profile.

If you plan to use a sprinkler, soaker hose or a complete irrigation system to supplement watering, it is beneficial to measure water output. One of the easiest ways to do this is to place several flat-bottom containers—such as pie pans or empty tuna cans—throughout the yard to catch water, then turn on the irrigation system for a set amount of time. This simple project provides real numbers on the rate of water being applied, making it much easier to refine the irrigation system.

In addition to measuring the application rate of the system, it's important to water at the appropriate time. For lawns, irrigation is best done midmorning, which minimizes the time moisture sits on the leaves, reducing disease pressure and water loss.

Lastly, a rain gauge is a cheap investment that can pay dividends.

Rain gauges provide accurate rainfall measurements, helping you determine if irrigation is even needed.

Mowing Height

Another key strategy in reducing stress on turfgrass during the summer is maintaining the appropriate mowing height. Generally, the appropriate mowing height for warm-season grasses ranges from 1 to 3 inches. Cool-season grasses can be anywhere from 1 inch to 5 inches, in the case of tall fescue.

During these hotter months, grasses can benefit from a higher cutting height, which helps reduce overall stress and may even encourage deeper rooting. It's also important to be consistent with mowing, as grasses allowed to get too high between cuttings can become damaged and unsightly with subsequent mowings.

Other considerations include keeping the mower blades sharp for clean cuts and alternating directions when mowing. ■

Information courtesy of University of Tennessee publication PB1935, "Turfgrass Selection for Tennessee Landscapes."



Rylan Thompson is a University of Tennessee Agriculture & Natural Resources agent in Franklin County. His responsibilities include production agriculture, nursery production and the Master Gardener program.

Wally "Mr. Crappie" Marshall shows off a crappie he caught near a dock while fishing on Kentucky Lake near Paris.

PHOTO BY JOHN N. FELSHER

Propelled to Success

'Shooting' docks can put more crappie into the boat

When the Tennessee summer sunshine beats down, everything looks for a place to cool down.

Docks line the shores of many Tennessee lakes and rivers. Docks provide fish with abundant cover, overhead protection from fish-eating birds and cooling shade. Countless anglers run baits past the outside pilings, but the really big fish hide in the most inaccessible cover and might never see lures. To land these wily ol' fish, "shoot the docks."

For shooting docks, use flexible, light or ultralight spinning rods. Open the reel bail and grab the lure by the jighead. Bend the rod to build up energy like a bow. Pick an opening and let it fly. As the rod releases energy, it propels the lure forward with remarkable accuracy. The unbending rod flings small lures under places that few other anglers even attempt to fish.

"Load up the rod like a bow and release the jig to catapult it under the dock as far as possible," explains Wally "Mr. Crappie" Marshall, a professional crappie angler. "With a 7-foot rod and 4-pound test line, I can shoot a 1/16-ounce jig 50 to 60 feet with no problem. Solid bodies skip farther than people can shoot them. Sometimes, I catch more than 50 crappie from under one dock. Anybody can do it."

A skilled dock shooter can fling practically any enticement into tight spots under docks or elsewhere. The farther back the jig travels, the more likely it runs through unfished waters and the more likely a big fish might grab it. The biggest fish typically seek the darkest shadows deep under overhanging cover.

Many crappie enthusiasts use 1/64- to 1/8-ounce jigheads tipped with plastic trailers or hair jigs, but practically any crappie enticement could work. After flinging the temptation under the dock, retrieve it close to pilings or other structures.

Hit every piece of cover from multiple angles to see what works best that day. Occasionally pause so lures sink a bit before resuming the retrieve. Sometimes, crappie suck down baits as they fall.

Older docks with crusty pilings are the best places to fish, since they've been in the water longer. An opening covered by an intact spider web indicates that no one fished that spot for a while. In addition, look for docks close to deeper water. Creek channels or tributary ditches that swing close to docks allow fish to easily rise into the shallows to feed or plunge into the depths for security.

Any dock with lights aimed over the water and rod holders usually indicates a good place to fish. Those lights probably face a brush pile or two. Dock owners might toss leftover bait or other scraps into the water. These morsels attract small fish. Big crappie go where they can find easy meals.

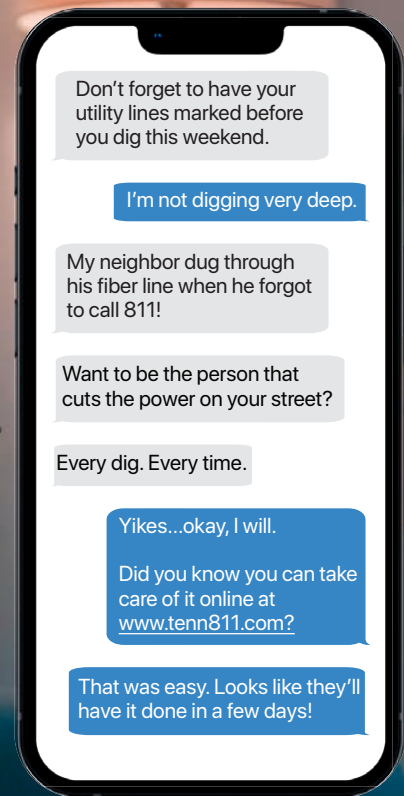
Most anglers shoot docks, boathouses and other artificial structures, but could also fling small lures under overhanging rocks, trees and other natural features. Anything hanging low over the water creates an ideal place to shoot baits. ■



John N. Felsher is a professional freelance writer, broadcaster, photographer, editor and consultant. An avid sportsman, he's written more than 3,600 articles for more than 170 different magazines on a wide variety of outdoors topics. He also hosts an outdoors tips show for WAVH-FM Talk 106.5 radio station in Mobile, Alabama. Contact him at j.felsher@hotmail.com or through Facebook.



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Labor Day: Sept. 7

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