

Thomas R. Biebighauser

Biography

Tom Biebighauser has been enthusiastically restoring wetlands, lakes, streams, and rivers since 1979. He has designed over 10,000 wetland projects and has successfully supervised the construction of over 2,900 wetlands in 26-states, 3-Canadian provinces, Mexico, New Zealand, Puerto Rico, and Taiwan. He carries a deep and long-standing concern for the environment and finds it rewarding to assist individuals who are interested in restoring wetlands and streams. Tom's passion for restoring wetlands has been recognized by his receiving 45 awards, including the Robert Lauderdale Award from the Kentucky Water Research Institute in 2023.

Tom teaches that when building a wetland, it is necessary to identify and disable historic drainage features to be successful. He methodically researched literature from the 1600's to the present to learn how wetlands were changed into farmland. Tom has interviewed and worked alongside numerous seniors who spent their lives draining wetlands and moving streams, documenting their practices so others can be successful in restoring these ecosystems. This knowledge has allowed him to identify over 50-signs on the landscape showing where wetlands once occurred.

Tom enjoys leading workshops where participants can learn about wetland restoration by designing and constructing wetlands from start to finish. He has instructed hands-on wetland workshops since 2003. These practical training sessions are responsible for empowering hundreds of individuals to build wetlands around the world.

Tom has developed highly successful and inexpensive techniques for restoring wetlands and streams that should last forever without maintenance. He cautions against using berms, dams, dikes, levees, weirs, diversions, pipes, pumps, water control structures, or wells that all require frequent and expensive maintenance. Having built over 1,400 dams he has since decommissioned over 300 dams and impoundments, restoring natural valleys in the process.

He specializes in restoring wetlands, streams, and rivers that provide habitat for endangered and threatened species. Tom has developed techniques for building wetlands that improve habitat for rare species including the Blandings turtle, burbot, California red-legged frog, Chiricahua leopard frog, grizzly bear, Eastern spadefoot, Great Basin spadefoot, Indiana bat, marbled salamander, mole salamander, Northern bat, Northern leopard frog, Sandhill Crane, Trumpeter Swan, Virginia big-eared bat, Western painted turtle, white sturgeon, and the wood frog.

Tom has built over 250 wetlands at universities, high schools, middle schools, and elementary schools across North America. He involves students in the design, construction, planting, and monitoring of these wetland habitats. Tom instructs a graduate-level online Wetland Design Class at the University of Louisville Speed School of Engineering where individuals learn how to build naturally appearing and functioning wetlands.

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Tom has developed highly effective techniques for restoring wetlands in deserts, having built over 600-wetlands in arid regions of Arizona, British Columbia, California, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah. He has discovered how to successfully restore wetlands, lakes, and streams so they will contain water forever in response to the long-term drought wrought by climate change.

Tom worked as a Wildlife Biologist for the U.S. Forest Service for 34-years, helping personnel from federal, state, and county agencies initiate wetland and stream restoration programs across the United States. He took the lead in completing hundreds of partnership projects for building emergent, ephemeral, forested, peatland, shrub, and wet-meadow wetlands on public and private lands during his career with the Forest Service.

In 2003, Tom wrote and published the book *A Guide to Creating Vernal Ponds*, distributing over 30,000 copies. His second book, *Wetland Drainage, Restoration, and Repair* was well received after its release in 2007. The three-editions of this book *Wetland Restoration and Construction, A Technical Guide* has been used by wetland and watershed professionals throughout the world in the years since its printing in 2011. Ellen Eubanks and Tom published the book *Restoration of Forests, Grasslands, and Wetlands Damaged by Off-Highway Vehicles* in 2014.

He is a volunteer board member with the Sheltopee Environmental Education Coalition (SEEC), a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization that assists landowners and agency personnel with the design and restoration of wetlands for outdoor education, and to provide habitat for rare species of animals and plants. You may learn more about SEEC by visiting <https://sheltopee.net>.

Tom and his wife Dee have two married children and three grandchildren. They are both active in their church. When he isn't exploring and photographing wetlands, he can be found making improvements to their farm in Kentucky, which Dee has aptly named *Twisted Arm Farm*. Tom invites you to visit his website <https://www.wetlandrestorationandtraining.com>, or to email him at tombiebighauser@gmail.com.

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