



# The Chattooga Quarterly

Spring ♦♦ 2004

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## Chattooga Wild and Scenic River



## 30th Anniversary

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# Director's Page

*You could not step twice into the same river; for other waters are ever flowing on to you.*

Heracitus of Ephesus 540 BC – 480 BC, on the Universe.

## Buzz Williams

Those of us in the business of conservation often muse about the swing of the pendulum back to a better day when people will again become more aware of the connection between a healthy environment and the human condition. We yearn for an environmental Messiah in the vein of Aldo Leopold, Teddy Roosevelt, or Bob Marshall of the turn of the century; or a Morris King Udall, Rachael Carson, or Gaylord Nelson of the 60s and 70s to lead us out of this bondage of greed, avarice and ignorance that is threatening the natural systems that sustain us. These two and only great periods of environmental awareness and activism in our brief history as a nation have both followed periods of rampant exploitation of natural resources. If this pattern holds, I am confident we are on the cusp of a reawakening for conservation and environmentalism. If we are going to meet the challenge of promoting good conservation we need to build on past successes and identify new problems of our age.

In 1988 I was employed by the Forest Service as a river ranger on the Chattooga River. My boss thought it would be instructive for us to attend a conference in Washington D.C. in celebration of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. The Chattooga River had been one of the original rivers named in the act and we felt encouraged about what we would learn about the history of its designation and about management trends from a national perspective.

We learned about Frank and John Craighead, twin brothers, who as biologists studying grizzly bears in Yellowstone National Park became principle authors of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. I even found myself having a conversation with Mo Udall during a social break. Udall, as a member of the United States House of Representatives, served as the chairman of the House Committee of the Interior and Insular Affairs during that second environmental renaissance of the 60s and 70s. In that capacity he wrote much of the nation's most important environmental legislation. I stood there in wonder as he patiently fielded my questions about his hearings on pesticide use after *Silent Spring* and the friendship he had developed with Rachael Carson and even personal conversations he had had with her shortly before her death.

I came back from the conference pumped to do good things

for conservation. The environmental heroes in our history gave us great cornerstones to build on: the Wilderness Preservation System, the Clean Water and Clean Air Acts, the National Forest System, and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to name a few. We have seen good progress in smog reduction, new technologies for pollution control, and lands set aside for natural resource protection. One shining example is the 11,292 miles of National Wild and Scenic Rivers that have been protected. One of which is our own Chattooga River.

The bad news is that we have allowed those who degrade our great natural resources in the name of profit to gain far too much control of our society. We must all accept responsibility. Conservation organizations have become so bloated and obsessed with funding campaigns to feed exorbitant salaries and assets that they have lost their bearings. Our system of government has become so

infiltrated with unscrupulous corporate money that, once again, as at the turn of the century, profit motive at the expense of environmental concerns has become the political norm. Finally, and most disturbing, people have lost touch with the natural world. We no longer link quality of life with clean air and water and with biological diversity.

Today we are faced with a whole suite of new problems; global warming, sprawl, overpopulation, exotic species globalization, loss of family farms and green space, genetic engineering, and a host of other problems that our predecessors never dreamed of. But now we have better tools to work with. We

now know how to look at the whole watershed across political lines in order to protect water quality and biological diversity. We have learned, as Eugene Odum taught, to look at the whole landscape in formulating any plan for conservation. We also have better technology if we will only put it to work.

Our challenge is great, but the time is at hand to act. The pendulum always swings back. What we must be concerned with is taking advantage of the great environmental legacy we have in this country. This time there must be no net loss. We must, as Leopold instructed us, create a new land ethic and a sense of community in harmony with nature. This time we must be vigilant to maintain our land ethic. Rather than waiting for the swing of the pendulum our task should be to minimize its swing. The pendulum is something we have created. It is an unnatural manmade cycle of progress followed by complacency. Many of our problems are new, but the solutions have always been right in front of us. Every time we step into the river it will be different, but it will still be a river. This time, let's keep it clean.

**“If we are going to meet the challenge of promoting good conservation we need to build on past successes and identify new problems of our age.”**

# The Wild and Scenic Chattooga River

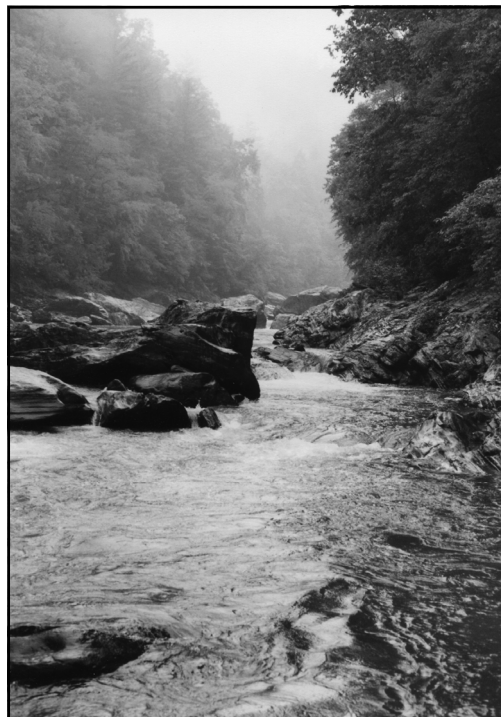
*Buzz Williams*

On May 10, 1974 the United States Congress voted to include the Chattooga River as a component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The designation surprised no one in "Chattooga Country" who had recently seen the remote and almost forgotten river of their ancestry suddenly illuminated by a series of events: the release of the national best selling novel *Deliverance* in 1970, the subsequent blockbuster movie in 1972, and the river's nomination as a candidate for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. On this 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the designation of the Chattooga River as a component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System we take look at the history of this event.

The Chattooga River originates in the Southern Appalachian Mountains of North Carolina at the base of Whiteside Mountain, a massive 4800 foot granite monolith on the escarpment known to the Cherokee as the "Great Blue Wall." It is one of seven rivers that flow from the Blue Ridge Escarpment, an area marked by high rainfall and unusual biological diversity. The terrain is abrupt and deeply dissected with many spectacular gorges. The cultural heritage is rich with both Cherokee and early European lore. The Chattooga River from its origin flows unimpounded by any man made structure for sixty miles, making it one of the longest free flowing rivers in the southeastern United States. From the resort villages of Cashiers and Highlands in North Carolina the river flows for ten miles to Ellicott Rock Wilderness and then another forty miles as the border between South Carolina and Georgia.

From its source at the headwaters at an elevation of 3360 feet until it flows into Tugalo Lake the Chattooga River descends 2469 feet in elevation, making it one of the best whitewater recreational rivers in the eastern United States. It was because of these and other unique values that the Chattooga River was chosen by Congress as one of the 27 rivers to be studied for possible inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

In 1969 a Task force appointed by Congress was charged with working with the Forest Service to study the Chattooga River to determine if it was eligible for inclusion. At the time much of the Chattooga River watershed was already a part of three National Forests; the Nantahala in North Carolina, the Chattahoochee in Georgia, and the Sumter in South Carolina. The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act prescribed that each component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System would be assigned to a federal land management



agency to administer the act. Since the Forest Service already had significant inholdings in the watershed it was logical that they would play a key role in the development of the study report to Congress. The task force was made up of a representative from the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation and the governors and forest supervisors of the three states involved; Governor McNair (SC), Governor Scott (NC), and Governor Maddox (GA). Forest Service field teams were assigned to collect data and the task force also consulted with a resource advisory board consisting of the Federal Power Commission, the U. S. Geological Survey and the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers. Other individuals, state and federal agencies, and public interest groups were also consulted. Public hearings were also held in Highlands, North Carolina and Clayton, Georgia to allow citizens' involvement in formulation the study report.

The task force's charge was to determine eligibility based on requirements that the Chattooga must be "free flowing" long enough to provide a "meaningful experience," have enough volume to "allow full enjoyment of water-related activities," its environment "outstandingly remarkable," that the river was "generally inaccessible" and "essentially primitive," and that its waters must be "unpolluted." Other considerations were land acquisition requirements, cost to the government, land ownership patterns, and use.

At the time that the task force began its study, the Chattooga

River was relatively unknown outside the local communities or the circle of elite resorts of the headwaters and by a few whitewater enthusiasts. In the late sixties and early seventies the number of people floating the Chattooga River was only a few hundred per year. But in 1970 James Dickey's *Deliverance* was published and became a best seller. The movie version in 1972 popularized the Chattooga so much that river use skyrocketed. Within four years 50,000 river users were flocking to the Chattooga with 24 recorded deaths on the river. The phenomenon became known as the "Deliverance Syndrome."

On June 15, 1971, the year after *Deliverance* was published with such great influence, the task force published its "Wild and Scenic Study Report" on the Chattooga River. The report concluded, "This is one of the longest and largest free-flowing mountain streams in the Southeast remaining in a relatively undeveloped condition." The report went on to

## The Wild and Scenic Chattooga River

say, "The beauty of the rapids and scenery of the Chattooga drainage is unsurpassed in the Southeastern United States." The task force concluded that the entire Chattooga River was eligible for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

The details of the report were compelling. For example, it was discovered that there had been four proposals for hydroelectric dams on the Chattooga: two by the Corps of Engineers in 1935 and 1944, one by the U. S. Study Commission, Southeast River Basins in 1963, and one by the Federal Power Commission in 1969. These dams collectively included sites in Cashiers near Norton Mill Creek, Warwoman Creek, Sandbottom, Rogues Ford (Hwy 76), Long Creek, Camp Creek, and Opossum Creek. The report concluded that the benefit of protecting a free-flowing river outweighed the potential for hydroelectric power generation on the Chattooga River.

It is interesting to note that both Georgia Power and the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers actually supported the designation of the Chattooga River as a Wild and Scenic River. In a written statement, Colonel John S. Egbert of the Corps of Engineers stated, "Our studies to date indicate that the environmental implications of this proposal are positive, since the Chattooga in its present state contributes a great deal to the scenic and aesthetic value of the region, generally possesses high water quality and would preserve under the conditions of the proposal one of the longest and free flowing rivers in the Southeast in its primitive and undeveloped state, and thus preserve a unique national environmental resource." Such rhetoric notwithstanding, the fact is that these dams were not economically feasible. To put them in place would mean a huge battle with numerous supporters of the designation. Later, Georgia Power Company would sell more than 5700 acres of its holdings along the river to the Forest Service.

The report clearly showed the overwhelming support for designation. The record from the public meetings and subsequent comments contained over 1,000 statements from individuals, organizations and both state and federal agencies. **All** were positive with the exception of three individuals and one private hunt club.

The report was not without concern, however. Although the task force concluded that the river was not "overused," it cautioned that future demand could reach saturation and cause a degradation of the "experience" that could be provided by the Chattooga. Consequently, the report recommended development to be guided by preserving a primitive experience as a priority over demand.

There was also a concern that Stekoa Creek was so polluted from sewage and silt from nearby Clayton, Georgia developments that it could cause the section of river below the confluence to the lake to be disqualified from

designation. The section did in the end receive a recommendation for a "wild" designation with the following disclaimer: "The Georgia Water Quality Control Board has worked closely with the City of Clayton, Georgia to clear up pollution problems on Stekoa Creek."

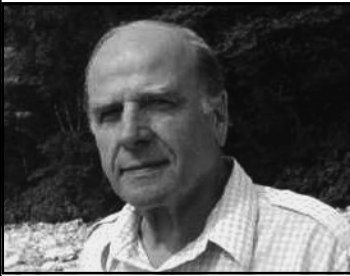
In the final analysis, the few negatives in the report were vastly outweighed by the overwhelming evidence that the Chattooga was eminently qualified for designation as a component of the National Wild and Scenic River System. The next step was for the task force to classify sections of the river according to the amount of development that had occurred on that particular section. A *wild* section was one that represented a "vestige of primitive America" and was relatively inaccessible. A *scenic* section was one judged to be still primitive with some road access. A *recreational* section is one that is readily accessible with some development. In all, 39.8 miles of the Chattooga were recommended for *wild* status, 2.5 miles as *scenic* and 14.6 miles as *recreational* for a total of 56.9 miles. The task force proposed designation of the Chattooga as a Wild and Scenic River along with an action plan for managing the river in compliance with the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. These plans included acquisition, development recommendations, and a benchmark monitoring system.

The cogs of government turned slowly, but finally the Chattooga River was officially designated three years later. In retrospect, on the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the official designation of the Chattooga as a Wild and Scenic river, it is clear that much has changed. Now there are more than 100,000 boaters who visit the river on a "good water" year. Many of the original recommendations for management of the river have fallen by the wayside. Demand seems to have taken over as the chief driving force behind Forest Service management. Development has taken its toll in spite of many of our best efforts. Federal dollars for much needed land acquisition have all but dried up. The Forest Service has erred much in favor of heavy road building and even-age timber management. It seems that land managers have lost touch with the original intent of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to prioritize "experience" over demand by special interest.

On the bright side, we have made much progress in understanding the dynamics of a watershed ecosystem. Many people have come and enjoyed the beauty and excitement of a great whitewater river, while others have been inspired by the rare solitude of the Chattooga River. Yet we must not forget that unless we maintain eternal vigilance, the inspirational vision of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act will be eclipsed by those forces that would exploit wild places for selfish gain. Citizens' involvement is the key to ensuring natural resource protection. There is much work to be done, but this spring we deserve to pause and celebrate May 10<sup>th</sup> as the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of a great historical victory for the Chattooga River.

# Earth Day

Carol Greenberger



Founder of Earth Day,  
Gaylord Nelson.

Earth Day was established on April 22, 1970 as a day for people around the world to focus on the environment and our responsibility toward it. Founded by former Wisconsin Senator Gaylord Nelson, Earth Day made environmental protection a major national issue. Today Earth Day is celebrated around the

globe with festivals, parades, community clean-ups, recycling drives, and numerous other activities. Over 15,000 groups in 175 countries, working for environmental protection in their communities, form the international organization Earth Day Network.

Gaylord Nelson served in Wisconsin's Senate for ten years, then as Governor for four years. Nelson was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1962 and served until 1980. In all of these positions, Nelson was a strong advocate for protecting the environment. In 1963 in a speech before the Senate in support of a bill to ban detergents from water supplies, Nelson said, "We need a comprehensive and nationwide program to save the national resources of America. We cannot be blind to the growing crisis of our environment. Our soil, our water, and our air are becoming more polluted every day. Our most priceless national resources – trees, lakes, river, wildlife habitats, scenic landscapes – are being destroyed."

Nelson describes the purpose of Earth Day and how it started as an idea that evolved over seven years starting in 1962. "For several years, it had been troubling me that the state of our environment was simply a non-issue in the politics of the country. Finally, in November 1962, an idea occurred to me that was, I thought, a virtual cinch to put the environment into the political 'limelight' once and for all. The idea was to persuade President Kennedy to give visibility to this issue by going on a national conservation tour." Although the tour did not create the focus Nelson had hoped for, a movement had begun.

Continuing his conservationist efforts, Senator Nelson spoke on environmental issues across the country. He felt that "the people were concerned, but the politicians were not." While on a conservation speaking tour in the west in 1969, Nelson thought about the anti-Vietnam demonstrations taking place on college campuses across the country and saw a way to create a focus on environmental issues. "I was satisfied that if we could tap into the environmental concerns of the general public, and infuse the student anti-war energy into the environmental cause, we could generate a demonstration that would force this issue onto the political

agenda," Nelson said. The idea was born – Nelson announced the date for a nationwide grassroots demonstration on behalf of the environment. Wire services carried the story and the response was immediate. Five months before Earth Day the *New York Times* reported, "Rising concern about the environmental crisis is sweeping the nation's campuses with an intensity that may be on its way to eclipsing student discontent over the war in Vietnam."

An estimated twenty million people participated in educational activities and community events that first Earth Day. Congress recessed for the day so that representatives and senators could speak about the environment and attend community events. The mayor of New York City closed Fifth Avenue to automobile traffic and 100,000 people attended an ecology fair in Central Park. Tens of thousands of schools and colleges hosted Earth Day activities. Earth Day was a great success. *American Heritage Magazine* described that first Earth Day as "one of the most remarkable happenings in the history of democracy."

While in Congress, Senator Nelson was instrumental in the creation of many environmental protection laws. The preservation of the Appalachian Trail, fuel efficiency standards in automobiles, the ban on use of DDT, the creation of the St. Croix Wild and Scenic Riverway, and the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore are some of his achievements. In 1981 Nelson became counselor of the Wilderness Society. In his fourteen years there, Nelson focused on protecting America's national forests and parks and other public lands. More recently, he has been concentrating on U.S. population issues and sustainability. Nelson is still active in promoting Earth Day.

Gaylord Nelson was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1995 by President Clinton. In his speech, Clinton said, "Twenty-five years ago this year, Americans came together for the very first Earth Day. They came together to make it clear that dirty air, poison water, spoiled land were simply unacceptable. They came together to say that preserving our natural heritage for our children is a national value. And they came together, more than anything else, because of one American – Gaylord Nelson. His career as Wisconsin's Governor, United States Senator, and now as counselor of the Wilderness Society has been marked by integrity, civility and vision. His legacy is inscribed in legislation, including the National Education Act and the 1964 Wilderness Act.

As the father of Earth Day, he is the grandfather of all that grew out of that event – the Environmental Protection Act, the Clean Water Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act. He also set a standard for people in public service to care about the environment and to try to do something about it... He inspired us to remember that the stewardship of our natural resources is the stewardship of the American Dream."

# Earth Day

Today, Earth Day is the only event celebrated simultaneously around the world by people of all nationalities and backgrounds. Earth Day promotes an awareness of protecting the environment that has spread to year round activities and programs. While there is still much work to be done and many grave problems facing the health of our environment, major improvements have been made since 1970 in so many facets of how our daily lives impact the environment.

In our homes, great strides have been made in appliances, building materials, and energy requirements. Today's typical refrigerator uses 67% less energy than those made 25 years ago. Washing machines use half the energy and toilets use less than half the water they did in the 1970s. The vehicles we drive are drastically more fuel efficient than the gas guzzlers we drove in 1970, and mass transportation has come a long way in most major cities.

Recycling has become part of our daily lives, sometimes in ways we're not even aware of. One third of our trash in America is recycled today. Recycled plastic bottles are used to make everything from lumber that is used as decking and in furniture, to T-shirts and Patagonia fleece vests, carpet, cars parts, and the fiberfill in your sleeping bag. Almost half of the paper thrown away is recycled, reused in many products, including cereal boxes, books, roofing shingles and insulation. Recycled car tires are made into an artificial surface used in the stadiums of 17 NFL teams. In Maine, a turnpike interchange is being built on top of the shredded remains of two million tires. Used aluminum cans are recycled and back on the shelves of grocery stores as new cans in as little as sixty days. In 1972, 24,000 metric tons of aluminum cans were recycled. In 1998, the amount increased to over 879,000 metric tons. In 2001 Americans recycled 68 million tons of trash, twice the amount recycled in 1990.

Celebrate Earth Day this year. Here are some ideas to use and share:

- Plant a garden. This is the perfect time to be outside digging in the dirt! Don't use any chemicals on your plants.
- Join an environmental group or give a membership to a friend as a gift. (Check out the membership form on the last page of this *Quarterly*!)
- Set up a recycling center at your office & get a list of volunteers to take it to a recycling center regularly.
- Carpool to work, take mass transit or work at home for the day if you can. *Reader's Digest* and the American Automobile Association have teamed up to launch a SAVE-A-GALLON campaign the week of Earth Day. Check out [rd.com/saveagallon](http://rd.com/saveagallon) for details.
- Take canvas reusable bags to the grocery store. Clayton's Bi-Lo gives customers a nickel off groceries for each reusable bag you bring.
- Do an energy home audit. You'll see where your energy is going and how to save money. Check with your local power company or go to the US Department of Energy's site at [homeenergysaver.lbl.gov](http://homeenergysaver.lbl.gov) for a do it yourself audit.
- Vote green – check the League of Conservation Voters website [lcv.org](http://lcv.org) for a national environmental scorecard on every member of the U.S. Congress. For the Georgia state legislators' environmental record, go to [protectgeorgia.com](http://protectgeorgia.com).
- Check out [earthday.org](http://earthday.org) to find an Earth Day event in your community.

Check out the following websites for more recycling ideas:

**[www.rbrc.org](http://www.rbrc.org)**

Rechargeable Battery Recycling Corp. - Find over 30,000 battery collection locations, including many Home Depot, Staples & Sears stores.

**[www.wirelessfoundation.org](http://www.wirelessfoundation.org)**

The *Donate a Wireless Phone* program raises money for a variety of charities.

**[www.nikebiz.com](http://www.nikebiz.com)**

Nike's *Reuse-A-Shoe* program recycles old sneakers into a surface used for tracks, playgrounds, basketball & tennis courts and soccer fields. To look for a drop off location near you, click on "responsibility" and then "environment."

**[www.lionsclubs.org](http://www.lionsclubs.org)**

Recycle your old eyeglasses. Look on line for a Lions Club collection site or drop them off at any LensCrafters or Pearle Vision.

**[www.earth911.org](http://www.earth911.org)**

This site lists community specific resources and events, as well as recycling ideas. Enter your zip code to find recycling centers in your area, green shopping and energy conservation tips and lots of other resources.

Want to buy green? Check out these websites:

**[www.worldwatch.org/pubs/goodstuff/](http://www.worldwatch.org/pubs/goodstuff/)**

Have you ever wondered where chocolate comes from, if antibacterial soap is good for your family, or how to recycle an old computer? If you've had these or other questions about the environmental and social impacts of the products you buy and use, *Good Stuff* is for you. It contains many of the tips, facts, and links you'll need to start making more informed purchases that benefit your health and the environment.

**[www.greengiftguide.com](http://www.greengiftguide.com)**

The California Department of Conservation sponsors this site listing clothes, toys, furniture and other products made from recycled materials.

**[www.beneficialbug.com](http://www.beneficialbug.com)**

Beneficial Bug is a retailer of useful products that save energy, water, reduce landfill waste and are less toxic. Their products are especially chosen based upon an index of how well they function (usability), their payback period, whether or not they actually reduce landfill, and how much they reduce the toxicity of ones immediate environment.

**[www.buygreen.com](http://www.buygreen.com)**

This site lists a directory for green products and services, as well as helpful information on purchasing products or services that will reduce environmental impact.

# North American River Otter

*Eric Orr*

Long ago, the North American River Otter thrived almost everywhere in North America. It was one of the most widely distributed mammals in the region. Now, due to unregulated trapping, pollution, and habitat destruction, the river otter occupies a fraction of its original range.

## TRAITS AND HABITS

The river otter belongs to the *Mustelidae* family, along with weasels, minks, and badgers. They have long, thin bodies, short legs, and short snouts. The tail of an otter is long and thick and tapers to a point. An adult normally weighs from 12 to 23 pounds and can measure three to four feet long. They have small eyes and ears that lie flat against their heads. Their webbed feet and oily waterproof fur make them well suited for an aquatic environment. Like cats, otters have whiskers to help them navigate and locate prey in dark and murky water. Though they are mostly nocturnal, otters are sometimes active early and late in the day. They are secretive animals and to see one is a rare treat.

Most everyone familiar with river otters associates them with playfulness. They can sometimes be seen amusing themselves by sliding down mud and snow banks plunging into the water below. Some biologists believe, however, that the play is restricted to the young pups, and the adults are simply taking advantage of a quick mode of transportation.

At home in the water, otters can float on their backs, tread water, and swim either forward or backward. They are fast and nimble swimmers, capable of evading most predators. When otters submerge themselves their eyes are shielded with a clear eyelid called a nictitating membrane. This special trait allows the otter to see clearly underwater, while the eyes are protected. They swim by kicking their webbed rear feet and moving their bodies in a snakelike motion. Otters can stay underwater for up to four minutes and several hundred yards. Their speed and agility helps them catch fish and other small aquatic creatures. Although they are often mistakenly blamed for depleting trout populations, the otter's diet consists mainly of small non-game fish. They can actually enhance trout habitat by feeding on species that would otherwise compete with trout. Otters prefer to feed mostly on slow swimming fish. Daces, suckers, perch, chubs, catfish, carp, and redhorses are a major part their diet. They also eat crayfish, insects, small mammals, birds, and some plants.

## HABITAT

River otters are well adapted to a number of habitats. The main requirement is water, whether it be a mountain lake, a woodland river, or a small pond. They prefer clean, slow



*Photo courtesy NC Wildlife Resources Commission*

moving water with lots of fish. Proper cover is also essential to otters. Their habitat must include some kind of shelter. This could be in the form of a hollow log or tree trunk, a rock pile, a log jam, or the den of another animal. They've also been known to inhabit old boathouses and duck blinds. Streams and rivers seem to be more favorable, as they tend to have more cover and less human disturbance than lakes and ponds.

## LIFE CYCLE

In early spring a soon to be mama otter starts to look for a den for her babies. She leaves the creek or river habitat to find an out of the way haunt by a complacent pond. She won't dig her own den, but relies on another animal, like a beaver, to provide her with a home to raise her offspring. Once she's settled in she'll give birth to several tiny pups. There are any number from one to six of them, but a normal litter size is two to four. Each baby weighs about five ounces. They are helpless at birth, much like human babies. Their eyes are closed and they're covered with a light coat of fur. After three or four weeks they open their eyes, and they begin to play soon after. The little otter pups are introduced to water by the time they're seven weeks old, and they may leave the den by eight to ten weeks of age. They are weaned by ten weeks. The young otters are finally capable of fending for themselves when fall rolls around, but they usually stay with their families, which sometimes include the father, until the following spring. Then, right before the next litter arrives, the otter yearlings venture out in search of their own home ranges.

Breeding season comes right after the females give birth. It usually lasts about three months. As soon as they are bred, female otters go through a process known as delayed implantation. Instead of going into gestation right away, the embryos remain dormant in the mother's uterus for about nine months. The actual period of gestation lasts about two months.



# North American River Otter

## LIVING WITH OTTERS

Although otters are relatively safe in the water, they are much more vulnerable on land. Among their predators are bobcats, coyotes, foxes, dogs, wolves, and alligators. Young otters are the most susceptible to predation. None of their predators significantly impact their numbers, though. None except for humans. Traditionally, otters were trapped by Indians for clothing and adornments. Then white settlers began trapping and exporting them in the 1500's. By the early 1900's, they had been eliminated from a large portion of their original range, and by the 1980's, river otters were rare in 13 states and extinct in 11. Several reintroduction programs were initiated and populations bounced back to some extent.

The river otter population of western North Carolina had been extirpated by the 1930's. In 1992, the NC Wildlife Resources Commission trapped 49 river otters from eastern North Carolina and released them along the French Broad, Catawba, and other major rivers. The otters spread out and established themselves in their new homes. They are reportedly doing well. After the project proved successful, 37 more otters were released in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, some of which have moved into North Carolina. Other states have tried similar programs, and now river otters are reported to be scarce or extinct in only 15 states. But it's important to keep in mind that regional populations, like western North Carolina, may be low or nonexistent, while the entire state of North Carolina shows a healthy number.

20,000 to 30,000 otters are trapped each year for their pelts, and it's still legal to trap them in 38 states. In the Chattooga River watershed, otters can only be trapped in Georgia and South Carolina. According to Jay Butfiloski of South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, the otter harvest is usually low in Oconee County. From 1995 through 2002, only 17 were reported, most of which were taken in recent years. Butfiloski attributes the increase to rising pelt prices, but he feels like more otters are taken through depredation permits. (Depredation permits are issued to landowners to reduce damage caused by animals such as beavers.) Though trapping is controlled by season, there is no limit on

how many animals can be taken. The DNR imposes tighter restrictions when populations are reported to be low by trappers.

Some biologists say changes in otter numbers can be linked to beaver activity. Not only does beaver trapping directly affect otter populations, but actual changes in beaver occurrence and beaver habitat has a significant impact. In some areas otters may be somewhat dependent upon habitat created by beavers.

Habitat destruction is a serious threat to otters. The major culprits are recreational development of waterways, reduction of wetlands and riparian areas for farmland and new homes, and compromised water quality from increased runoff. In mountainous areas, roads and railroads contribute to a significant number of otter deaths, as they are often built next to streams and other waterways. Pollution also destroys otter habitat. Otters are extremely intolerant of chemical contamination. When land is cleared for farming, it not only increases the sediment levels in waterways, but it also introduces pesticides and herbicides. Past studies have indicated the presence of mercury and DDT, both common in pesticides, in the tissue of otters.

Wetlands and riparian areas are seemingly losing more legal protection every day, and with it, river otters lose protection. There is no way to stop development, but it can be controlled. The best way to ensure the survival of our otters is to vote for clean water and support sustainable agriculture and development.





# Chattooga... Book Review

Carol Greengberger

## Chattooga – Descending Into the Myth of Deliverance River by John Lane

*Before the novel and the film Deliverance appeared in the early 1970s, any outsiders one met along the Chattooga River were likely serious canoeists or anglers. In later years, untold numbers and kinds of people have felt the draw of the river's torrents, which pour down the Appalachian along the Georgia-South Carolina border. Because of Deliverance the Chattooga looms enigmatically in our shared imagination, as iconic as Twain's Mississippi - or maybe Conrad's Congo.*

*This book is John Lane's search for the real Chattooga - for the truths that reside somewhere in the river's rapids, along its shores, or in its travelers' hearts. Lane balances the dark, indifferent mythical river of Deliverance against the Chattooga known to locals and to the outdoor enthusiasts who first mastered its treacherous vortices and hydraulics. Starting at its headwaters, Lane leads us down the river and through its complex history to its current status as a National Wild and Scenic River. Along the way he stops for talks with conservation activists, seventh-generation residents, locals who played parts in the movie, day visitors, and others. Lane weaves into each encounter an abundance of details drawn from his perceptive readings and viewings of Deliverance and his wide-ranging knowledge of the Chattooga watershed. At the end of his run, Lane leaves us still fully possessed by the Chattooga's mystery, yet better informed about its place in his world and ours.*

— from the book jacket

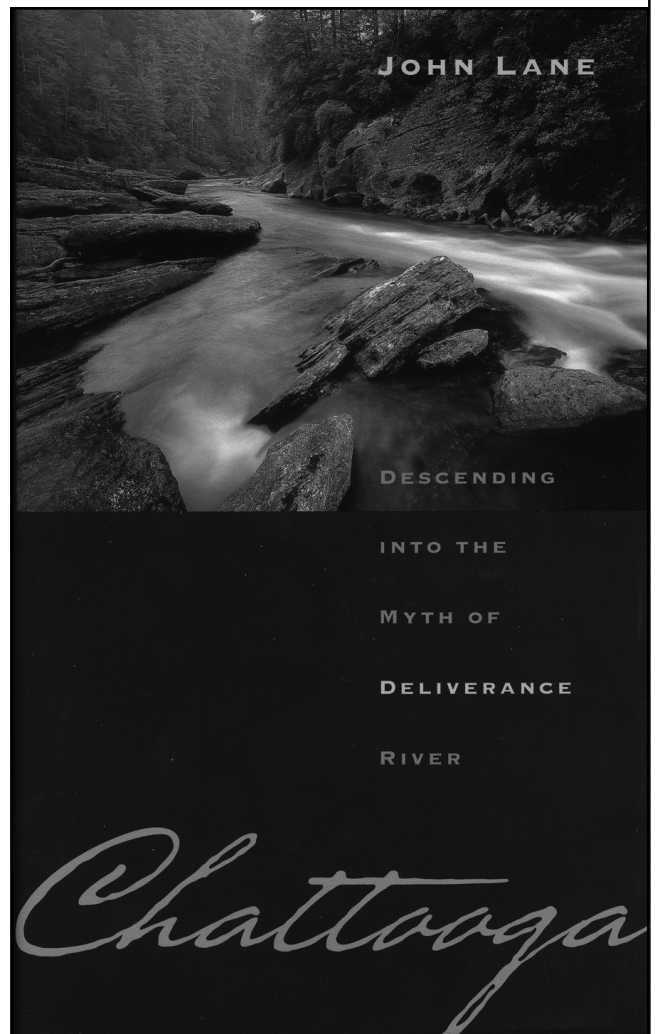
John Lane, born in North Carolina, has lived on a wilderness island off the coast of Georgia, studied crocodiles in Central America, surveyed monkeys in the remote rain forests of Suriname, and traveled extensively in the wild places of the United States. Currently, Lane teaches environmental literature, creative writing, and film at Wofford College in Spartanburg, South Carolina. He is also a poet and playwright and has published several books of personal essays.

On Lane's first kayak trip from Earl's Ford to Sandy Ford he discovered the beauty of the Chattooga River. "The river had that winter stillness about it. The only life we saw as we paddled down was a pair of mallards in an eddy where the sun was shining. Southern woods in the winter are not only silver and dark. There are many conifers along the river - white pines, hemlocks - and the mountain laurel holds its green all winter, though dulled by the cold. It was so cold that the laurel leaves had curled inward like fat fingers around the branching stems." Throughout the book, Lane's way with words paints a picture so vivid that I found myself wanting to send the book to friends who had never visited the Chattooga, so they could know the river too.

The author also examines the ecology and conservation issues surrounding the river. From the controversy over developers trying to close access to the river on the West Fork to the political and environmental clashes during the difficult, emotional attempts in 1999 to recover the body of a hiker who drowned in the river, Lane touches on the Chattooga's effect on the communities that surround it.

The narrative falters a little when Lane focuses on comparisons between the river and Dickey's story. Deliverance was fiction, a highly dramatized tale with exaggerated characters, filmed on several different rivers, not a portrayal of real people living in the mountains. And so when Lane journeys to Clayton to look for the characters out of Deliverance, he finds they don't exist. City manager Henry Burrell nicely sums up what most of the locals feel about Deliverance with, "I kinda wish we could forget it."

Lane's strength as a writer lies in his poetic descriptions and vivid imagery, which makes this a truly enjoyable read about a beautiful and special place. Whether you've never seen the Chattooga River or you live in its watershed and know it well, you'll enjoy seeing it through John Lane's eyes.



# Conservation Fair *June 5<sup>th</sup>*

The Chattooga Conservancy's 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Conservation Fair will be Saturday, June 5<sup>th</sup> from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The fair will be held at the Chattooga Conservancy Community Conservation Center on the corner of Pinnacle Dr. and Warwoman Road in Clayton. Check our website [www.chattoogariver.org](http://www.chattoogariver.org) and local newspapers for a schedule of events closer to the date.

**Join us for food, music, arts & crafts,  
native plant sale, live animal program,  
kids' activities, conservation award  
presentation, meet local & regional  
environmental groups**

## WILD ANIMAL PRESENTATION

We're very excited that the star of last year's fair is returning. Mark Hufford is a licensed wildlife rehabilitator and environmental educator. Over the last twelve years, Mark has presented more than 2,500 educational live animal programs for hundreds of schools, libraries, and civic organizations throughout North and South Carolina. Mark's "animal ambassadors" are native wild animals no longer able to survive on their own, providing living examples of the need to protect wildlife habitat.

Mark's presentation last year wowed everyone, but he especially gears his talk to children. Don't miss this opportunity for your kids to see wildlife up close and learn lots of interesting facts from an expert.



*Mark Hufford shows off a Red-Tailed Hawk.*

## NATIVE PLANT SALE

An addition to this year's fair will be a native plant sale, thanks to Jack Johnston, a local botanist, and Chattooga Gardens, a nursery and garden center in Cashiers, North Carolina. Chattooga Gardens offers a huge variety of plants and products tailored to the mountain climate. Native plants are a significant part of their inventory, with the majority of natives being nursery propagated varieties of trees, shrubs and wildflowers. Occasionally Chattooga Gardens offers wild-collected plants that have been rescued from road construction projects in the area. Chattooga Gardens does not condone collection of wildflowers from the wild, even if they are abundant species and permitted by the forest service. Jack Johnston and Chattooga Gardens are generously offering this opportunity to purchase native plants as a fundraiser for the Conservancy.

**Come check out a variety of plants from  
ferns & wildflowers to shrubs & trees!**

# Watershed Update

## DOWN TO THE WIRE

On March 4th, Federal Judge William O' Kelly in Gainesville, Georgia ruled in favor of the Forest Service in a lawsuit brought by the Chattooga Conservancy, Georgia Forest Watch and the Sierra Club in their attempt to stop the 115 kilovolt transmission power line proposed by Georgia Transmission Corporation (GTC) that would cross seven miles of the Chattahoochee National Forest. The North Lake Burton Transmission Line would cross 22 streams and descend to a substation on scenic Highway 76 across one of north Georgia's most significant northern hardwood forests including old growth sugar maple, buckeye, beech and basswood.

Conservancy attorneys argued that the Forest Service had "rubberstamped" an Environmental Assessment conducted by GTC that determined that the power line was the only viable alternative to meet the needs of the North Lake Burton Area and that the effects on federal land concerning wildlife, forest habitat and scenic quality would be insignificant.

The Chattooga Conservancy had earlier presented clear testimony by prominent electrical design engineer, Dr. Robert Broadwater from Virginia Polytechnic Institute that a less benign upgrade of existing distribution power lines would easily meet the electrical needs of the community. Our lawyers also pointed out strong concerns that Georgia Department of Natural Resources fisheries biologists were very concerned about the possible "significant" effects on sensitive mountain streams as a result of line construction. Arguments were also made that the North Lake Burton Area in Rabun County would also be negatively affected by the construction of a costly transmission line that would supply ten times the electric power needed by the community.

The judge ruled that the Forest Service could not be expected to second guess GTC engineers concerning matters outside their area of expertise. He also accepted the determination by GTC's contracted Environmental Assessment that there would be insignificant effects from the power line. The judge also dismissed the claims of negative effects to the community by the excessive size of the power line because the area was destined for development with or without the power line.

The Chattooga Conservancy believes strongly that the judge erred in his ruling in that he failed to consider that the Forest Service should have obtained, and clearly had at its disposal, a second opinion about the possible alternative to the GTC transmission line. We also feel that while the Forest Service may not be engineers they certainly should have looked closely at concerns raised by independent analyses by state biologists and concerned conservation organizations. We also reject the conclusion by Judge O'Kelly that excessive development is inevitable considering Rabun County's

current development of a Comprehensive Land Use Plan. Consequently we are urging our attorneys to appeal.

## SOMETHING'S FISHY AT STEKOA CREEK

The new Home Depot site on Highway 441 just outside of Clayton looks more and more like a desert every day. The landowner, Jeff Duvall, has been moving thousands of tons of dirt from one side of 441 to fill in the flood plain on the other side. The controversial site plan was approved the Army Corps of Engineers and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Prior to developing the Home Depot site plan, Duvall implemented a "demonstration stream bank restoration project," which consisted mainly of reshaping and seeding the banks of the creek that runs through the development site. According to the NRCS, the stream modification mitigates the effects of runoff due to flooding, but it doesn't take a scientist to see the flood plain fills up with Georgia red clay soup during hard rains. Though the flood plain is zoned for agricultural use, it is rumored that Duvall plans to use the space for his car dealership.

The silted stream that runs through the development is a tributary to Stekoa Creek, one of the most impaired streams in the Chattooga River watershed.. Although the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has Stekoa Creek



*These photos of the Home Depot development were both taken from the same perspective. Both were taken after heavy rains. In the more recent picture at the bottom, the stream is out of its*

## Watershed Update

listed as impaired by sedimentation, the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) doesn't even have a "sedimentation" classification. In other words, there is not a stream in Georgia that is tested by the EPD for sediment levels. They do, however, have a "biota" classification, which means they monitor the presence of macro invertebrates. Monitoring macro invertebrates is an effective method for determining water quality, but it doesn't necessarily reveal the cause of impairment. It's like testing for symptoms that are common to a myriad of diseases. The EPD has Stekoa Creek listed for biota. They know something's not right, but they won't say what. To ignore sediment levels is a clear violation of the Clean Water Act. It's the EPA's responsibility to enforce state agency compliance, but so far they've dropped the ball.

### **BURRELL'S FORD ROAD PAVING DELAYED**

Plans to pave Burrell's Ford Road in South Carolina from Highway 107 to the Chattooga River are being re-evaluated by the Forest Service. Mike Crane, Andrew Pickens District Ranger, announced in February that changes are needed to the Environmental Assessment (EA) that served as the basis for the decision to pave the entire length of the road.

Parking was not addressed in the EA, and there were no rules prohibiting certain kinds of vehicles, such as large motor homes.

The Environmental Assessment will be revised and made available for another 30 day comment period in April. Crane said that if the money is available, paving could begin in fall. Estimates to pave the length of the road in South Carolina and the campground parking lot are between \$900,000 and \$1 million. The road continues in Georgia after crossing the Chattooga, and connects with Highway 28. Georgia plans to pave their side of the road also, but an Environmental Assessment has not been released yet.

The Chattooga Conservancy and South Carolina Forest Watch both appealed the plans to pave Burrell's Ford Road. The erosion problems that are affecting King Creek and other riparian areas can be solved by spot paving. Paving the entire road would greatly increase the traffic on Burrell's Ford, turning a sensitive area into a thoroughfare. Spot paving would cost considerably less and would adequately solve the current erosion problems.

Contact the Andrew Pickens Ranger District office at 864-638-9568 to receive a copy of the revised EA. Don't miss this opportunity to comment on preserving this part of our wilderness.

### **FOREST SERVICE TO ADDRESS OFF-ROAD VEHICLE PROBLEM**

The U.S. Forest Service announced plans to rewrite regulations governing the use of dirt bikes, ATVs and other

off-road vehicles on National Forests and Grasslands. Failure to effectively manage off-road vehicle use has caused serious problems in the National Forests. Erosion, damage to streams and wetlands, impact on wildlife habitats are all results of unmanaged off-road vehicle traffic. Thousands of miles of illegal trails spread out across most of our National Forests. Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth calls unmanaged recreation, particularly off-road vehicle use, one of the great threats to the long term health of our National Forests.

Current regulations are not consistently enforced, due in part to an inadequate number of Forest Service law enforcement officers. The average enforcement ranger is responsible for over 461,000 acres. Off-road vehicle regulations are not strong enough or consistent from forest to forest.

In our local forests, off-road vehicle misuse has become an alarming problem. While there are 133 miles of legal trails for off-road vehicles to use in the Oconee and Chattahoochee National Forests, there are over 550 miles of illegal trails, including some in designated wilderness areas. The estimate to close, repair and revegetate those trails is \$1 million.

Watch for upcoming Forest Service regulations regarding off-road vehicle use. This is an excellent opportunity to write to your local Forest Service office in support of tightening these rules. If you see signs of illegal activity in the National Forest, please report it.

### **LAND & WATER CONSERVATION FUND THREATENED AGAIN**

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) was enacted in 1964, and has been our nation's principal source of funding for acquiring new recreation lands and critical habitats. The fund has always enjoyed widespread popular support, and while annual federal appropriations for the LWCF have fluctuated widely over the years (with a recent major reduction of 34% for FY 2004), the fund's basic purpose has never been altered.

Enter HR 1517, the "Land Reinvestment Act," introduced by Representative Sam Graves (R-MO) during the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress. The proposed legislation would radically amend the LWCF, striking "acquisition" from the Act and restricting the fund's uses for maintenance needs only on public lands. Acquiring land to conserve habitats as well as meet our country's huge and still growing demand for public recreation opportunities would no longer be allowed. Representative Graves just testified before the House Resources Subcommittee on National Parks, Recreation, Parks and Public Lands, and doubtless will be working to advance his misguided legislation during 2004. Please contact your legislator and express strong support for preserving the LWCF in its present capacity.

# The Hemlock Woolly Adelgid: A Strategic Plan

The Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA) is an insect that was accidentally introduced into the United States in the Pacific Northwest in the early 1920's where it did little damage to western hemlock trees. The same insect later arrived in Richmond, Virginia in 1953 on an ornamental nursery tree imported from Asia. The HWA was spread by wind and birds and soon reached the Appalachian Mountains. It now threatens the entire range of the Eastern and Carolina Hemlocks, our two species of native hemlocks. With the absence of natural predators the HWA has mortally impacted almost 80% of the hemlocks in the Shenandoah Valley. The HWA feeds on fluids from the twigs of hemlock trees which robs them of valuable nutrients. The trees succumb to the devastating effects of the HWA in about four years. The fact that hundreds of species of plants and animals depend hemlocks means an ecological disaster if the HWA is not put in check.

Scientists discovered that the pest was advancing at a rate of about 20 miles per year. In 1999 the Chattooga Conservancy began planning for the arrival of the HWA with a public education strategy and plans for establishing a beneficial insect rearing laboratory at Clemson University. The HWA was predicted to arrive in the Chattooga River watershed in about 2001. Unfortunately, the HWA took us by surprise when we discovered it had arrived ahead of schedule. Unless we act quickly our hemlock trees in the Chattooga River watershed will be a thing of the past.

The Chattooga Conservancy has a two pronged strategic plan for saving the hemlocks; one for public land and one for private land. The majority of our hemlocks are on public lands. They provide habitat for hundreds of species including the Louisiana Waterthrush, Blackthroated Green Warbler, Water Shrew, Pirate Bush, and Brook Trout. Chemical spraying is not economically or environmentally feasible in this remote and ecologically sensitive context. Twenty percent of the Chattooga River watershed is Forest Service land.

This spring at least 60,000 ladybird beetles (*Pseudoscymnus tsugae*) will be released on Forest Service lands in the Chattooga River watershed. This comes as a result of a collaborative effort lead by the Chattooga Conservancy to establish a beneficial insect laboratory at Clemson University. Preliminary results from early releases are beginning to show results. Monitoring results indicate that the beetles are "taking" or reproducing in the wild. We do not know what impact these beetles will have on adelgid populations but scientists assure us that this will be our "best shot" at saving an important component of hemlock populations.

On private lands our recommended strategy includes the spraying of insecticidal soaps or horticultural oils on hedges and trees less than 80 feet tall. Hydraulic equipment is available that can reach the top of these smaller trees. The whole tree must be drenched with chemical treatment to be effective, and it must be done every year when the adelgids are active. Fall is a good time for spraying. We don't recommend the use of petro chemical sprays, as they are less effective and potentially harmful to the environment. On taller trees soil injections of imidacloprid are the most effective means of control. This method takes advantage of the tree's natural process of absorption. It effectively controls the adelgid, and it doesn't harm the tree like even the most advanced tree injection techniques. We recommend that land owners seek the assistance of certified arborists in administering this chemical, as it can be harmful to aquatic life if not done properly. Finally, it is imperative to treat hemlocks on trees with established adelgid populations. The action of these chemicals work directly on the adelgids so to administer the treatment as a means of prevention is wasteful and ineffective. Learning to identify the HWA is key to any treatment on private land.

The Chattooga Conservancy is dedicated to waging a proactive campaign to save as many hemlock trees as we can. Please do your part by learning the most effective method of treating your trees. Learn to identify the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid and seek certified professional help when using soil injections. Also, contributions to the Chattooga Conservancy Beneficial Insect Control Project would be greatly appreciated. As a member of the Chattooga Conservancy you can rest assured we'll do all that all that can be done to save our hemlocks. Using the best science available is our goal.



*Cottony sacks on the bottom of hemlock leaves are indicative of Hemlock Woolly Adelgid infestation*

# Members' Page

***MANY THANKS to all who recently renewed their membership, or joined the Chattooga Conservancy. Your generous contributions will help us continue to work on all of the important conservation issues facing the watershed.***

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Spring 2004

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# Chattooga Conservancy

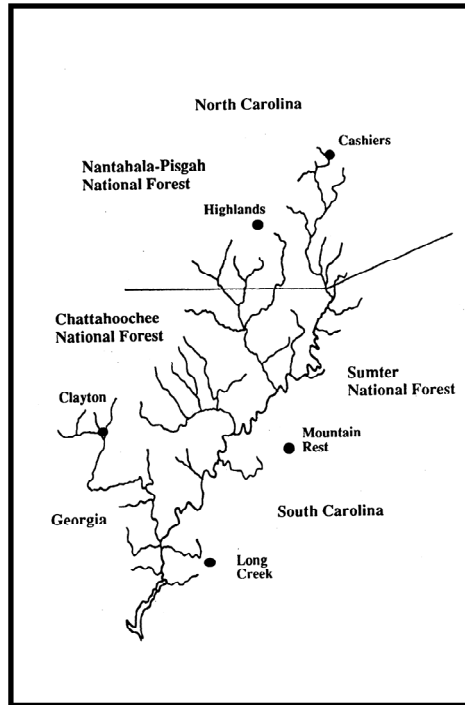
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Clayton, Georgia 30525

(706) 782-6097 tel. (706)782-6098 fax info@chattoogariver.org Email www.chattoogariver.org

**Purpose:** To protect, promote and restore the natural ecological integrity of the Chattooga River watershed ecosystem; to ensure the viability of native species in harmony with the need for a healthy human environment; and, to educate and empower communities to practice good stewardship on public and private lands.

**Made Possible By:**

Members and Volunteers  
Appalachian Forest Resource Center  
National Forest Foundation  
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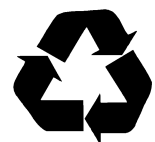
**Goals:**

- Monitor the U.S. Forest Service's management of public forest lands in the watershed
- Educate the public
- Promote public choice based on credible scientific information
- Promote public land acquisition by the Forest Service within the watershed
- Protect remaining old growth and roadless areas
- Work cooperatively with the Forest Service to develop a sound ecosystem initiative for the watershed

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