



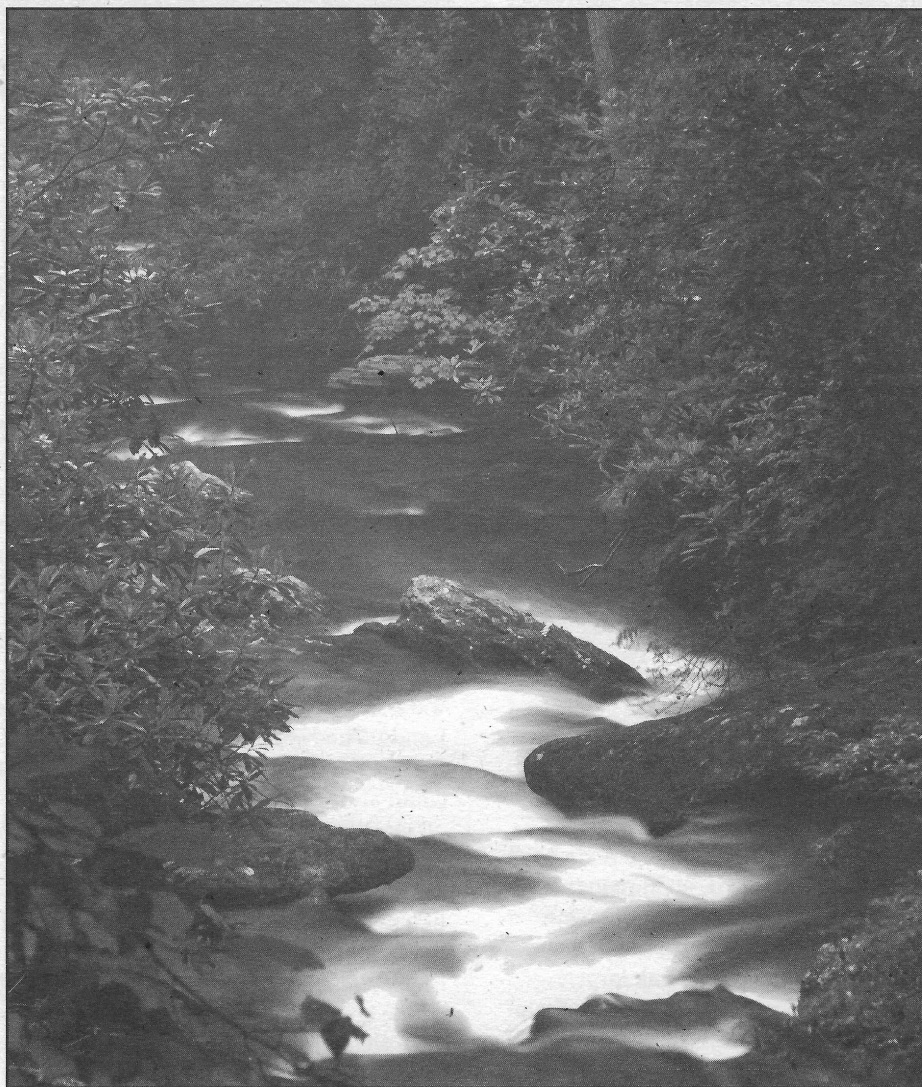
# The Chattooga Quarterly

Fall



2005

## *On To the Confluence*



*Warwoman Creek above its confluence with the Chattooga River*

*photograph by Peter McIntosh/mcintoshmountains.com*

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# Director's Page

Buzz Williams

I am making an urgent appeal TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE CHATTOOGA CONSERVANCY to take immediate action to write their Members of Congress and ask them to vote for restoring the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). Here is the situation.

Each year the Forest Service submits a request for money from congress to acquire lands that have unique natural and cultural resources, to protect these lands for future generations. These acquired lands provide recreational opportunities, critical wildlife habitat, educational opportunities, and improve land management efficiency and save administrative costs. The Forest Service uses LWCF money to buy these lands from willing sellers, and the properties then become public land under the jurisdiction of the national forest system.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund was created by the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act passed by congress in 1964. Money to create the LWCF comes from proceeds from surplus federal property sales, a portion of federal taxes on motorboat fuel, and outer continental shelf revenues derived from offshore oil and gas leases. Since its creation, millions of acres of land have been added to the national forest system. These lands, all of which have irreplaceable natural and cultural resources, are now protected for the use and enjoyment of the American public.

Lands acquired with LWCF money often reduce administrative costs. In-holdings acquired by the Forest Service reduce the cost of boundary line disputes and surveys, as well as access roads. In some cases, management costs associated with in-holding actually exceed the fair market value of the land. LWCF money has also protected Civil War battlefields and native American cultural sites, and preserved wetlands, wilderness areas and wild and scenic rivers. Acquired lands often link larger, core wild areas by providing wildlife corridors that facilitate genetic diversity and ecosystem health. LWCF acquired lands provide a respite for burgeoning urban populations hungry for recreation areas. They also protect prime native ecosystems to be used as benchmarks for scientific research and restoration.

Land acquisition with LWCF money in the Chattooga River watershed has a storied history. LWCF money has been used to purchase key tracts of private land within the watershed ever since the Chattooga River was designated a National Wild and Scenic River in 1974. With the exception of the Reagan administration years when LWCF money was withheld, many important tracts have been acquired with this important trust fund including the Devil's Courthouse tract on Whiteside Mountain, the Fodderstack

Mountains tract near Highlands, North Carolina, the Potholes tract in the Chattooga headwaters, the West Fork tract and the Hedden tract in Georgia, and the Garland, Long Falls and Ewing tracts on Long Creek, a South Carolina tributary to the Chattooga River.

All of these tracts were very important acquisitions that met the guiding criteria for priority with LWCF money. You may remember the West Fork tract, which was the scene of the scandalous scheme of three greedy developers who actually attempted to close the West Fork of the Chattooga to boating in the late 1990's. The Hedden tract acquisition protected the federally listed Small Whorled Pagonia. Acquisition of the Fodderstacks tract protected a unique grove of dwarf old growth Pitch pine. Imagine, had we not bought the Devil's Courthouse tract there could have been a housing development on top of Whiteside Mountain!

***LWCF funds have helped protect over 4,000 acres of some of the best remaining wild lands in the Chattooga watershed. Today, I am sad to report there is not one single dollar allocated by congress for the Chattooga River watershed to acquire important lands.***

Much of the credit for these critical acquisitions must go to important congressional allies like former Senator Ernest Hollings, who went to bat for the Chattooga River. In a letter to constituents, Senator Hollings stated, "Since 1991, utilizing my position on the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee, which is responsible for funding the Forest Service and the National Park Service, I have worked to secure 8.8 million dollars for land acquisition." These LWCF funds helped protect over 4,000 acres of some of the best remaining wild lands in the Chattooga River

watershed. We also owe our thanks to the Trust for Public Lands, The Nature Conservancy and the Conservation Fund for interim purchases that held these tracts until congress could allocate funds for acquisition.

Now, here's the rub. Originally, congress set aside 900 million dollars in the LWCF Act for land acquisition. But like many other trust funds such as Social Security, congress never funds it to its full amount. LWCF money, even in the best years, never exceeds 200-300 million dollars. The whole country then has to compete for this partial funding. Historically, places like the Chattooga River or Yellowstone National Park are at the head of the list. Even in lean conservative years we were able to get money for especially important tracts. Today, I am sad to report there is not one single dollar allocated by congress for the Chattooga River watershed to acquire important lands. Yet, several very high priority acquisitions remain.

This is a critical situation. You are the key. If you have ever considered pitching in, now is the time. Please write your congressional representatives and strongly urge them to do what is necessary to restore LWCF money to the federal budget. Use the information here to build your case. If we all write and call, they will listen. Please act now.



# Watershed Update

## INTERSTATE 3 ROAD NOTES

This past June the news broke of a proposal to build a new interstate highway known as I-3 through the Southern Appalachian Mountains (see summer 2005 *Chattooga Quarterly*, pp. 2, 5-6). The proposed route could use the highway 441 corridor through the Chattooga watershed, while also crossing three national forests and skirting numerous federal wilderness areas, state parks, and the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Since the proposal emerged, the Chattooga Conservancy has been working to defeat the unnecessary highway project, which is being led by congressional boosters including northeast Georgia's own Representative Charlie Norwood. In August, pro-interstate members of congress moved the project forward by securing \$1.3 million in the six-year federal transportation reauthorization bill for a preliminary study. However, both Georgia and North Carolina Departments of Transportation have declined to be the lead agency in letting the contract for the study report.

In the meantime, citizens from areas that would be affected by the proposed I-3 route, as well as those from distant points, have been mobilizing for the long battle to stop construction of this interstate highway. Here in the Chattooga watershed, the Rabun County Board of Commissioners voted unanimously to oppose the routing and construction of I-3. The commissioners from White County and Habersham County (both in GA) have also issued formal statements against I-3. In western North Carolina, both state and national elected officials have expressed reservations about building a new interstate through the mountains. Representative Charles Taylor, known for his poor record on environmental issues and whose district includes the Chattooga River headwaters area in western North Carolina, said, "From a practical standpoint, it would be exceedingly expensive to build such a route through our mountains and I am concerned about the environmental effects such a project would carry." In fact, each of the four states that would be affected by the proposed interstate now has its own coalition opposing the highway. The growing opposition to I-3 has also gained important media coverage and includes stories in publications such as *Creative Loafing*, *Gainesville Times*, and *Atlanta Journal Constitution*. *National Public Radio* also broadcasted a feature story in October where Conservancy Director Buzz Williams gave commentary against the proposed interstate. While we are encouraged by the growing number of citizens, civic organizations and elected officials who are stepping forward to fight the I-3 proposal, it's clear that the funding for the interstate study report will allow the project to incubate and be nurtured by congressional allies and corporate interests. ***We urge our membership and their friends and neighbors to join the work to stop I-3, which will be long, difficult, and well worth the effort in order to protect our quality of life in the Southern Blue Ridge Mountains.***

## CHATTOOGA LAND SWAP CONTROVERSY

A controversial land swap involving several important tracts within the Chattooga watershed was proposed in September by the supervisor of Georgia's Chattahoochee National Forest. In the proposal, the Forest Service wants to trade about 166 acres of national forest land in Rabun County to Mr. Ed Poss, a well known Rabun County developer. The 166 acres would be exchanged for 97 acres that are contained in five separate tracts. The five tracts are presently owned by Mr. Poss and contain strategically located lands very important for increasing protection of the Chattooga River. For example, one parcel holds critical floodplain and riparian zones along Cliff Creek, which is a large tributary to the Chattooga River. Another two of the Poss-owned tracts are located next to the wild and scenic river corridor on the West Fork of the Chattooga River. The fifth tract is located on Yonah Mountain in White County, and all of this land would become part of the Chattahoochee National Forest system if the proposal moves forward.

What's wrong with a deal that would yield so many benefits to the Chattooga River? The problem is with the flip side of the land swap, and concerns the 166-acre parcel that Mr. Poss seeks to acquire. This land is located within the Timpson Creek/Tallulah River watershed, and sits on the ridgeline and steep slopes of Tiger Mountain at altitudes of 2,200 feet and above. If traded, these steep slopes surely would be subdivided and intensely developed, as Poss happens to own adjoining land on the mountain that already has been developed as a residential area. Many property owners in the Tiger Mountain area have called the Chattooga Conservancy office offering harsh testimony against Mr. Poss's record of protecting the environment during land development projects, and have urged the Conservancy to oppose the land swap in order to protect Timpson Creek and the surrounding view shed. In addition, the Rabun County Board of Commissioners has objected to the Poss land trade proposal because it runs counter to the mountain top protection guidelines in the county's current draft land use plan. The Conservancy also has deep concerns over any existing land appraisals that would result in such wide ranging property values—166 acres for 97 acres—as in this case. In light of all of these factors, the Chattooga Conservancy regrettably opposes this attempt by the Forest Service to acquire critical lands within the Chattooga River watershed. Instead, we believe that our best option is to restore the federal Land & Water Conservation Fund so that priority tracts may be purchased outright from willing sellers.

## WHITE BULL TIMBER SALE APPEAL MOVES FORWARD

Following a scoping notice issued during the summertime, the Highlands Ranger District in the Chattooga River's headwaters recently released an environmental assessment

## Watershed Update

for their proposed White Bull Timber Sale. The assessment spells out the details of the timber sale, whose main objective is to produce more "early successional habitat" that is, by definition, land where trees are just 10 years old or younger. As per the environmental assessment, the Highlands District's decision is to harvest trees in ten areas altogether totaling about 357 acres using mainly a "two-age" harvest method that would leave only 14-18 trees per acre. All of the trees slated for cutting are 75 years old or more, with a top age of 115 years old. Herbicides would be used to eliminate "undesirable species," and 1 mile of road would be reconstructed—in an area where the existing road density already "far exceeds habitat objectives for eastern wild turkey and black bear" (as stated by the Forest Service). The Chattooga Conservancy has taken a close look at this proposed timber sale because the project targets trees that are either old growth and/or approaching old growth, and because the project area is located in the heart of the Chattooga River headwaters and encompasses numerous streams and sensitive habitats such as Chattooga Cliffs.



*Forest recovery after natural disasters can be more effective when left to natural processes, as illustrated by the successful regeneration in Yellowstone National Park after the fires in 1989 (left) and nine years later (right).*

In spite of the Highlands District's friendly reception of our concerns, the timber sale's treatment of old growth remains unacceptable. At issue is the district's non-compliance with the "old growth guidance" requirements contained in the Nantahala National Forest's Land & Resource Management Plan (LRMP). In sum, the LRMP mandates that small, medium and large patches of old growth trees be designated at the watershed level, and disturbance in these areas be avoided. The Highlands District has been unable to supply adequate documentation of the size and location of old growth designations in the project area, which is necessary to comply with the overarching Nantahala Forest Plan. Furthermore, some of the proposed timber sale would cut down trees included in the Nantahala National Forest's old growth inventory. The Chattooga Conservancy has joined with four more conservation organizations in filing an appeal of the Forest Service's decision to implement the White Bull Timber Sale, with the aim of protecting stands of old growth for their conservation values, and for the use and enjoyment of the public.

## NEW PUBLIC LAND LOGGING BILL MOVING FAST

Fast track congressional maneuvering to loosen environmental protections has become the norm in recent years. Recently, a new bill called the Forest Emergency Recovery and Research Act (H.R. 4200, or "Walden Bill") to speed logging on public lands was proposed by representative Greg Walden (R-OR), who chairs the House Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health. This bill follows in the footsteps of the infamous "Salvage Logging Rider" of 1995, and essentially provides a greatly expedited process for carrying out logging projects after "natural



disasters." H.R. 4200 defines disaster events very broadly and includes drought, insect outbreak, storm damage, and fire. Under this bill, there is minimal opportunity for public involvement, and logging projects would be allowed to proceed with scant or no consideration of the environmental and cultural protections provided by the Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act, National Historic Preservation Act and other key legislation. Meanwhile, despite

all of the bill's green-washing in recent committee hearings, it cannot be defended as scientifically credible. For example, according to the best science available there is no ecological emergency to log forests after natural disasters, and forest recovery is more effective when left to natural processes. Finally, the Walden Bill would authorize the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management to take money appropriated for fire management and spend it on salvage logging projects. This would rob funding for fire suppression and preparedness, hazardous fuel reduction, and community fire planning, effectively trading off community safety to produce more salvage timber sales. The Walden Bill could go to the house floor for a vote as early as the week of December 12th. Meanwhile, a reasonable alternative bill has been introduced by Representative Tom Udall (D-NM), called National Forests Rehabilitation and Recovery Act (H.R. 3973). The Udall bill would determine the best responses to natural disturbances on forest ecosystems based on science and community collaboration.



# “Keeping It Wild”—Representative John Lewis

*The Chattooga Conservancy is a member of the host committee of the Wilderness Society's "Keeping It Wild" program, which is a "series of events to raise public awareness about the importance of Southeastern wild lands, honor the contributions of African American conservationists, and re-energize and build partnerships among diverse communities engaged in natural lands protection in Georgia and the Southeast."*

*The Keeping It Wild program is an ongoing series of seminars, meetings, and hiking tours that are open to the public, and scheduled for the next year (see page 7 for a partial listing). The event series was kicked off by a gala dinner at Clark Atlanta University in October 2005, featuring keynote speaker the Honorable John Lewis (D-GA). The following is a transcript of Representative Lewis' inspiring keynote speech.*

## “Keeping It Wild”—Representative John Lewis

I am very pleased, happy, and delighted to be here tonight to help kick off the Keeping It Wild program and to help bring attention to the beauty and the value of wilderness in the American South.

As many of you know, the beauty of the Earth is one of my greatest inspirations. And I try, as often as I can, to get back to the fields and streams of rural Alabama where I grew up. As I said in the introduction to Keeping It Wild, as I was walking through the fields, smelling the wildflowers, touching the ancient oaks, the poplars and pines, I learned wonder. As I was drinking the clear fresh water from an Alabama spring, I learned purity. When I was fishing with a simple cane pole deep in the quiet of a warm, lazy afternoon, I learned the value of prayer and patience.

As I was feeling the dirt and the pine straw between my toes, I discovered that the wilderness is a part of you and it is a part of me. I discovered that we should never, ever break our connection to the Earth, from its beauty, its joy, and its peace.

We used to say in the Civil Rights Movement that the struggle in America is inseparable from the struggle in Africa or the Caribbean. That the struggle in Eastern Europe and South America is inseparable from the struggle in the United States. But I

say to you tonight that also the struggle to save America's fields and streams, the struggle to save endangered species is inseparable from the struggle for human rights around the globe.

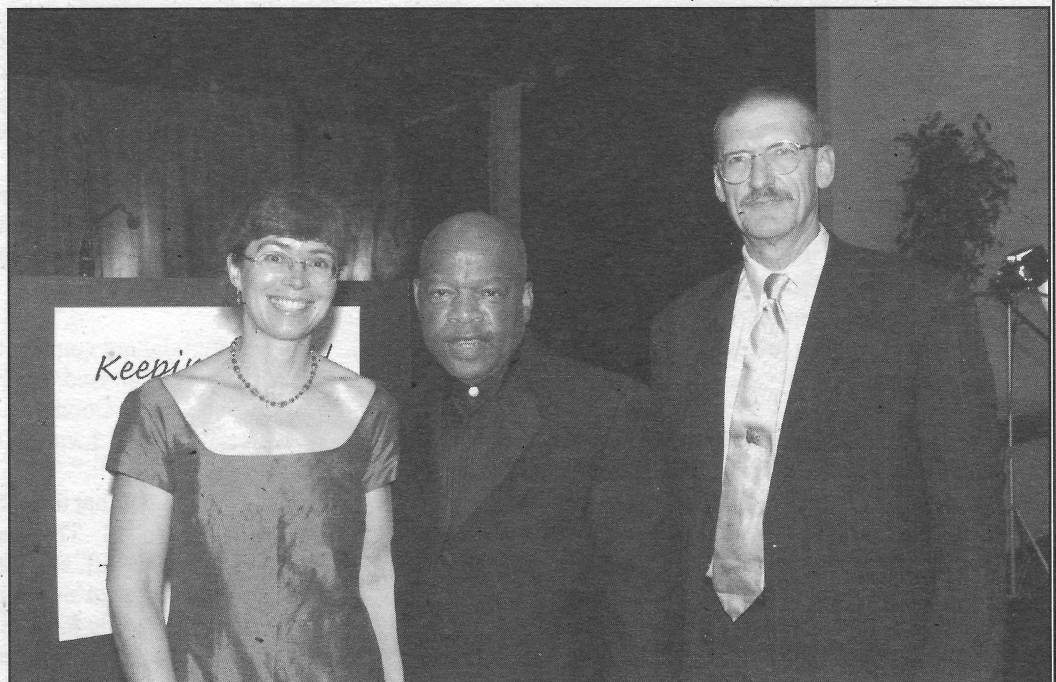
As Dr. King would say, “We must learn to live together as brothers and sisters or together we will perish as fools.” As Gandhi would say, we must learn to choose between nonviolence or nonexistence.

These ideas were the foundation of the Civil Rights Movement, and they also are the foundation of the environmental justice movement. I truly believe that as we move deeper into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, that the connection between healthcare, the environment, and the civil rights movement will become more and more clear.

We all need to breathe fresh air, drink clean water, and eat clean food. These things are all necessary for us to live, and I believe that access to these vital components of human life is a sacred right that should not be violated.

You know when I was a little boy growing up in rural Alabama, it was my job to take care of the chickens. I learned a lot from those chickens. I really loved those chickens... and I wanted to be a minister. So I would round up the chickens and sometimes I would preach to them and sometimes they would shake their heads ... and none said amen. But I believe that some of these chickens listened to me more than my colleagues in congress.

Those of us who are friends of the environment have a lot of



*Chattooga Conservancy staff Nicole Hayler and Buzz Williams discussed environmental issues with Representative Lewis at the Keeping It Wild campaign's kick-off dinner.*

## John Lewis

work to do in congress today. People have not yet understood the practical relationship between job creation and environmental protection. Most people do not understand the relationship between preserving our land and the ideals of justice and peace.

But that should not stop us. We know that the energy bills we just passed in the congress are harmful to the environment. We know that there are efforts to privatize as much public land as possible, and we know that some wilderness is already lost. We know that finding alternative sources of energy is one of the most important environmental and economic goals of this new century, but it sometimes seems like our cries are falling on deaf ears.

I am here tonight to say, don't give up. Don't give in. Don't give out. Don't get lost in a sea of despair. Stay in the struggle, continue to get out there and push and pull to move this society forward. There is a force of good, a power, what I like to call the spirit of history, and it is on your side.

When I was growing up in rural Alabama, I saw those signs that said "white men," "colored men," "white women," "colored women," "white waiting," and "colored waiting." I tasted the bitter fruits of racism, and I didn't like it.

I used to ask my mother, my father, my grandparents, my great grandparents, "Why segregation? Why racial discrimination," and they used to tell me, "That's the way it is. Don't get in trouble. Don't get in the way." But I was fortunate to become involved in the modern day Civil Rights Movement, and I got in trouble. I got in the way.

It was good trouble, it was necessary trouble. You must be maladjusted to the problems and conditions of today. You must find a way to dramatize your issue. And then you have to get in the way. You just have to get in the way and make your voices heard.

Through your leadership, you must help build an all-inclusive world community based on simple justice, an all-encompassing community that values the dignity of every individual and of wild lands and wildlife—what I like to call the Beloved Community.

Consider those two words: Beloved Community. "Beloved" means not hateful, not violent, not uncaring, not unkind. And "Community" means not separated, not polarized, not locked in struggle.

The most pressing challenge in our society today is defined by the methods we use to *defend* the dignity of humankind. You cannot wait for someone else to create change. Through your own efforts, through your own action, through your own creativity and vision, you have to do it. You must make our society and our world a better place.

40 years ago this past summer, another generation of men and women, black and white, had the courage, had the capacity, had the ability to get in the way.

They put aside the comfort of their own lives, and they got involved in the circumstances of others. At 23, I was a leader in the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee. I traveled around the country encouraging people to come to Mississippi to get involved with the Freedom Summer of 1964.

40 years ago, it was almost impossible for people of color living in the South to register to vote. In 1964, the state of Mississippi had a population of more than 450,000 blacks, but only 18,000 were registered to vote. In one county in Alabama—Lowndes County—80% of the residents were African American, and there was not one single African American registered to vote.

***We all need to breathe fresh air, drink clean water, and eat clean food. These things are all necessary for us to live, and I believe that access to these vital components of human life is a sacred right that should not be violated.***

We were ordinary citizens, just like you, but we began organizing in Mississippi with one simple mission: to register as many black voters as possible. It was a great task, but our passion for justice was even greater.

We know our mission would not be without risk. In 1964, the state of Mississippi was a very dangerous place for those of us who believed that everyone should have the right to vote.

And freedom did not come without a heavy cost. Less than a month after we arrived, three civil rights workers, three young men—Andy Goodman and Mickey Schwerner—both white....and James Chaney, a black man—disappeared.

Later we found out that these three young men had been arrested, taken to jail. That same night they were released from jail by the sheriff, and turned over to the Klan. Then they were beaten, shot and killed. I tell you this so you will know that the struggle for social justice has been a long, hard road, littered by the battered and broken bodies of countless men and women who paid the ultimate price for a precious right—the right to vote.



# John Lewis

For those of us in the Movement, we learned early that our struggle was not for a month, a season, or a year, but the struggle of a lifetime. That is what it takes to build the "Beloved Community."

As leaders of the environmental justice movement, you can move our society forward by standing up for what you deeply believe. I often wonder why Americans today are so quiet.

I don't think the people of my generation would stand for what you accept today. What ever it is that you care about—whether it is the injustice of the war in Iraq, preserving human rights or the environment—you must find your passion and make your contribution. You have a mandate from the Spirit of History to follow in the footsteps of those brave and courageous men and women who fought to make a difference.

You have a mandate from the three young men who gave their lives in the red clay of Mississippi. Andy Goodman, James Chaney and Mickey Schwerner did not die in Europe. They did not die in Asia. Or in Central America. Or in the Middle East. They died right here in the American South. I knew these three young men. You must make sure that they did not die in vain.

As a nation and as a people we stand on the shoulders of these martyrs of the Movement. Now it is your turn to lead. It is your turn to build the Beloved Community. You must help to build a new, more green, more clean America and a better world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

I like to tell a story that some of you may have heard, but I think it symbolizes what we all must do to build the Beloved Community, a nation and a world at peace with itself. One day when I was growing up outside of a little town called Troy, Alabama, I was visiting the home of an aunt of mine, Aunt Seneva. Aunt Seneva lived in what we called a shotgun house. Most of you don't know what a shotgun house is.

In a non-violent sense, if you bounce a basketball through the front door of a shotgun house, it would go right out the back door. In a more military sense, in shotgun house, you can fire a gun through the front door and the bullet would go right out the back door.

My Aunt Seneva lived in a shotgun house with a tin roof that had little holes in it. And sometimes at night you could look up and see the stars. And when it would rain she would gather a tin pan, that some people call a bucket, and put it down to catch the rain water.

One day my sisters and brothers and a few of my cousins were all playing out in the yard. There were about 12 or 15 of us. And suddenly, an unbelievable storm came up with

strong winds blowing. The thunder was rolling, and the lightening was flashing. My Aunt Seneva suggested that we all should come into the house. And we all went inside.

She told us to hold hands. And we did as we were told. I could tell my aunt was terrified because she started crying. She thought that old house was going to blow away. She started crying, and we all started crying.

We were scared, but when one corner of that old house appeared to be lifting from its foundation, we would run to that corner of the room. And then when another corner began to lift up, we would walk to that corner of the room. We were trying to use our little bodies to hold that old house down. We were fifteen children walking with the wind.

My friends, the storms may come. The winds may blow, but we must never, ever leave the house. Call it the American house. Call it the world house. Call it the house of peace and environmental justice. We must never, ever leave the house.

You must use all your power to love and not to hate, to build and not to tear down, to heal and not to kill. And if you use that power, if you continue to pursue a standard of excellence in your daily lives—in your homes, in your communities, and in your work—then a new and better world—a Beloved Community—is yours to build. So I say to you tonight walk with the wind and let the spirit of love, the spirit of peace, and the spirit of justice be your guide.

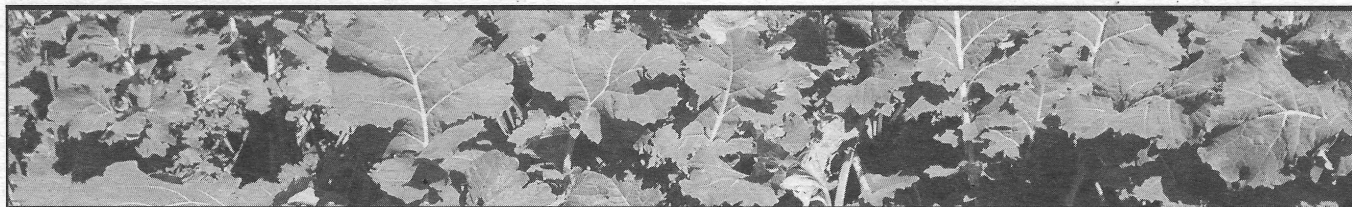
## KEEPING IT WILD EVENT SCHEDULE

*The "Keeping It Wild" seminar series is offered in partnership with Emory University and Spelman College. Upcoming presentations include:*

- *Nature, Negotiation, and Community: Slavery and the Origins of African American Environmentalism*, by Dr. Mart Stewart, Prof. of History, Western Washington University, February 2006. This seminar will look at the broad contours of Southerners' relationships with their environment by comparing the experiences of African, Native, and European Americans in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- *Protecting Community and the Environment at the Urban Rural Interface and Panel Discussion on Tax Challenges for the Preservation of Large Privately Held Land Tracts*, presented by Sutherland Asbill & Brennan LLP, the Georgia Legal Services Program and Georgia Wildlife Federation at Alcovy Conservation Center, March 2006.

The "Keeping It Wild" campaign also includes guided hiking tours. Upcoming excursions include trips to: old growth cove forest, Cascade Springs Nature Preserve, Arabia Mountain, Ocoee River, Blood Mountain Wilderness, Chattooga River watershed, and the Conasauga River. Please contact the Chattooga Conservancy for more information about the seminar and event schedule.

# Chattooga River Farm



*Eric Orr*

The Chattooga Conservancy is proud to announce the inception of Chattooga River Farm to promote sustainable agriculture in Rabun County. We are grateful to have access to 2 acres just outside of Clayton in Tiger, Georgia. The farm will use biodynamic and biointensive farming techniques as a means of controlling erosion and eliminating the need for synthetic soil amendments.

Chattooga River Farm is a response to America's disappearing farm culture and the degradation of our food systems. Since just after World War II agribusiness, with the help of industry funded institutional research, has convinced the farming community that synthetic soil amendments and pesticides are necessary to grow food. As a result, healthy farming practices have been replaced with chemically dependent monoculture, and the quality of our soil has been destroyed. As farmers abandoned the time tested practice of companion planting and composting, they found that more and more synthetics were necessary to produce the same amount of crops. The repeated addition of fertilizers to soil kills the very microbes that would otherwise benefit soil quality. The farmer has become trapped in a cycle of adding artificial nutrients to soil that has been rendered devoid of life. The United States loses more small farmers every year to the high cost of modern farming techniques, while agribusiness corporations grow bigger.

Our main goal at the Chattooga River Farm is to develop a working model that will demonstrate that there is a better way to grow food. Sustainable agriculture is not only favorable for the environment, but it also pays better. By eliminating synthetic soil amendments, the farmer saves money in overhead and adds value to the final product. We hope to encourage other farmers to revisit sustainable methods as a means of growing healthier food and making higher wages.

A major component of sustainability is keeping business local. Most vegetables travel between 1,500 and 2,500 miles before they get to the grocery store. Long distances mean the wasteful use of gasoline and the loss of valuable nutrients. It also means local farm economies are weakened by outside trade. When you buy local produce you get to see where it comes from and you know how it was produced. You also save fossil fuels and keep money circulating within your community. And locally grown produce tastes better because it is usually picked within a few days of when you buy it.

Chattooga River Farm will help to strengthen our local food system by selling produce at the Simply Homegrown Community Market in Clayton, and to local restaurants. We also have long term plans to operate part of the farm as a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), which entails selling shares of produce. A share holder would pay in advance, and would be guaranteed to receive a share of vegetables every week. Shares will be calculated on a sliding scale and may include opportunities for consumers to trade work for food.

Here is a sampling of some of the exciting programs we have planned:

## **Farm to School**

Communities throughout the United States are making profound changes through farm to school programs. The Chattooga River Farm's program would encourage local school systems to incorporate local produce in school lunches. We believe that children are the very roots of grassroots change.

## **Local Food Campaign**

We hope to build a food coalition with local farmers, business owners, non-profits, and government representatives. The focus will be to encourage the public to buy locally produced food, and to encourage farmers to use sustainable growing methods.

## **Community Outreach**

The farm has long term plans for offering public workshops on sustainable gardening and farming techniques, and alternative energy. We also hope to offer children the opportunity to learn about and participate in growing food.

The Chattooga River Farm's programs are just developing. Right now all labor on the farm is on a volunteer basis, and we are still working on funding for equipment and seed to start our spring crop. Please consider supporting sustainable agriculture through the Chattooga River Farm, and by eating local food. If you would like to volunteer, please contact Eric Orr at [eric@chattoogariver.org](mailto:eric@chattoogariver.org). If you would like to make a contribution, please make checks payable to the Chattooga Conservancy and earmark your donation for Chattooga River Farm, or you can contribute by credit card on our website. Thank you for your support! We look forward to sharing a sustainable community with you!

*Check us out on the web at  
[www.chattoogafarm.org](http://www.chattoogafarm.org)*



# Stekoa Creek Water Monitoring Project

Jenny Pugh Sanders

One year ago, the Chattooga Conservancy began a full-on assault on the pollution problems that have plagued Stekoa Creek for over thirty years. In the Fall 2004 issue of the *Chattooga Quarterly*, an article entitled "Stekoa Creek: A Plan for Restoration" highlighted the sad history of Stekoa and outlined a plan of action to stop further degradation of the creek while working towards restoration of Stekoa as a native brook trout habitat. In just one year, many of these proposals have taken shape as part of a larger water-monitoring project that has made considerable strides toward actualizing the Stekoa dream.

Stekoa Creek is a major tributary to the Chattooga River that flows through the city of Clayton southward along Highway 441, crossing under the road and through private lands before eventually joining the Chattooga River. Stekoa and several of its tributaries are listed by the State of Georgia on the 303 (d) list as impaired waterways. For years, uncontrolled development along the creek bank has caused high levels of sedimentation. Additionally, trees and shrubbery that are cleared out from along the waterway result in higher water temperatures and increased runoff of pollutants from nearby parking lots. Failing septic systems and leaking sewer pipes from downtown Clayton have also attributed to unusually high levels of fecal coliform bacteria, and since Stekoa Creek is a major tributary to the Chattooga River, these pollutants have had and continue to have an adverse effect on the health of the Chattooga.

As many of our readers know, in 1974 when the Chattooga River was under consideration to be included in the Federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, it was nearly excluded from protection below the confluence of Stekoa Creek because of the numerous pollution problems. The Chattooga was finally accepted in its entirety on the condition that the City of Clayton and the State of Georgia clean up Stekoa Creek. Although the wastewater treatment facility was brought to compliance several years ago, little else has been done to restore the health of Stekoa Creek...until now.

The Chattooga Conservancy initiated preliminary water sampling in September 2004 with the University of Georgia Agricultural and Environmental Services Laboratories. Without any formal training, staff members and volunteers from the Conservancy took water samples from seven locations along Stekoa Creek in downtown Clayton. Although the samples weren't collected strictly according to EPA guidelines, this data confirmed that fecal coliform

bacteria levels were still far above the legal limit and they laid the groundwork for what has become known as the Stekoa Creek Water Monitoring Project. Right around the same time, the Fall 2004 *Chattooga Quarterly* was published, which contained the article exposing the predicament of Stekoa Creek. Almost immediately, several members and local citizens stepped forward to offer both financial support as well as in-kind services. In particular, one member named Duncan Cottrell who specializes in water testing and sampling came out to train volunteers on sampling protocol. Through his involvement in Adopt-A-Stream programs, he was able to provide the Conservancy

with monitoring tools and sampling equipment, which he generously offered to lend to the program until more money becomes available for such purchases. Coincidentally, at the time Mr. Cottrell was also the lab manager at Environmental Management Services, Inc.; a certified lab based in Tate, Georgia which tests effluent from wastewater treatment facilities. Until this time, the Conservancy had been unable to afford regular water testing due to high costs and funding shortages. Once Mr. Cottrell and his company learned of this dilemma, they offered their testing services at a discounted rate to facilitate the collection of credible data. With the equipment provided by Mr. Cottrell, volunteers can monitor the dissolved oxygen, pH, air and water temperature, and



*Volunteer Lawrence Holden collects a water sample to measure conductivity in Stekoa Creek.*

conductivity in the field while the lab tests for fecal coliform and turbidity. As monthly testing became feasible, I, along with volunteer Mike Johnson and staff member Eric Orr, took on the task of making sure the samples were collected and shipped within 24 hours to the lab at Environmental Management Services.

On December 28<sup>th</sup>, 2004 the Conservancy received the results from the first sampling event held the week prior under the instruction of Mr. Cottrell. The data showed that the fecal coliform levels were not only consistent with earlier sampling results, but that they were actually much higher than had previously been recorded. One reading behind the Dairy Queen on Savannah Street showed 6,300 fecal colonies per milliliter, which is alarming considering that anything over 200 is considered unsafe for human use and/or recreation. As soon as these results were realized, Conservancy director Buzz Williams urged Mayor Danny Gillespie and (former) City Manager Henry Burrell to inspect the sewage pipes in the Dairy Queen area. What they in fact found was a "clogged" pipe that had created a



## Stekoa Creek Water Monitoring Project

back up in the line, causing sewage to leak out into the creek. Likewise, the samples taken the next month in January 2005 showed high levels of fecal coliform bacteria which proved to be a cracked sewage pipe between Paris and Valley streets in downtown Clayton. This pipe, which was also promptly repaired by the city, had actually crossed with a storm drain line and was sending raw sewage straight into Stekoa Creek. After these initial repairs, the fecal coliform count dropped back down to lower levels, still far above the "safe" limit, but this was short lived. Once again, the tell-tale sign of a sewer leak appeared in the recent August data when the fecal coliform count was 10,900 at the Wedgy's site on Village Way in Clayton. Urged by Mayor Danny Gillespie to "check out Scott's Creek," we decided to sample Scott's Creek in September. These results proved without a doubt that the leaking pipe was somewhere in Scott's Creek. Armed with a camera and a pair of waders, I walked the creek until the leak was located. Just behind the Buds n' Blossoms nursery, a pipe crossing the creek was leaking raw sewage directly into Scott's Creek, toilet paper and all. Once this evidence and an exact description of the location were presented to the city, there were no more excuses, and the leak was finally fixed. Unfortunately, the October and November samples continue to show high levels of fecal coliform, peaking at **15,000 fecal coliform colonies per milliliter**, our highest reading yet. We are currently working to locate the problem through increased sampling and monitoring of this particular area.

As the Stekoa Creek Water Monitoring Project volunteers and staff continue to monitor the creek and pressure the city to identify problem areas in the collection lines, other local groups continue to offer their support as well. One such group that has helped the Water Monitoring project considerably is the Stekoa Creek Greenway Group. Additionally, we have received several calls from concerned citizens in the area who offer volunteer support with every sampling event. Our newest volunteer, expert fly-fisherman and Conservancy member Lawrence Holden helped to collect the outrageously high August, September and October sampling data and recently wrote an editorial to *The Clayton Tribune* to call attention to the condition of Stekoa Creek. Holden also informed us of some species sampling that the Georgia Department of Natural Resources had been collecting at two different sites along Stekoa Creek. Upon request, Brian Shaner of the DNR shared his observations and the results of these tests with us. When asked about the condition of Stekoa, Mr. Shaner commented that Stekoa Creek "...appeared to act as little more than a drainage ditch..." that had "...high urban impacts." Similarly, Mr. Shaner also commented that "...[Stekoa Creek at Bethel Church Rd.] appears to be degrading due to the land disturbing activities along the 441 corridor." Unfortunately, even though we have been assured by the DNR that they will stop handing out variances that allow construction on the stream bank in town, several mountain-moving projects continue around town.

The Conservancy staff continues to research and solicit potential financial support, but the time is drawing near that we may again face funding shortages. Presently, we sample from

eight different locations along Stekoa Creek from around the RV Park in Mountain City to Rickman Airfield Rd., just south of Clayton. Regular testing of the same sampling sites is vital in order to gather long-term data, which can be used to secure both private and federal grants; however, it can take up to a year to receive these funds once they have been awarded. The total cost to the Conservancy is around \$35 per month per sample site, so in an effort to offset the cost and to continue sampling until substantial funding becomes available, we have launched an Adopt-a-Sample site program. If this program is successful, we hope to be able to expand the water monitoring project to include more sample sites, more frequent sampling, and emergency sampling events in between scheduled events. There are three levels of support ranging from \$15 per month to \$50 per month. Of course, donations of any amount are welcome, but since we ask participants to agree to adopt the site for at least one year, we decided to keep the minimum at an affordable amount to encourage the program's success.

Full restoration of Stekoa Creek will take the work of citizen organizations, businesses, and private individuals partnered with the efforts of our municipalities, but it is attainable. One of the most effective weapons that we all have in this fight is education. In April, we hosted nearly 60 high school students from Rabun County High School for a field trip that directly involved students in water sampling and macroinvertebrate sampling. Recently, the Environmental Club at Rabun Youth in Tiger also completed a macroinvertebrate sampling field trip and a water sampling field trip. If you or anyone that you know is interested in scheduling a field trip, adopting a sampling site, or volunteering to help with a sampling event, please contact the Chattooga Conservancy or Jenny Sanders at 782-6097.

### THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING SPONSORS OF THE ADOPT-A-SAMPLE PROGRAM:

- **Community Bank & Trust**—"Coosa Bass" 2 sample sites/month
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- **United Community Bank**—"Warpaint Shiner" 1 sample site/month
- **Walmart, Clayton store**—"Brook Trout" 3 sample sites/month



# Jim Fisher, Long Hunter

Eric Orr

*The following story is based on true accounts of Jim Fisher, a legendary character from the headwaters of the Toxaway River in North Carolina. Fisher belonged to a class of rugged mountain men called long hunters, named for their extended hunts in the untamed wilderness, which sometimes lasted as long as six months. Long hunters hunted for a living, and they often worked under contract, providing meat and furs to the cities and towns adjacent to the wilderness they hunted. These events took place in the mid 1800's.*

The sun hadn't quite broken the ridgeline of Hogback Mountain. It was a dreadful cold morning in the mountains of North Carolina, and it came after a long day and a short night. Jim Fisher had slept with his hound dog, Wonder, pressed close all night. He crawled out from under the skins that dressed his bed and worked up a flame from last night's coals. Fisher's hunt yielded nothing but wasted effort the day before and he was determined to make the next one count. He had customers in Asheville who were expecting meat, and he had a hungry family to feed. After a breakfast of leftover venison steaks, biscuits, and grainy coffee, he gathered up his accouterments and made for the woods.

Fisher was dressed in a fashion that you might expect an old timey mountain man to dress. He was covered with buckskin: a long fringed shirt that came down below his knees, buckskin breeches and leggings to match, and a hat made from a raccoon pelt to complement his thick, graying beard. His muzzleloader was the best that could be had. It was made not too far from home by legendary gun maker John Gillespie. Good rifles are essential to a professional hunter, as second shots don't come easy.

Wonder put her nose to the ground right at the start. She was on a good trail that took the two down a switched back

path that nearly circled the cabin. Fisher knew they'd be on a bear soon and he could feel the excitement welling up in his throat. That feeling reminded him of a hunt that his son in law, John Green, had a few years earlier.

Green had been hunting down near Tallulah Falls in Georgia. He and his dog climbed a dangerously steep and narrow ridge when they came up behind a big black bear. Green raised his rifle and loosed his bullet. That bullet pierced the bear's rear and found its way out through the bear's neck. Affrighted and ireful, the beast whipped around, and gnashing her teeth, she sharply closed the gap

between bear and man. Dodging to one side or the other would surely have ended in a 40 foot tumble to hard death. All John Green could do was clutch his knife and lay for a bloody fray. He could smell fermenting blueberries and hot bear breath when his dog vaulted forth, offering up her life for her master's. The two animals tussled toward the cliff and plunged past the precipice in a hateful embrace. Green crept out to the rock face and gazed down. The bear lay still upon the dog. After scrambling to the bottom Green peeled the bear back to see she was dead, and his dog nearly so. Her bowels lay splayed out in the dirt and her



*Jim Fisher telling stories at lying camp.*

breath was weakly slow. Jim Fisher was the one who put her back together and sewed her up. She recovered fully. He claimed to have sewed his own dog up a total of nine times.

Fisher knew this hunt could end in similar consequence. Or worse. It's what he lived for. It's what all long hunters lived for.

He and his dog had been on the heels of this bear for a good piece, and Wonder's supercharged enthusiasm betrayed the tension that was building. The scent got hotter and the pace

## Jim Fisher, Long Hunter

quicker. They were in a stand of burnt chestnut when she caught up to the old bear. Wonder lit out like the devil and the bear made for the nearest tree. But Wonder managed to get herself hemmed up in the hollow of that burnt tree. She was at the mercy of her tormentor, and she was about to get crucified. The bear's massive jaws locked onto her belly while she nearly got the brains shaken from her head. Her diminutive body was smitten and smashed from one wall to another of the tree trunk. The bear tore deeper into her gut, and her life leaked out like molten lava.



*The trophy of lying camp, held by Jim Fisher for many years, still exists today.*

Moving at man-speed, Jim Fisher arrived to find Wonder left for dead, her stuffing sticky with aging blood and strewn about beneath the huge chestnut. He hastily procured a hickory sapling and twisted its bark into crude cordage. Then after putting her bowels back into her belly, Fisher sewed her up and ordered her to resume chase. But she couldn't do it. She just lay there at his feet whimpering, gurgling for breath. Again, he yelled at his dying dog and this time she mustered all she had, took a step or two, and toppled over lifelessly.

The bear was still loose and there wasn't time to grieve. Fisher would need dogs if he was to remedy the situation. The cabin was only two miles away, and two of Wonder's puppies waited there. He hoofed it back and returned directly with his new hunting party. They took the bear's trail almost as well as their mama ever did, and Fisher saw Wonder in them. The three of them chased the bear through ivy tangles and laurel hells until they found themselves at the edge of the river. Owing to their youth and greenness, the pups lost the track and were unsure as to what to do next. But Fisher picked up where they fell short. Chasing bears through these hills was nothing new, and he had the woods sense to know what direction the bear likely took. They all followed the river down until the scent was strong again. They were within spitting distance, and the pups knew it. The bear was holed up in a thicket just off the river bank, and they hounded him for fight. It took a bit of coaxing, but the old bear finally abandoned his sanctuary. No sooner than he emerged did Wonder butt into the brawl. She had been delivered from death, and Fisher was glad to see it.

He backed off and let the hounds do their thing for the moment, while searching for a good stick with which to beat the bear. The hunter chose his licks carefully. The dogs fought hard, as did the bear. He lasted a good while, fending them off, getting in a blow here and there. But

Fisher smashed at the bear's head whenever he had the chance, and the bear soon lost his steam. He slowed down to a deadly vulnerable pace, and the dogs pushed and pushed until they had him against the water. Wonder saw that the bear was incapable of making a proper defense, and she catapulted toward him, grabbing hold where she could while one of her babies latched onto his snout and the other to his throat. Then Fisher was on the bear's neck, pressing hard with his stick until he forced the head underwater. After some effort the old bear lost his soul to the river.

That hunt marked the beginning of celebration. Most of the other long hunters were returning from the wilderness, which meant there would be a big meeting. Hunters came from all around to tell stories, shoot guns, and drink profusely. It was a common practice to stretch the truth of hunting adventures. It was expected... the straight story was looked down upon. The event was called "lying camp" and Jim Fisher came to be called "Big Lie."

The man who could out-shoot, out-drink, and out-lie his peers got the prize. He got to hold on to a two foot powder horn crudely etched with a hunting scene. The horn was his to keep until someone else took the title with a more outrageous lie. Jim Fisher held the title many times, and the horn actually still exists. It is owned by one of his descendants in Lake Toxaway, North Carolina.

Jim Fisher was a legend in these mountains and the stories of his adventures still find their way into books today. The long hunters of a past era have been replaced by modern sportsmen. Radio collars and ATV's have replaced superior physical condition, and the sense of sport has replaced sheer courage and necessity. Bear hunting with dogs has evolved from a means of survival into a circus of sport. Jim Fisher represented a breed of man that is nearly extinct.



# Members' Page

*Many thanks to all who recently renewed their membership, joined or donated goods or time to 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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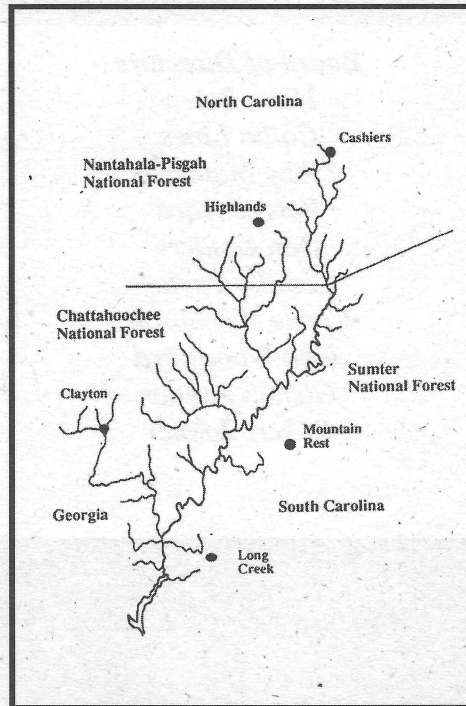
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- Educate the public
- Promote public choice based on credible scientific information
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- Protect remaining old growth and roadless areas
- Work cooperatively with the Forest Service to develop a sound ecosystem initiative for the watershed

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