

Campaign Focus Area 19

Upper Tuckasegee Gorge

Located in southeastern Jackson County and surrounded by the Nantahala National Forest, the Upper Tuckasegee Gorge is rich with waterfalls, cliffs, and prime biological habitat. The Tuckasegee, named for a former Cherokee settlement, was once a major center for the Middle Cherokee Indians between 1600 and 1780. Located in the headwaters of the east fork of the Tuckasegee is Panthertown Valley. Also known as the "Yosemite of the East", Panthertown is home to intact Southern Appalachian bogs, spray cliffs, granitic domes, and possesses high biological diversity.

The Tuckasegee Gorge area is well known for its abundant canoeing, kayaking and recreational opportunities and is home to the nationally significant Upper Tuckasegee Gorge Macrosite, designated by the North Carolina Natural Heritage Program.



Biological Diversity

More rare species are found in this area and adjacent Panthertown than any place else in Jackson County and perhaps for an area its size in the entire Appalachians. The streams are prime habitat for the native brook trout and Hellbenders. There are over 150 occurrences of Threatened and Sensitive species and 70 ecosystems. Of these ecosystems nearly a third are not protected. Habitats range from acidic granitic domes to mafic cliff-faces, Southern Appalachian bogs to tannic streams.



Green Salamander photo by Lori Williams



Cultural Heritage

This region has been home to native Americans for 1400 years and the town of Tuckasegee was a major population center for the Cherokee between 1600 and 1780. As the Cherokee were displaced from the region, settlers moved in, growing corn, apples, harvesting timber, and grazing cattle. Remnants of these agricultural efforts can still be seen in the open spaces of the Big Ridge. Many of these open spaces are now Christmas tree farms.

Economic Significance

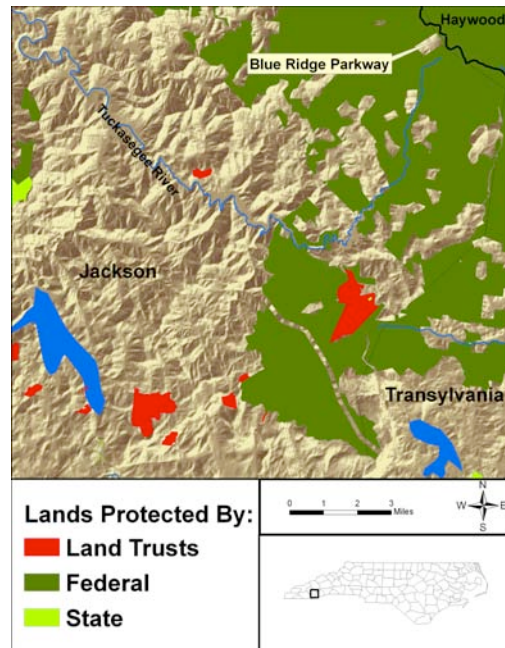
The traditional farming and rural economy of this region is being maintained but is experiencing a transition to Christmas tree farming. In addition, there is a transition to an economy based on clean water, stunning views, open spaces, and a rural/recreation lifestyle. This is being driven by the construction and real estate industries as they attract retirees and seasonal residents. Recreation, tourism and service industries are experiencing growth as more development occurs.



Upper Tuckasegee Gorge

Since 1909, the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust and the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy have protected 1,720 acres in this focus area through land purchase, donation, and conservation easements. During that time with \$1.2 million of private funds, these partners have leveraged \$880,000 from the North Carolina Natural Heritage Trust and Clean Water Management Trust Funds, and over \$18 million of donated interests in land to total nearly \$20 million of land value conserved. While portions of this landscape are protected by the U.S. Forest Service as part of the Nantahala National Forest, significant portions are at risk for development. The portions of the watershed to the east of Panthertown are almost completely unprotected.

The North Carolina State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP), Natural Heritage Inventory, and other data sources are being used to set priorities for land and habitat protection. This portion of the Southern Blue Ridge ecoregion contains 70 occurrences of 15 different ecosystems that are candidates for preservation. Over 30% of these are not protected and 20% of the known occurrences of threatened and endangered species are not protected. They need to be protected before they succumb to the pressures of development.



Leave Your Legacy

There are few ways that you can leave a greater legacy than through land conservation. Please consider a tax-deductible gift to preserve the magnificent landscape of the Upper Tuckasegee Gorge. Each donation brings us one step closer to conserving this veritable Noah's Ark for our great-grandchildren and beyond.

Financial information about these organizations and a copy of their license are available from the State Solicitation Licensing Branch at 888-830-4989. The license is not an endorsement by the state.

Goal: 974 Additional Acres by 2010			
Funding Source	Protected 2006-2007	To Protect 2008-2010	TOTAL
	824 Acres	150 Acres	974 Acres
Private Donations	\$1,200,000	\$6,332	\$1,206,332
Public Funding	\$880,000	\$50,000	\$930,000
Land Value Donations	\$10,300,000	\$3,000,000	\$13,300,000
TOTAL	\$12,380,000	\$3,056,332	\$15,436,332



Highlands-Cashiers
LAND TRUST
"Saving Special Places since 1909"

Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust, PO Box 1703, Highlands, NC 28741

Gary Wein, Executive Director Telephone: 828-526-1111

website: www.hicashlt.org

The Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust (HCLT) has been protecting valuable land resources for all generations since 1909 in Macon and Jackson Counties. We protect natural areas and their native flora and fauna; to preserve our rural and cultural heritage; to sustain air, water and land quality along with biological diversity; to provide opportunities for outdoor education and recreation; and to enhance the natural vegetative buffers of our regional community. HCLT currently protects nearly 1,400 acres in Macon and Jackson Counties.



Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy, 34 Wall St., Suite 502, Asheville, NC 28801

Carl Silverstein, Executive Director Telephone: 828-253-0095

Website: www.appalachian.org

The mission of the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy is to conserve the unique plant and animal habitat, clean water, and scenic beauty of the mountains of North Carolina and east Tennessee for the benefit of present and future generations. We achieve this by forging and maintaining conservation relationships with landowners and public agencies, owning and managing land, and working with communities to accomplish their conservation objectives. To date, the Conservancy has helped ensure the protection of more than 37,000 acres throughout the mountain region. Much work remains to be done. We invite all who care about the future of our southern mountains to join the effort.



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