

Campaign Focus Area 20

Chattooga Headwaters and Whiteside Mountain

In southwestern North Carolina, the Blue Ridge takes a steep rise at the 4000-foot Highlands Plateau just before tapering off into flat-lying South Carolina. A bold landscape of granite cliff mountains, including a 700 foot exposed cliff on Whiteside Mountain in the Nantahala National Forest, provide defying rock faces for experienced climbers and extensive scenery into Georgia and South Carolina for motorists and hikers. The high cliffs host a variety of rock-loving plants needing a high altitude, bare rock, and high rainfall to survive. Peregrine falcons, ravens, and wintering golden eagles frequent the cliffs above the Chattooga River, one of the few remaining free flowing streams in the Southeast. Two of the highest cliff faces east of the Mississippi River, Whiteside Mountain and Laurel Knob, frame the upper reaches of the Chattooga River.



Photo by Gary Wein

An Area Rich with Biological Diversity and Economic Vitality

Protection of land within this area will provide ecological connectivity surrounding the Nantahala National Forest and preserve scenic views from Whiteside Mountain, Devil's Courthouse, and the Blue Ridge Parkway. Land conservation within this sensitive area will sustain the area's famed outdoor recreation and local economy, both highly dependent on the area's natural resources and beauty. Tourism currently provides employees 1,800 people in Jackson and Macon counties.

Biological Diversity

The 33,000 acre Chattooga River watershed in North Carolina is dominated by the nationally significant Escarpment Gorges Macrosite. There are nationally and statewide examples of rare southern Appalachian bogs, northern hardwood forests, high elevation granitic domes, and high elevation rock summits. These communities support populations of 22 endangered and threatened species, including the peregrine falcon, green salamander, swamp pink, bog turtle, and the small whorled pogonia.

The state threatened Peregrine Falcon nest on the cliff face of Whiteside Mountain.



Zachary Tolbert House Photo by Gary Wein

Cultural Heritage

This region was part of the heart of the Cherokee nation until 1835 when the New Echota Treaty eliminated Cherokee occupation and resulted in the Trail of Tears in 1838. Many of the places still bear the names of the Cherokee such as Tuckasegee and Chattooga. Settlers began to make their mark in the region by the early 1800's with the first settlers in the Horse and Whiteside Mountain Coves and the Cashiers Crossroads by the 1830's. Today the region is renowned for its magnificent views.

Economic Significance

This region has long been known for providing a high quality of life, first as a place for recuperation and later for seasonal residents as they recognized the beauty of the stunning views and open spaces. Tourism is the industrial engine for the region as visitors are drawn to its spectacular scenery, trails, beautiful waterfalls, fishing for native brook trout, and golf resorts such as High Hampton. These same visitors build homes driving a development based economy that threatens the very thing that attracts them to the region in the first place.

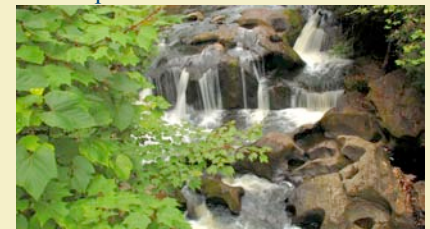
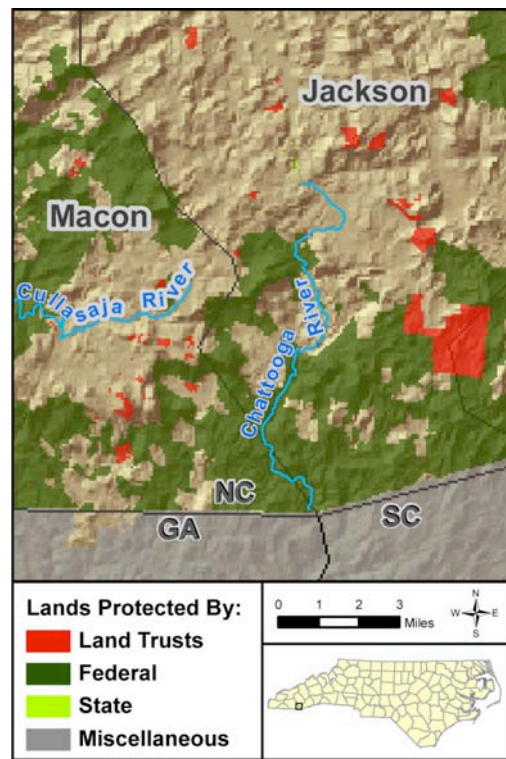


Photo by: Mark W. Hutchison/Light Image PRO Digital Photo

Chattooga Headwaters and Whiteside Mountain Area

Since 1909, the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust and the Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy have protected 780 acres in this focus area through land purchase, donation, and conservation easements. During that time, with \$4.8 million of private funds, these partners have leveraged \$625,000 from the North Carolina Natural Heritage Trust and Clean Water Management Trust Funds, and over \$17 million of donated interests in land to total nearly \$22 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 upper portions of the Chattooga Watershed 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 44 occurrences of 18 different ecosystems that are candidates for preservation. Nearly 30% of these are not protected and 25% 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 Chattooga River and Whiteside Mountain. 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 licenses are available from the State Solicitation Licensing Branch at 888-830-4989. The license is not an endorsement by the state.

Goal: 1,200 Additional Acres by 2010			
Funding Source	Protected 2006-2007 300 Acres	To Protect 2008-2010 900 Acres	TOTAL 1,200 Acres
Private Donations	\$1,051,000	\$1,000,000	\$2,051,000
Public Funding	\$625,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,625,000
Land Value Donations	\$8,280,000	\$8,000,000	\$16,280,000
TOTAL	\$9,956,000	\$10,000,000	\$19,956,000



Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust, Gary Wein, Executive Director, PO Box 1703, Highlands, NC 28741, 828-526-1111, 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 1400 acres in Macon and Jackson Counties.



Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy, Kieran Roe, Executive Director, P.O. Box 2822, Hendersonville, NC 28793, 828-697-5777, www.carolinamountain.org

The Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy (CMLC) envisions a region in western North Carolina, where in the face of continued rapid growth and development over coming decades, sufficient farm, forest, park, natural land and water resources will be conserved to safeguard the region's unique natural heritage and quality of life for future generations. As an effective local nonprofit organization dedicated to saving the places you love, CMLC is helping to create a regional network of more than 17,700 acres in Henderson, Transylvania and neighboring parts of Buncombe, Jackson and Rutherford counties in western North Carolina.



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