

## Campaign Focus Area 22

# The Hiwassee River Valley The Snowbird Mountains The Unicoi Mountains

The southwestern corner of North Carolina contains some of the most pristine headwater streams in the nation, providing critical drinking water and recreational support to areas downstream. The unique combination of majestic mountain ranges and broad, fertile valleys contained in this landscape gives rise to an incredible variety of aquatic and terrestrial habitats and has supported thriving human cultures for millennia. With many essential wildlife corridors and prime farmlands at risk to subdivision and development, the Hiwassee River valley along with the Snowbird and Unicoi mountains represent an outstanding yet transient conservation opportunity.



Photo: Callie D. Moore

## Exceptional Natural Resources, Historic Communities, a Way of Life An Uncertain Future

From rushing mountain trout streams such as the High Quality Waters of Tuni Creek to the meandering Valley River with its unique combination of cold- and warmwater fisheries, the Hiwassee is one of North Carolina's most ecologically diverse river basins. The Snowbird and Unicoi mountains are cloaked by woodlands ranging from dry oak and pine ridges to rich coves blossoming with wildflowers. These historic farmlands and headwater forests are being lost to residential subdivisions and ex-urban sprawl at an alarming rate, with 23,000 acres of private forest and nearly 6,000 acres of farmland lost between 1992 and 2002.

### Biological Diversity

The varied landscape of southwestern North Carolina provides habitat for an incredible variety of plants and animals, including many species found nowhere else in the world. The Hiwassee headwaters crayfish (*Cambarus parishi*), for example, is a state and federal species of concern found only in the upper Hiwassee basin.

Key private tracts, as yet undeveloped, within the Little Snowbird and Hanging Dog watersheds are critical wildlife corridors between disjunct federal lands and help secure the diverse flora and fauna of this landscape.



### Cultural Heritage

"Hiwassee" is derived from the Cherokee "Ayuhwasi", meaning savannah or meadow, which was the name of a native village near the confluence of Peachtree Creek and the river, believed to have been settled at least 3,000 years ago. The John C. Campbell Folk School at Brasstown, modeled on the Danish rural folk school tradition, continues today as a monument to North Carolina's significant and unique craft culture.

### Economic Significance

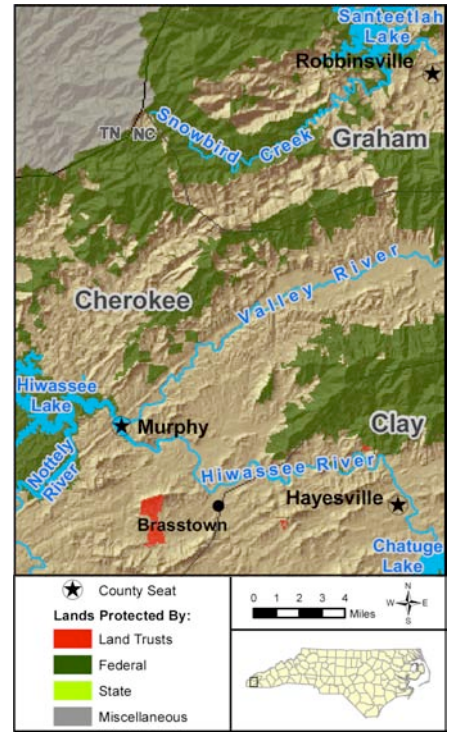
A forestry and conventional farm economy is transitioning to an economy dependent upon quality of life measures such as access to clean water, stunning views, open space and a rural lifestyle. Recreation, tourism and service industries are growing as is the construction industry for retirees and seasonal residents, and many farmers are shifting to direct-market strategies to take better advantage of this new market. Preservation of rural character will be essential to securing the long-term economic vitality of the area.

Blue Ridge Forever  
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*A Campaign Spearheaded by 13 Conservation Organizations to Protect 50,000 Acres of the Southern Blue Ridge Mountains by 2010*

# - - Hiwassee - - Snowbird - - Unicoi

Since the expansion of the organization's service area in 2005, the Land Trust for the Little Tennessee (LTLT) has led in the protection of nearly 1100 acres representing over \$6 million of land value conserved within the Hiwassee-Snowbird-Unicoi region. Among the protected properties to date is the largest working farm in North Carolina west of Asheville. Another 2,850 acres including 23 miles of streams and nearly 13 miles of National Forest boundary is at immediate risk and targeted for protection by 2010. These lands valued at over \$18 million include two municipal watersheds and an individually-held tract. The North Carolina State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) and other data sources are being used to set priorities for land and habitat protection.



Tracts in red represent the diversity of land protection projects LTLT has successfully undertaken in this Focus Area, including working farm conservation easements, ownership of threatened, pristine watersheds adjacent to National Forest, and conservation-based residential communities.

## 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 Hiwassee valley and the surrounding Snowbird and Unicoi mountains. Each donation brings us one step closer to conserving this treasure of natural and cultural heritage for our great-grandchildren and beyond.

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

Goal: 3,940 Additional Acres by 2010			
Funding Source	Protected 2006-2007 1,090 Acres	To Protect 2008-2010 2,850 Acres	TOTAL 3,940 Acres
Private Donations	\$50,000	\$0	\$50,000
Public Funding	\$0	\$6,500,000	\$6,500,000
Land Value Donations	\$6,000,000	\$12,000,000	\$18,000,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$6,050,000</b>	<b>\$18,500,000</b>	<b>\$24,550,000</b>



**LTLT**  
*Land Trust for the Little Tennessee*

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The Land Trust for the Little Tennessee (LTLT) conserves the waters, forests, farms and heritage of the upper Little Tennessee and Hiwassee River valleys. Since its inception in 1997, LTLT has led in the conservation of over 10,000 acres including: 35 miles of river frontage on the free-flowing Little Tennessee; 50 miles of river, stream, and reservoir frontage surrounding the confluence of the Little Tennessee and Cheoah Rivers; three municipal watersheds; and 12 other parcels of land buffering national parks and national forest lands. LTLT's cultural heritage work to date includes the conservation of four historic farms, the nomination of the Cowee/Wests Mill Historic District to the National Register, the purchase of the T.M. Rickman General Store in West Mill, and the conservation of the Cowee Mound - returning it to historic Cherokee control. LTLT serves Macon, Swain, Jackson, Graham, Clay, and Cherokee Counties in North Carolina and northern Rabun County in Georgia.

**Blue Ridge Forever**  
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