

## Campaign Focus Area 26

# Grandfather Mountain & Wilson Creek

Grandfather Mountain possesses the highest peak along the Blue Ridge escarpment and contains the headwaters of Wilson Creek, designated a National Wild & Scenic River in 2000. Iconic Grandfather Mountain and the unspoiled waters of Wilson Creek provide spectacular wilderness and educational experiences, as well as clean water, to millions of North Carolinians and visitors from afar.



Photo: Foothills Conservancy



Photo: Kevin Knight

## International Biosphere Preserve & World Class Trout Waters

Grandfather Mountain and National Wild & Scenic Wilson Creek are ecological and cultural treasures of North Carolina. Multitudes of significant and rare habitats and species occupy this spectacularly diverse area. Grandfather Mountain is the site of an International Biosphere Preserve and Wilson Creek's pure water provides nationally significant aquatic habitat for rare and potentially undocumented aquatic species. Both places attract visitors from all over the country and the world and can be viewed from one of the most spectacular scenic viewpoints along the Blue Ridge Parkway, the Linn Cove Viaduct. Though largely surrounded by Pisgah National Forest, these North Carolina gems are at risk of unchecked development of approximately 12,000 acres of unprotected private land that is extremely attractive for second-home development. One such development plan was narrowly avoided in the summer of 2007 along four miles of Wilson Creek.

### Biological Diversity

Grandfather Mountain and the Wilson Creek watershed are incredibly rich ecologically and afford outstanding water quality attributes. The entire 23-mile stretch of Wilson Creek is a National Wild and Scenic River. The creek's aquatic habitat and Grandfather Mountain are nationally significant natural heritage areas. The area hosts eight additional natural heritage areas; five unique habitats associated with the State Wildlife Action Plan; eight federal and over a dozen state endangered, threatened or rare species; 47 North Carolina-designated "Outstanding Resource Waters" streams; and one "High Quality Waters" river.

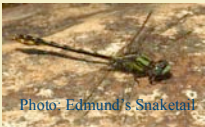


Photo: Edmund's Snaketan



Photo: Foothills Conservancy

### Cultural Heritage

Wilson Creek hosted turn-of-the-century timber and textile communities prior to devastating floods in 1916 and the 1940s. The CCC then created and restored roads and trails for public use. The McRae/Morton family has owned Grandfather Mountain for over 100 years. They operate a successful tourist attraction and began formally protecting the land in the 1980's. In 1992, it was selected by the UN as an International Biosphere Preserve.

### Economic Significance

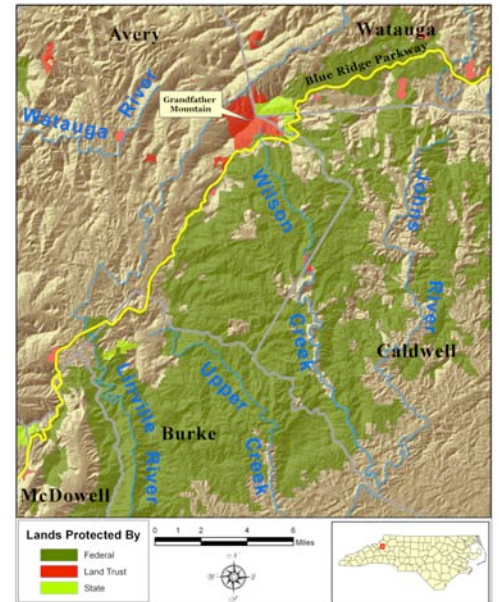
This area attracts hundreds of thousands of tourists from all over the world for outdoor recreation, stunning scenery, trout fishing, whitewater sports and wilderness enjoyment. Local communities depend upon the direct and indirect revenues generated by these natural treasures and the tourists and sportsmen they attract. Recent opportunities to acquire lands along several miles of Wilson Creek for public gameland open up the possibility of a world-class trout fishery, creating even more opportunities.



# Grandfather Mountain & Wilson Creek

Since 2006, Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina has focused on the protection of significant lands along Wilson Creek guided by a recently completed watershed conservation plan. In 2008, Foothills Conservancy negotiated a purchase contract with the landowners of the largest privately-owned tract in the watershed – 649 acres encompassing nearly four miles of this National Wild and Scenic River – on behalf of the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission. Funds have been secured to complete this \$7 million purchase in 2009. By 2010, Foothills Conservancy will complete two conservation easements on an additional 300 private acres surrounding two miles of Wilson Creek and a major tributary. Currently, \$8 million in public funding and nearly \$2 million of leveraged private money could protect a connected network of nearly 1,000 acres and almost 10 miles of Wilson Creek and its tributaries.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) has protected 3,770 acres at Grandfather Mountain over the past 20 years and, with The Conservation Fund, helped facilitate the purchase of Grandfather Mountain State Park in 2008. Additionally, TNC holds a conservation easement on 150 acres encompassing over a mile of Wilson Creek upstream and adjacent to Foothills Conservancy's protection area. As an advisor to Blue Ridge Forever, TNC will continue to coordinate its conservation work throughout the Southern Blue Ridge Ecoregion with Blue Ridge Forever member organizations.



Significant land protection opportunities exist within the boundary of the Grandfather Mountain & Wilson Creek focus area.

## 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 Grandfather Mountain and Wilson Creek.

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.

Proposed Funding Plan for Protecting an Additional 1,000 Acres	
Private Donations	\$1,050,000
Public Funding	\$8,500,000
Land Value Donations	\$2,000,000
<b>FUNDING GOAL</b>	<b>\$11,550,000</b>



**Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina, Susie Hamrick-Jones, Executive Director**  
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Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina is dedicated to landowners and communities to preserve and protect important natural areas and open spaces of the eastern Blue Ridge Mountains and Foothills, including watersheds, environmentally significant habitats, forests and farmland, for this and future generations. Foothills Conservancy has protected more than 43,000 acres since 1995. Serving Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, Cleveland, Lincoln, McDowell and Rutherford counties and the headwaters of the Broad, Catawba, and Yadkin rivers, Foothills Conservancy has added thousands of acres to Pisgah National Forest, three state parks at Chimney Rock, Lake James and the South Mountains, and several major state game lands. The Conservancy is also dedicated to protecting significant private forests and farm lands with conservation easements.



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High Country Conservancy is dedicated to protecting the natural resources of Appalachia by conserving land with significant ecological, cultural, recreational, or scenic value in the North Carolina High Country. To date, HCC has protected over 2,100 acres of significant land in Ashe, Watauga and Avery Counties.



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