



## Summary of 2015 Accomplishments

### Water Quality Monitoring Program

- ◆ Thirty-two certified volunteers monitored 41 sites across the 4-county area, with a total of 451 sampling events completed! ([www.georgiaadoptastream.org](http://www.georgiaadoptastream.org))
- ◆ Data (including *E. coli*) was collected locally for the Hiwassee River for the first time!
- ◆ Held two Adopt-A-Stream water chemistry and bacterial training events, training 11 new volunteers. Several other smaller recertification workshops for existing volunteers were also conducted by our AAS coordinator.
- ◆ In partnership with the Unaka Chapter of Trout Unlimited, continued a water chemistry monitoring program in the Fires Creek watershed begun in 2013, focusing on the Rockhouse Creek sub-watershed.
- ◆ Staff continued collecting water quality data from 16 sites in the Valley River watershed to try to determine sources of high fecal coliform levels that resulted in a large length of the river being added to the NC 303(d) List of Impaired Waters in 2014.

### Restoration Program

- ◆ Completed stream restoration along 1,100 feet of Morgan Creek and two tributaries in Marble, NC. An estimated 218 tons (14 dump truck loads) of sediment per year was removed from the Valley River as a result of this project! This project was funded by the NC Section 319 Nonpoint Source Pollution Program.
- ◆ Using a grant from the Duke Energy Riparian Habitat Enhancement Fund, planned a project along Town Creek in Hayesville to repair eroding stream banks and turn an old sediment catch-basin into a stormwater management pond.
- ◆ Using a separate grant from Duke Energy, helped coordinate an effort to expand the “Shade Your Stream” program from its beginnings in Macon County, NC into a regional education initiative.
- ◆ Continued working in partnership with students at Tri-County Early College to enhance the streamside areas along McComb Branch by removing non-native invasive plants.
- ◆ Coordinated a stream restoration project along Junaluska Creek that stemmed from a technical assistance call.
- ◆ Hosted 44 Alternative Spring Break volunteers from Saginaw Valley State Univ. and Grand Valley State Univ. in Michigan, Bowling Green State Univ. in Ohio, and the Univ. of North Florida. This work generated nearly \$22,750 in matching funds for grants while completing needed restoration project maintenance in all four counties in the watershed!
- ◆ Continued working in partnership with the Riverwalk to eradicate invasive plants from riparian areas along Hiwassee and Valley Rivers along the trails in downtown Murphy.
- ◆ Continued to administer a low cost no-till grain drill rental program in partnership with the Cherokee and Clay county soil and water conservation districts and Peachtree Farm & Home Supply. Since its purchase in 1999 the drill has seeded more than 2,200 acres of land in six counties. It is mostly used for pasture renovation projects, which are a big win for water quality!
- ◆ Responded to six calls for technical assistance that range from invasive plant control advice to recommendations for mild to severe bank erosion solutions.

- ◆ Secured a \$58,000 matching grant from the NC Section 319 program for restoration of the Valley River at the mouth of Taylor Creek and began planning this project.
- ◆ Entered into a new partnership with the Chattahoochee-Nantahala Chapter of Trout Unlimited for a joint restoration project in 2016.

### Lakes Program

- ◆ In partnership with the Towns County Commissioner's office, hosted an educational meeting about aquatic weeds, specifically hydrilla, and encouraged people to watch for infestations in the spring. [We're happy to report that there were no reports of weed infestations in 2015!]
- ◆ Entered into a new contract with the City of Hiwassee for water quality monitoring of Lake Chatuge sites in and on streams draining to the city.
- ◆ Secured funding from the Lake Chatuge Rotary Club to implement a shoreline erosion & enhancement project and install an educational kiosk at the low water boat ramp east of Hiwassee.
- ◆ Coordinated the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Lake Chatuge Shoreline Cleanup with 147 volunteers and more than 4,500 pounds of trash collected, bringing the 5-year total to 5.55 TONS!
- ◆ Helped publicize the Hiwassee Lake shoreline cleanup coordinated by Cherokee County, NC and the Lake Nottely Improvement Association's events and clean-ups.

### Education Program

- ◆ Assisted with a 2-day "Kids in the Creek" event organized by Coweeta Hydrologic Lab staff serving the entire 8<sup>th</sup> grade from Hayesville Middle School.
- ◆ Participated in the GA Mountain Research & Education Center's environmental education days, providing the interactive activity, "Everyone Lives Upstream!" for 420 middle school students from five counties in two states! [This requires 5-6 full days of our education coordinator's time.]
- ◆ Participated in the Clay County Soil & Water Conservation District Field Day.
- ◆ Held one "Day at the C.R.E.E.K." summer youth education event; 10 students participated, bringing the total number of youth served by the C.R.E.E.K. program to 178!
- ◆ Led native/invasive plant walks on the River Walk in Murphy. Over four days, eight walks were held with classes of 1st-5th grade students from Murphy Elementary and The Learning Center.
- ◆ Assisted the Murphy High School Advanced Placement Environmental Science class in sampling water chemistry in the Valley River.
- ◆ Coordinated a workday on the River Walk with The Learning Center's 5th grade class for their community service day.
- ◆ Assisted Heather Moss with getting her Towns County High School biology class started with water chemistry sampling through GA Adopt-A-Stream.

### Public Access

- ◆ NC Wildlife Resources Commission completed (with help from HRWC) a canoe/kayak put-in on the Hiwassee River in Hayesville, just downstream of the Tusquittee Road/Tom Day Bridge.
- ◆ Negotiated a donation of land on the Valley River at one of our 2008 restoration project sites for NC Wildlife Resources Commission to put a public float fishing access on. This critical location is one of two needed to bridge the 11-mile gap in public access that exists on the Valley. We thank the Town of Andrews for accepting this donation while we get our ducks in a row!
- ◆ Union County and TVA constructed an access point at the head of Lake Nottely in Meeks Park this year. [Although they did this of their own accord, we can't help but think that our planning and emphasis on more public access didn't help spark the idea!]

- ◆ Launched a new outings program associated with celebrating our 20th anniversary! We hiked, watched birds, paddled canoes and kayaks, and photographed waterfalls this year during 13 outings in all for counties and along the Hiwassee River in Tennessee.

### Other

- ◆ Worked extensively with other nonprofit organizations and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians in southwestern NC on a regional erosion and sediment control education initiative.
- ◆ Continued participation in the Nantahala-Pisgah Forest Partnership which is working collaboratively with diverse interests to help the US Forest Service revise its 15-year management plan.
- ◆ Submitted comments on the latest Environmental Assessment for the Laurel Creek Property Owners' request to build a road to an inholding on the rim of the Fires Creek watershed. Then filed an objection to the June 2015 draft decision to grant the road through the pristine Fires Creek watershed.

### Organizational Development

- ◆ Celebrated our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a well-attended celebration at the newly-renovated historic L&N Depot in Murphy!
- ◆ Increased membership in the organization, adding 42 new residential households, 2 new organizations and 2 new businesses!
- ◆ Updated our Facebook page at least monthly and brought the number of "Likes" up from 648 to 840, a 30% increase. Engagement on several posts was recorded at more than 1,200 people!

Please visit our web site for current events and accomplishments: [www.hrwc.net](http://www.hrwc.net)

Our Facebook page is completely public, but if you are Facebook user, please engage with us there!

[www.facebook.com/hiwasseeiver](http://www.facebook.com/hiwasseeiver)