

2017 Highlighted Accomplishments

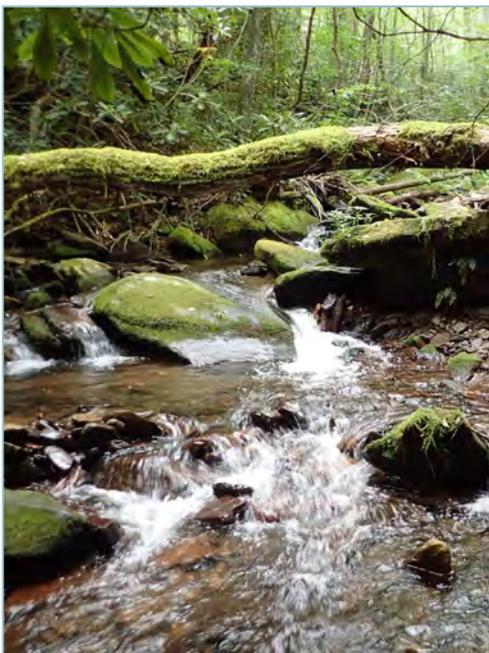
Major Milestone — Lake Chatuge

Since 2007, HRWC has been working to reduce phosphorus and nitrogen in Lake Chatuge. These key nutrients caused an increase in algae growth and contributed to a reduced ecological health rating in the late 1990s-early 2000s. This year we obtained TVA's ecological health rating data and score for 2015. From 1998-2006, the ecological health rating averaged 54.1 (Poor). There was only one Fair rating in 2001, when all the mountain reservoirs scored unexplainably higher. From 2007-2015, the average ecological health rating was 61.4 (Fair), representing



a 7.3-point improvement since the Lake Chatuge Watershed Action Plan was released! The nutrient reduction system at the Hiwassee wastewater treatment plant didn't even go online until 2016! We'll look forward to continued improvement in the ecological health rating over the next 9-year period as we and others continue working to reduce nutrients in the Lake Chatuge Watershed!

Major Milestone — Fires Creek



Since 2008, HRWC has been working through the US Forest Service's public process to protect the designated Outstanding Resource Waters of Fires Creek and its tributaries from excess sedimentation and potential acid runoff associated with proposed road building activities to access a 50-acre private parcel of land completely surrounded by the Nantahala National Forest. This year, the landowners finally agreed to sell the property to our local land trust partner for eventual transfer into public ownership! HRWC would like to recognize the following organizations (in alphabetical order) that worked with us over nine years to achieve the goal of sustaining good water quality and recreational opportunities in this pristine watershed: Mountain High Hikers, MountainTrue, NC Wildlife Federation, Southern Environmental Law Center, The Wilderness Society, Trout Unlimited, and Wild South.

Monitor

- ◆ Certified volunteers actively monitored 55 sites across the 4-county area, with a total of 284 sampling events completed. (View graphs of data at: <https://adoptastream.georgia.gov/>)
- ◆ Collected data (including *E. coli*) monthly at six locations on the Hiwassee River (2 in Towns, 3 in Clay and 1 in Cherokee County); two locations on Nottely River; three locations on Brasstown Creek; and one location on Valley River.
- ◆ Conducted water chemistry and bacterial certification workshops, training 13 new volunteers!
- ◆ Our Administrative & Outreach Coordinator, Raleigh Keagan became a certified Adopt-A-Stream chemistry and bacteria trainer, expanding our training and re-certification ability.
- ◆ Developed and hosted a new abbreviated re-certification workshop series so that long-time volunteers don't have to take the full-day certification workshop designed for new volunteers every year to get re-certified!
- ◆ Assisted the Georgia Department of Natural Resources with sicklefin redhorse sampling on Brasstown Creek and Nottely River using Fyke nets.



Restore

- ◆ Completed a bank stabilization project along Tatham Creek at the Andrews Valley River Park using funds from the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership.
- ◆ Finalized an agreement with Young Harris College for management of the streamside area along Corn Creek and completed Phase I of the Riparian Enhancement Plan.
- ◆ Assisted the Clay Co. Communities Revitalization Association with a bank stabilization project on Town Creek in Hayesville.
- ◆ Developed a planting and riparian enhancement plan for a small tributary to the Nottely River flowing through the Georgia Mountain Research & Education Center.
- ◆ Assisted private consulting firms with locating compensatory mitigation sites in NC and helped garner support for a proposed mitigation bank in GA.
- ◆ Responded to 14 calls for technical assistance, two of which led to alternative break workdays this fall and two others that will likely lead to planting projects in the coming year.
- ◆ Secured funding for, and worked with a private consulting firm to develop, a stormwater management plan for the "main campus" of Hinton Rural Life Center on Lake Chatuge.
- ◆ Identified an invasive aquatic plant (*Hydrilla*) in a pond near the Towns Co. Chamber of Commerce; worked to develop a plan for control, monitoring and education.



Major Milestone — Volunteer Time

Our Alternative Break Program broke records for the number of weeks, number of volunteers, hours served and matching funds raised! This year 67 volunteers from 7 colleges and universities in 4 states served a total of 2,020.5 hours over 8 weeks, for a total volunteer time donation of \$48,774.87!! Although much of this donation was used to match our restoration program grants, the value of this program is actually priceless in terms of the work that gets done throughout our communities, maintaining our past stream restoration projects and assisting our partners including the River Walk in Murphy, the Quannassee Trail in Hayesville, the Union County Farmers Market in Blairsville and the new Mayor's Park in Hiwassee. Since our program began in 2009, students from 13 colleges and universities in 7 states have participated! Learn more at: <https://hrwc.net/make-a-difference/volunteer/alternative-break-projects/>.



Educate

- ◆ Awarded the first round of Carson Conservation Scholarships (total of \$3,000)
- ◆ Provided native plant walks for elementary school outings on the River Walk in Murphy and during the Cherokee Heritage Festival in Hayesville.
- ◆ New this year, led an educational program on Brasstown Bald as part of their summer interpretive series and taught a session on water during the north Georgia Cooperative Extension Master Naturalist course.
- ◆ Participated for the third year in the Andrews Earth Day celebration, teaching students from Andrews Elementary and an area home school group about the water cycle. We also hosted an interpretive walk at our restoration project sites along Town Branch in Andrews.
- ◆ Again participated in conservation field day events host by the Clay County Soil & Water Conservation District and Murphy Middle School and multiple field days at the Georgia Mountain Research & Education Center, teaching almost every 4th grader in five counties about watersheds and non-point source pollution.
- ◆ Co-hosted “Kids in the Creek” for Hayesville Middle School 8th graders.



Connect

- ◆ Organized the 6th annual Chatuge Shoreline clean-up - 71 volunteers, 213 hours, and 1,200 pounds of trash collected. For the first time, we actually dropped sites from our list because there was little to no trash for volunteers to pick up!
- ◆ Assisted the Lake Nottely Improvement Association with organizing and publicizing their spring lake shoreline cleanup, resulting in nearly double the number of volunteers (53) and a very successful day!
- ◆ Hosted a wide variety of outings and outreach events that included birdwatching, snorkeling, hiking to the highest point in Clay County, canoeing on Hiwassee Lake and the Valley River, and introducing people to the Hiwassee River in Tennessee.
- ◆ Updated our Facebook page regularly and surpassed the 1,000 mark with followers of our page, up from 991 last year to 1041 as of December 2017.
- ◆ 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.



Organizational Development

- ◆ In 2017, we gained nearly 20 new business members and upgrades of existing residential members was nearly triple that of last year!
- ◆ Filled five board vacancies, including two that were empty for more than two years! Hosted a new board member orientation to acclimate the new members.
- ◆ Added a new Fall Native Tree/Shrub Sale Fundraiser.
- ◆ Began work to expand the major donor program.

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