



high school biology teacher searching for mussels



students collecting macroinvertebrates



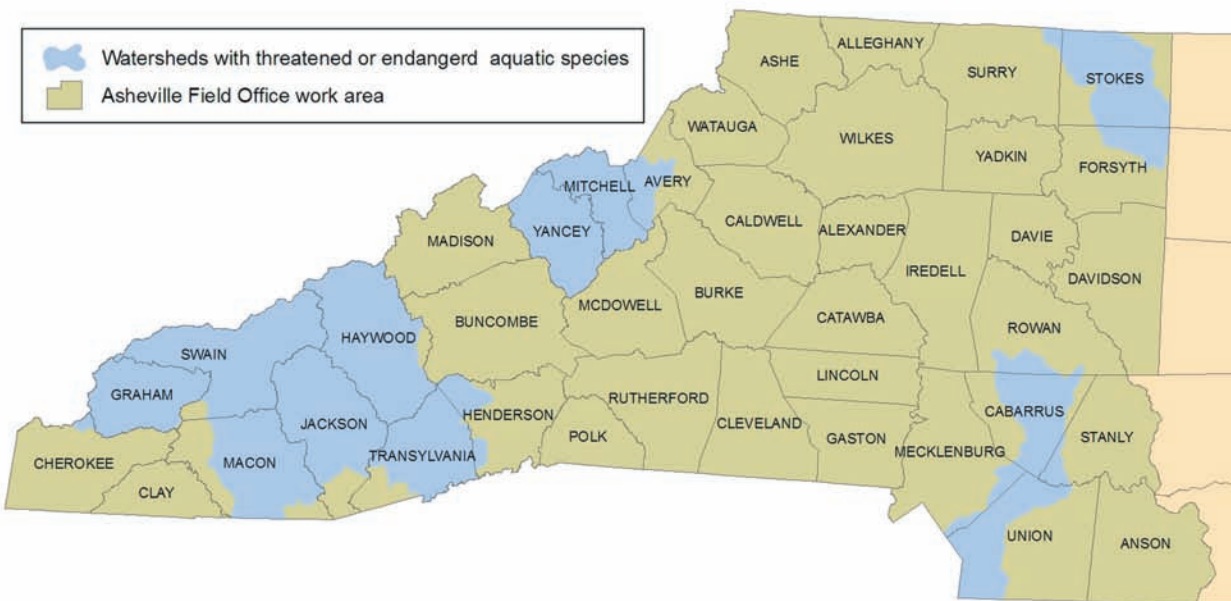
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Conservation Issues in the Asheville Field Office

Connecting People With Nature

The Fish & Wildlife Service, and specifically the Asheville Field Office, has long placed a priority on educating people about our fish and wildlife resources. The Service is also part of a larger movement to get people outside to enjoy the outdoors, a movement sparked in response to the increased amount of time people spend indoors, often sedentary. With a 41-county work area, the Asheville Field Office was posed with the challenge of how to most effectively use limited resources in its efforts to educate people and get them back outside. Hand in hand with our strategic planning and strategic landscape conservation efforts, the Asheville Field Office looked for those priority habitats where conservation was most challenging and could benefit the most from environmental education and getting people to experience the outdoors firsthand. As a result, we have focused our efforts on communities in watersheds that contain listed aquatic species, with the goal of not only getting people outside but also into the streams in their communities.

- Working with a local watershed group and numerous partners, the Service annually helps every eighth-grader in Haywood County go through the “Kids in the Creek” program, where they get in the Pigeon River to sample fish and macroinvertebrates and have lessons on water chemistry and watershed health.
- In 2008 the Service began helping with the Kids in the Creek program on the North Mills River in Henderson County, reaching every eighth-grader at Rugby Middle School.
- The Service has partnered with the Toe River Valley Watch to plan the inaugural Toe River Festival in Yancey County, an effort to get elementary school students to a local river for educational fun.
- For the third year in a row, we’re working with partners to organize a natural history workshop for river guides across Western North Carolina to help enable them to become better interpreters of the resource.





U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

- For the 2008 Endangered Species Day, Service biologists led members of a Yancey County high school's eco-club on a paddle trip along the North Toe River, searching for the endangered Appalachian elktoe mussel.
- Getting teachers outside and into streams is a priority; the Service has worked with the National Park Service and Haywood Waterways Association to organize a water-quality workshop for educators in Haywood County. At least three similar workshops are planned with local partners in the Upper Nolichucky, Upper French Broad, and Little Tennessee River basins.
- Service biologists annually lead benthic macroinvertebrate sampling trips with students at East Yancey Middle School and Mountain Heritage High School in the Upper Nolichucky River Basin.
- In Union County, home of the critically endangered Carolina heelsplitter mussel, the Asheville Field Office led class discussions on development impacts to streams and worked with sixth-grade teachers at Porter Ridge Middle School to incorporate the stream that runs through their schoolyard into their science lessons.
- Working with the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and Duke Energy, the Asheville Field Office helped stage a reenactment of a traditional Cherokee fish harvest on the Tuckasegee River in Jackson County for Cherokee High School students.

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canoeing