

Northwest Georgia Greenspace Conservation and Greenway Planning

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The descriptions and maps of the Environmental Corridors are based on the Georgia Department of Natural Resources' 1976 "Environmental Corridor Study."

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Table of Contents

- I. Introduction
- II. Description of Region
- III. Why Conserve?
- IV. Threats
- V. Visions and Goals
- VI. Measures in Place
- VII. Conservation Tools
- VIII. Funding Sources
- IX. Potential Partners
- X. Incentives
- XI. Existing Public Resources
- XII. Planning and Implementation Strategies
- XIII. Greenways Concept Map
- XIV. Model for Greenspace Development Guidelines
- XV. Map Appendix

Introduction

The dispersal of population into once remote and rural areas has caused land consumption to soar. According to the U.S. Bureau of Census Data on Urbanized Areas, from 1970 to 1990, Atlanta experienced a 161.3% growth in total land area, while Chattanooga showed an expansion of 120.1%. These two metro areas are linked by Interstate 75, and as they grow together, they will consume much unprotected land in the fifteen-county region.

While population growth is a factor in land consumption, development patterns are as important. From 1970 to 1990, the population of Detroit decreased by 7%, while sprawl increased by 28%. Similar scenarios occurred in Milwaukee, Buffalo, Cleveland, and other cities. The causes of land consumption are well known: the demand for roads results in their construction, in turn drawing more traffic to exacerbate the problem; schools are built on the fringe of development, encouraging further dispersal of population; utilities extend infrastructure to serve distant customers, encouraging more development; and state and local governments, believing they are helping to grow the economy, subsidize these practices, and enshrine them as policy.

Until there is a general realization that current development patterns are unsustainable, the most practical conservation alternative is to consciously and deliberately develop local plans for greenspace conservation.

The Concept of Greenspace

Greenspace is protected (whether permanently or temporarily) land and water, including agricultural and forestry land whose development rights have been severed from the property (whether permanently or temporarily), and that is in its undeveloped, natural state, or that has been developed only to the extent consistent with, or is restored to be consistent with, one or more of the following goals:

Water quality protection for drinking water surface sources, and for other rivers, streams, lakes, springs and wetlands;

Flood protection;

Wetlands protection;

Erosion reduction on steep slopes, stream banks, and other erodible areas;

Protection of riparian buffers and other areas that serve as natural habitat and/or corridors for native plant and animal species;

Protection of archaeological and historic resources;

Protection of prime or historic agricultural and forestry lands;

Provision of recreation in the form of biking, hiking, camping, walking, skating, birding, horse riding, observing or photographing nature, picnicking, playing non-organized sports, or engaging in free play;

Scenic protection; and

Connection of areas contributing to goals listed above.

Public Access

Public access is not necessary to the concept of greenspace.

Allowable Greenspace Development

Greenspace land that is not in agricultural or forestry use may be developed only to the extent that is consistent with provision of recreation in the form of boating, hiking, camping, fishing, hunting, running, jogging, biking, walking, skating, birding, horse riding, picnicking, non-organized sports and free play.

Disqualified Uses

Activities that prevent an area from being considered greenspace include, but are not limited to: sidewalks along roads or streets; fields for competitive sports, golf courses, swimming pools, amphitheaters, commercial and perpetual care cemeteries, and improvements necessary to support such uses such as parking lots and buildings.

Greenspace Conservation Tools

The most commonly used permanent land conservation tools are fee-simple acquisition, easement acquisition, deed restrictions, local historic district designation, and conservation subdivisions. Temporary protection mechanisms include zoning, and archaeological and historic overlays.

Description of region

Northwest Georgia is a fifteen county area occupying approximately 3,223,000 acres in the northwest corner of the State, and lying within a triangle formed by Atlanta, GA, Chattanooga, TN, and Huntsville, AL.

The region stretches across the Appalachian Plateau, Ridge and Valley, Blue Ridge, and Piedmont Physiographic Provinces, and encompass all or parts of the Lookout/Pigeon Mountain, Ridge and Valley, Conasauga, Blue Ridge, Talladega/Great Smokies Fault, and Etowah/Chestatee Environmental Corridors. (The fragment of the Etowah/Chestatee Environmental Corridor in the Region is so tiny, it will not be given further consideration here.)

Nature has favored the region, not only in mountain and piedmont scenery, but in natural resources, and a number of important industrial centers based on resource extraction and processing developed during the 19th century, attracting population to the region.

In the latter half of the 20th century, population growth began to escalate, in part due to new highway construction, especially Interstate 75 and, to a large extent, due to its proximity to the rapidly expanding Atlanta metro area.

The 19th century industrial towns and cities, with their well-developed infrastructure, proved attractive to newcomers to the region, and smaller towns began to develop into bedroom communities housing a workforce that commuted to larger cities within the region, and to Chattanooga and Atlanta.

Population

The fifteen county region's population will have grown from 871,968 persons in 2010, to an estimated 1,348,614 in 2030. This represents a projected population growth of almost 55%. Paulding is projected to be the region's most populous county with an estimated 2030 population of 275,726, with Bartow County second in population with an estimated 183,447 persons in 2030. Dade, Fannin, and Chattooga Counties are anticipated to be the region's smallest in population.

Bartow and Gordon Counties' locations along Interstate-75 will probably accelerate their population growth, and Pickens and Paulding Counties' population increase will be stimulated by their proximity to Atlanta and their location within the Atlanta Metropolitan Area.

The populations of Walker, Chattooga, Floyd, and Polk Counties are likely to increase more slowly, percentage-wise, than other counties, due to their relative distance from interstate highways.

Perhaps more significant than an absolute number to suggest a population's potential environmental impact is its density. By 2030, anticipated population densities for each county per square mile are: Paulding, 880; Catoosa, 643; Whitfield, 464; Bartow, 399; Pickens, 240; Floyd, 230; Gordon, 223; Murray, 211; Polk, 184; Walker, 182; Haralson, 158; Dade, 126; Gilmer, 122; Chattooga, 110; Fannin, 86.

The numbers anticipate a 55% increase in regional population between the years 2010 and 2030. Atlanta has little legacy of a dense urban core, and rapid population growth is unlikely to change an established development pattern. As the Metro-Atlanta population spreads outward in the region, demand for land for all uses will increase, and it is likely that the rate of land consumption will exceed that of the population, given trends over the past half-century.

Major transportation corridors

The region is traversed by ten major transportation corridors:

Interstate-75 crosses south to north roughly through the middle of the region and, as a link between Atlanta and Chattanooga, constitutes the most important and heavily travelled motor route in the fifteen counties. Many of its exits are sites of major commercial, industrial, and less often, residential development.

Interstate-20, a major route between Birmingham, AL, and Atlanta, is also heavily travelled, but passes through the south of Haralson County, the most southern county in the region. Its location somewhat limits its impact on the region as a whole, though its exits draw commercial development.

Interstate-59, connecting Birmingham, AL, and Chattanooga, passes through Dade County, where it has three exits accessing Rising Fawn, Trenton, and New England (GA). It constitutes Dade County's only major highway connection to other areas, and serves to relieve its geographical isolation.

Interstate-24 dips down into Georgia from its path through Tennessee, forced by geography to skirt the southern flank of Raccoon Mountain. In the course of its four mile path through Dade County, it intersects I-59.

State Route 515 came about as a phase of the development of Corridor A-1 of the Appalachian Development Highway System, and currently starts near the border of Pickens and Cherokee Counties, traversing Pickens, Gilmer, and Fannin Counties on its way to Blairsville. This corridor has spurred much commercial development in those three counties, and promises to convert large areas of forest and agricultural land to developed uses. In some areas, local sentiment favors commercial zoning through entire jurisdictions along the alignment.

U.S. Highway 27 is a south to north alignment that links Bremen, Buchanan, Cedartown, Rome, Summerville, LaFayette, Ft. Oglethorpe, and Chattanooga. The road has been widened throughout the Northwest Georgia Region, and carries large volumes of traffic in places. Bypasses built in cities such as Cedartown and Buchanan have encouraged consumption of agricultural and forested land for commercial and other uses.

U.S. Highway 41 was once a heavily travelled south to north route from Florida to Michigan, but today its potential traffic volume is greatly diminished by I-75, which runs roughly parallel to it. It traverses the entire state of Georgia, and links Cartersville, Calhoun, Dalton, Ringold, and Chattanooga, but does not support a great deal of new commercial development in the region, since its former role has been assumed by I-75 exits. As a consequence, existing businesses along the route must rely on local traffic volume to remain viable.

U.S. Highway 278 is a west to east alignment that links Cedartown, Rockmart, and Dallas in the region to Atlanta to the east. It is a major four-lane conduit for Atlanta metro sprawl into Paulding and Polk Counties, and contributes to the conversion of vast amounts of forest and agricultural land to commercial, residential, and other urbanizing uses.

U.S. Highway 411 crosses Floyd County roughly east and north after entering near Cave Spring, and becomes a four-lane road at Rome. From there it continues eastward to the center of Bartow County, where it turns sharply northward at Cartersville, becoming a two-lane road linking very small towns until it reaches Chatsworth, from which it continues north to the Tennessee line.

U.S. Highway 76 runs roughly east to west through the region, then north. It links Blue Ridge, Ellijay, Chatsworth, Dalton, and Chattanooga, crossing mountainous territory along much of its path across the region, and development tends to be concentrated near the towns.

Environmental Corridors

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources published a report in 1976 entitled Environmental Corridor Study. The concept of an Environmental Corridor is premised on the notion that environmental amenities tend to occur together and that this convergence of amenities tends to produce areas of special value. Because the most prevalent of the environmental amenities, waterways and ridges, are linear by nature, the designated areas will tend to be linear, hence the term "corridor." Environmental corridor is, therefore, defined as an area of concentrated environmental value that tends to be associated with linear land and water patterns and that is distinguished from the remainder of the landscape by an unusual potential for providing tangible benefits to the citizenry of Georgia without the necessity of drastic alteration of its natural character.

An environmental corridor may take several forms. It may be land based, such as major ridges, mountain ranges or other geological features such as fault lines. These generating features most often occur with other key features of value such as upland forests, wildlife habitats, erodible soils and steep slopes. Conversely, they may be water based such a river basin or tidal marsh. Here, too, such generators are most often linked with swamp or hardwood forests, prime wildlife habitats, and alluvial soils. In either case, these generating features are linear in nature and form the basis for corridor selection. The Georgia Department of Natural Resources has identified twenty-six major Corridors throughout the State of Georgia. Six of these are contained in whole or in part within the Northwest Georgia area. It is within these corridors that we find a significant portion of the Northwest Georgia area's most scenic rivers, diverse wildlife habitat, striking mountain vistas, and culturally valuable sites.

The Environmental Corridors are areas of environmental concern that shape the regional and urban environments and perform natural system functions such as stability and water purification and filtration. These functions are most essential, and of primary benefit to man's environmental quality maintenance in physical, biological, and psychological ways. These are areas that have high value in their natural state as opposed to value as agricultural, industrial, or urban development uses and have value as scenic, historic, educational or recreational areas. They have value to the environment in the protection of vital systems such as wildlife habitats, water quality control, preservation of vulnerable areas such as steep slopes, erodible soils, major upland or swamp forest, and other systems. Protection of these natural systems has a direct value to man, as well, in the quality of water he consumes, the air he breathes and in the overall quality of life.

The five significant environmental corridors (Map XV-2) in the Northwest Georgia area are as follows:

The **Blue Ridge Corridor** (Map p. II-7) is located in the Appalachian Mountains region of North Georgia from the Cohutta Mountains area in the west to the Tallulah River Basin area in the east. The corridor includes large areas of Chattahoochee National Forest lands; the Blue Ridge Mountains; headwaters of the Conasauga, Coosawattee, Etowah, Chestatee, Chattahoochee, Tallulah, Nottely, Hiawassee, and Toccoa Rivers; the Blue Ridge Crest and high mountains region of Appalachian North Georgia (with the exception of the Chattooga watershed which is a separate corridor); ten wildlife management areas; six state parks; and hundreds of identified natural areas such as rare flora and fauna locales, waterfalls, hemlock, ravines, mountain top meadows (the bald mountains), river shoals and outcrops, caves, springs, scenic and wild rivers, and creeks. The areas in which views are all directionally focalized tend to be the wilder rivers and creeks where high ridges and shoreline canopy extensions frame the channels. Enclosed views occur in the small valley areas, large water impoundments and pasture lands; they are also commonly associated with focalization if the valleys are long and narrow. A large portion of the Blue Ridge is composed of high elevation, panoramic landscapes, where views of the

Northwest Georgia area can be quite spectacular and extended. The highest and most extended panoramas occur on the bald mountains (Coosa Bald, Brasstown Bald, Hightower Bald, and Grassy Bald) where high elevation meadows exist with little forest cover to interrupt the vistas. The remainder of the panoramic landscapes have views dependent on the density and leaf cover (seasons) within the hardwoods, the proximity of overlooks and rock outcrops, and the physical composition of the area. Examples of the physical composition would be that some areas in the interior of the Blue Ridge are surrounded by peaks or adjacent ridge lines which restrict long vistas, while to the North the mountains border valleys such as Hiawassee or the Toccoa River Valley where views extend for miles into Tennessee and North Carolina. To the West, some portions of the Cohutta Mountains border directly on the Coosa Valley, and to the south, the Appalachian Foothill Mountains look onto the high ridges and deep river bottoms of the upland Piedmont.

The **Conasauga Corridor** (Map p. II-8) is located along the Conasauga River in Northwest Georgia from the Tennessee/Georgia line to just outside of Nickleville, Georgia. The corridor includes the Conasauga River, the immediate greenbelt of near-natural vegetation along the river, some primitive agricultural areas, and several sections of woodland that penetrate to the river. The corridor is strongly defined by the major status of the river, but limited by the lack of large forested areas throughout the corridor. The river is focalized by high banks and a canopy, which extends over the river in most areas. Where the river focalization is lost, enclosed areas dominate with little penetration away from the river. Panoramic landscapes are limited to the Brackett Ridges area in the southern portions of the corridor, where cleared pastures sometimes afford extensive views of the river.

The **Lookout / Pigeon Mountain Corridor** (Map p. II-9) is located in the northwestern corner of Georgia along the Sand Mountain, Lookout Mountain, and Pigeon Mountain plateaus and valleys as they pass through Georgia from Tennessee to Alabama. The corridor includes the plateau areas, steep slopes along the plateaus, some valley landscapes, a wealth of natural features, a wildlife management Area, one existing state park, many creeks and creek canyons, and a large amount of forest. The corridor is strongly defined by the linear aspects of the mountain plateaus as they move from North to south, the large quantity of natural landscapes along the mountains, and many special features. Focalized landscapes are limited throughout the corridor and occur usually in conjunction with the enclosed creek canyons where enclosure and focalization of views are both present. Panoramic views are dominant with over half of the land within the corridor having views that extend for miles. These panoramic views tend to be quite spectacular along the steep plateau slopes where the drop-off is severe enough for unique overlooks.

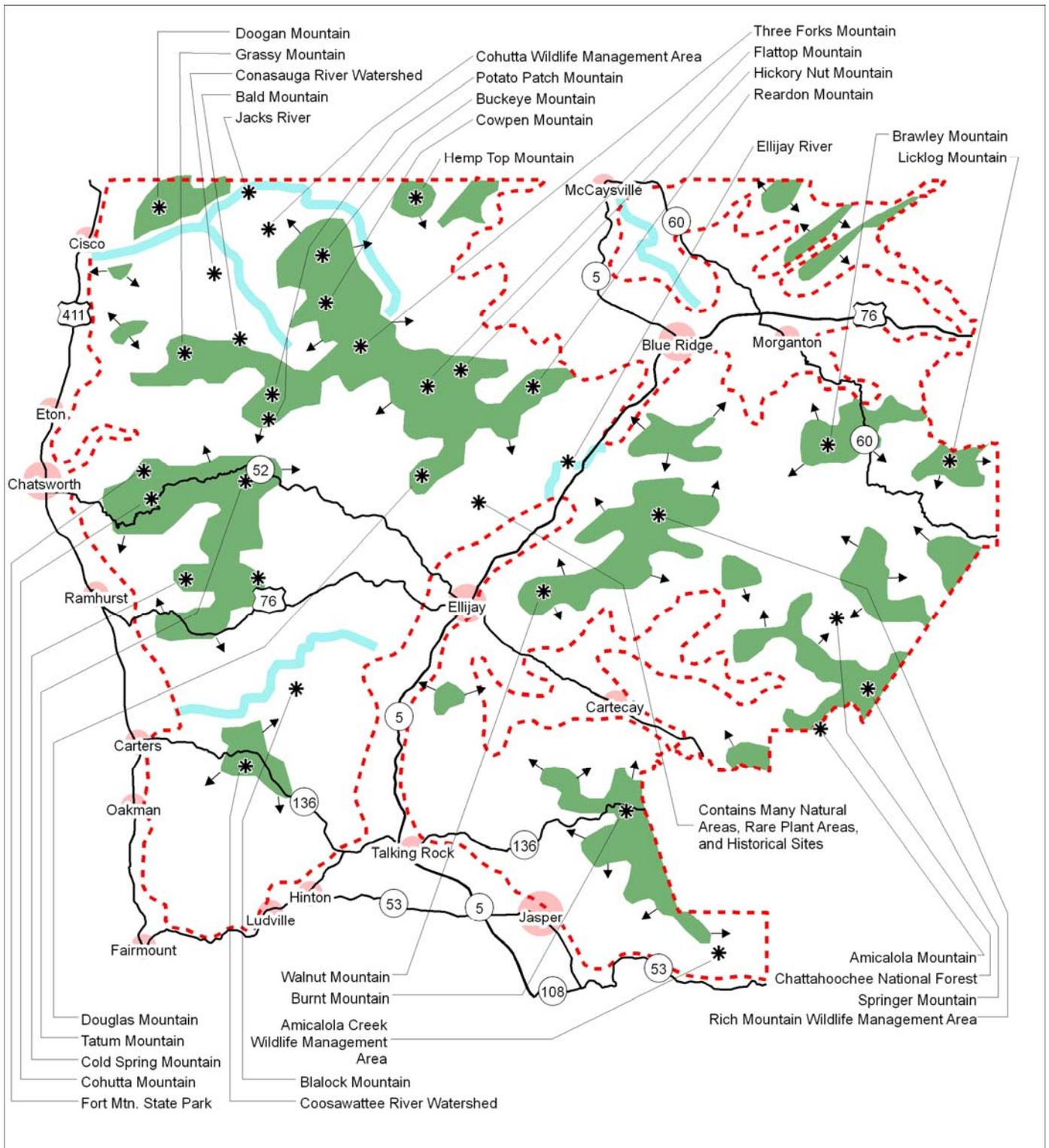
The **Ridge and Valley Corridor** (Map p. II-10) is located along Taylor Ridge/Johns Mountain area of Northwest Georgia from the Tennessee/Georgia border to Alabama. The corridor includes Taylor Ridge, Dick Ridge, White Oak Mountain, Rocky Face Mountain, Horn Mountain, Little Sand Mountain, Simms

Mountain, Rocky Mountain, Gaylor Ridge, Kincaid Mountain, Heath Mountain, Turnip Mountain, Judy Mountain, sections of the lower valleys and creek canyons around these mountains and ridges, Chattahoochee National Forest lands, two wildlife management areas, and a variety of special features. The corridor is strongly defined by the structure and North-south linear direction of the ridges as combined with the Chattahoochee National Forests and private timberlands. Focalized and enclosed landscapes are usually combined in the corridor in areas where pocket valleys or long, narrow valleys exist between the ridges. The ridge walls enclose the landscape, but usually with views directed in the North-south direction of the ridges. Panoramic views extend throughout much of the corridor on the slopes or high ridge tops. The viewing is somewhat limited by vegetation when leaves are still on, but rock outcrops are abundant for intermittent viewing.

The **Talladega/Great Smokies Fault Corridor** (Map p. II-11) is located along the Talladega, Cartersville, and Great Smokies Faults in North central to Northwest Georgia from Route 5 near Jasper, Georgia to the Alabama/Georgia border. The corridor includes a series of mountains and forested upper Piedmont ridges to the east of the fault zone; a wildlife management Area; two state parks; large areas of mountain and Piedmont forests; several natural areas; the Tallapoosa River; many small creek watersheds; and many special features such as caves, waterfalls, springs, and shoals. The corridor is strongly defined because of the large amount of relatively undisturbed landscape accompanying the fault on the eastern side. Focalized landscapes are confined to the rivers and large creeks where canopy cover and ridges focus views up and down the water channels. Enclosed landscapes are limited to Lake Allatoona, several small valleys, and agricultural valleys where views aren't directional but are enclosed by vegetation or ridge development. Panoramic landscapes occur along the Appalachian Mountains in the Northern parts of the corridor and along the high ridges and mountains of the Piedmont region to the south. Most of the panoramic views are confined to overlooks, rock outcrops, and cleared fields when leaves are on the hardwoods but when views are not disturbed, extended viewing of the Coosa valley can be quite spectacular with mosaics of valley woodlands, pastures, and small urban communities.

Because benefits cross jurisdictional lines, environmental corridors are of importance to the state as a whole. Therefore, no meaningful or effective management plan could be drawn from a purely local standpoint. Rather, a regional or statewide approach for the management and preservation of the corridors is necessary to ensure their continued viability.

Environmental Corridors have tremendous potential for providing benefits to Northwest Georgia communities while remaining in a natural or near-natural state. The corridors contained throughout the Northwest Georgia area, provide an ideal framework for inter regional amenities such as a scenic trail, road or river systems. Further, as recreational transportation corridors, they can serve to link nodal areas of high environmental value such as State Parks, Natural areas, and Historic Sites, and provide a unique, interconnected recreation



Blue Ridge Corridor

Landscape Description Abstraction

LEGEND

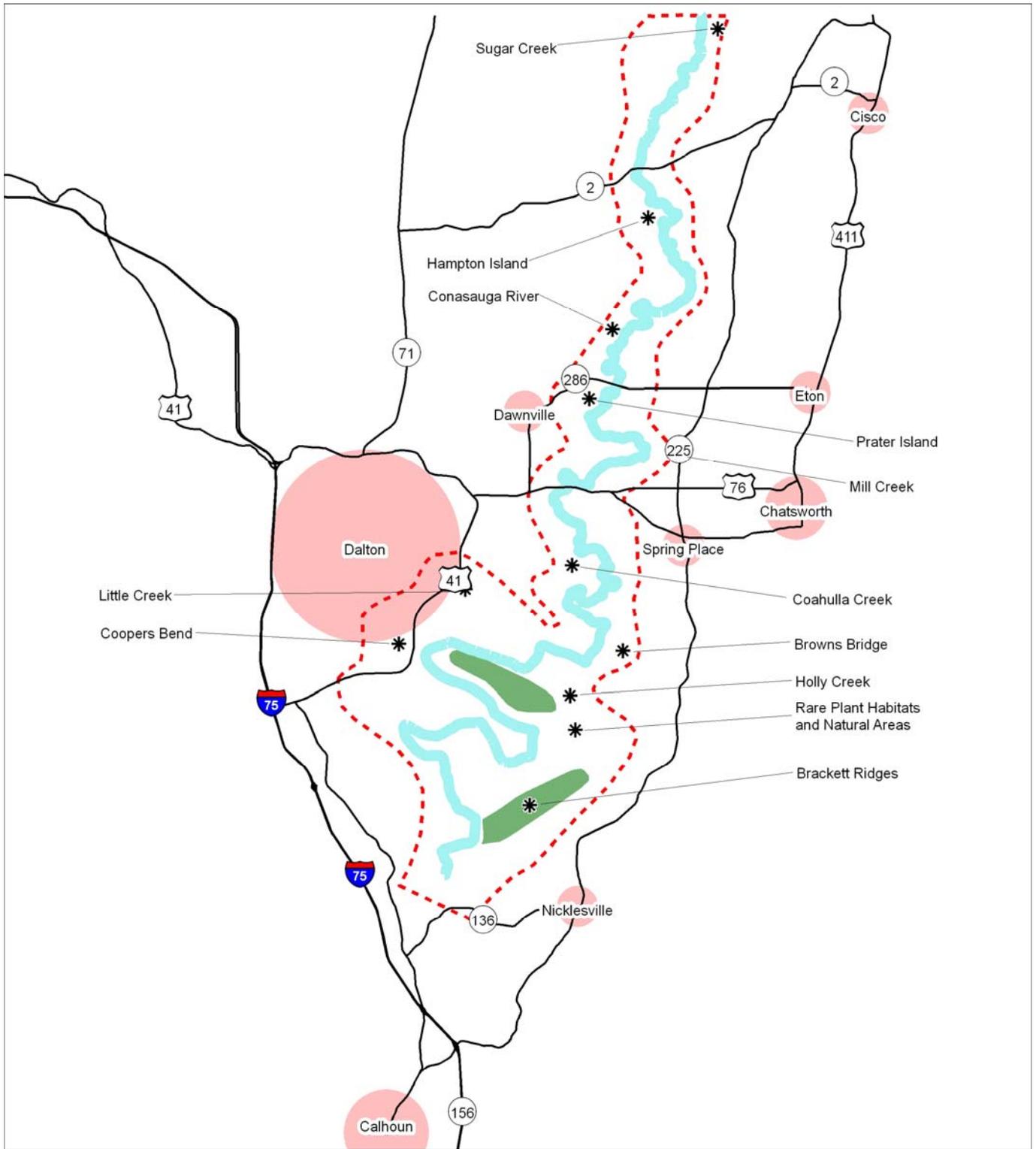
- Panoramic Landscape
- Corridor Boundary
- Panoramic View Direction
- Focal Landscape: River Corridor
- Landscape Features

0 3.75 7.5 15 Miles



Map adapted from the Georgia DNR's 1976 Environment Corridor Study.

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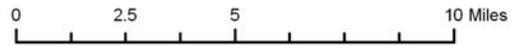


Conasauga Corridor

Landscape Description Abstraction

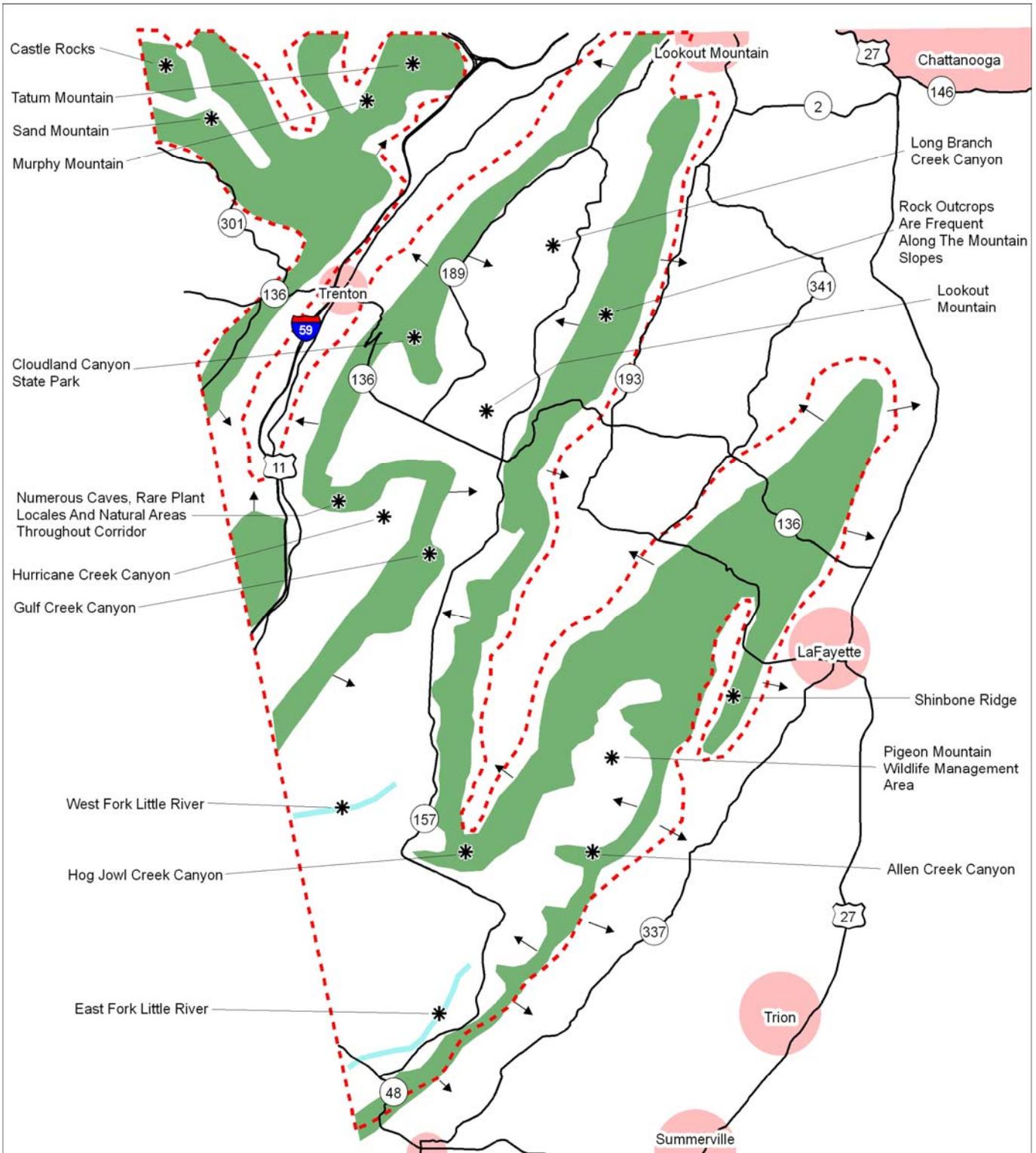
LEGEND

-  Conasauga River
-  Panoramic Landscape
-  Landscape Features
-  Corridor Boundary



Map adapted from the Georgia DNR's 1976 Environment Corridor Study.

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Lookout / Pigeon Mountain Corridor

Landscape Description Abstraction

LEGEND

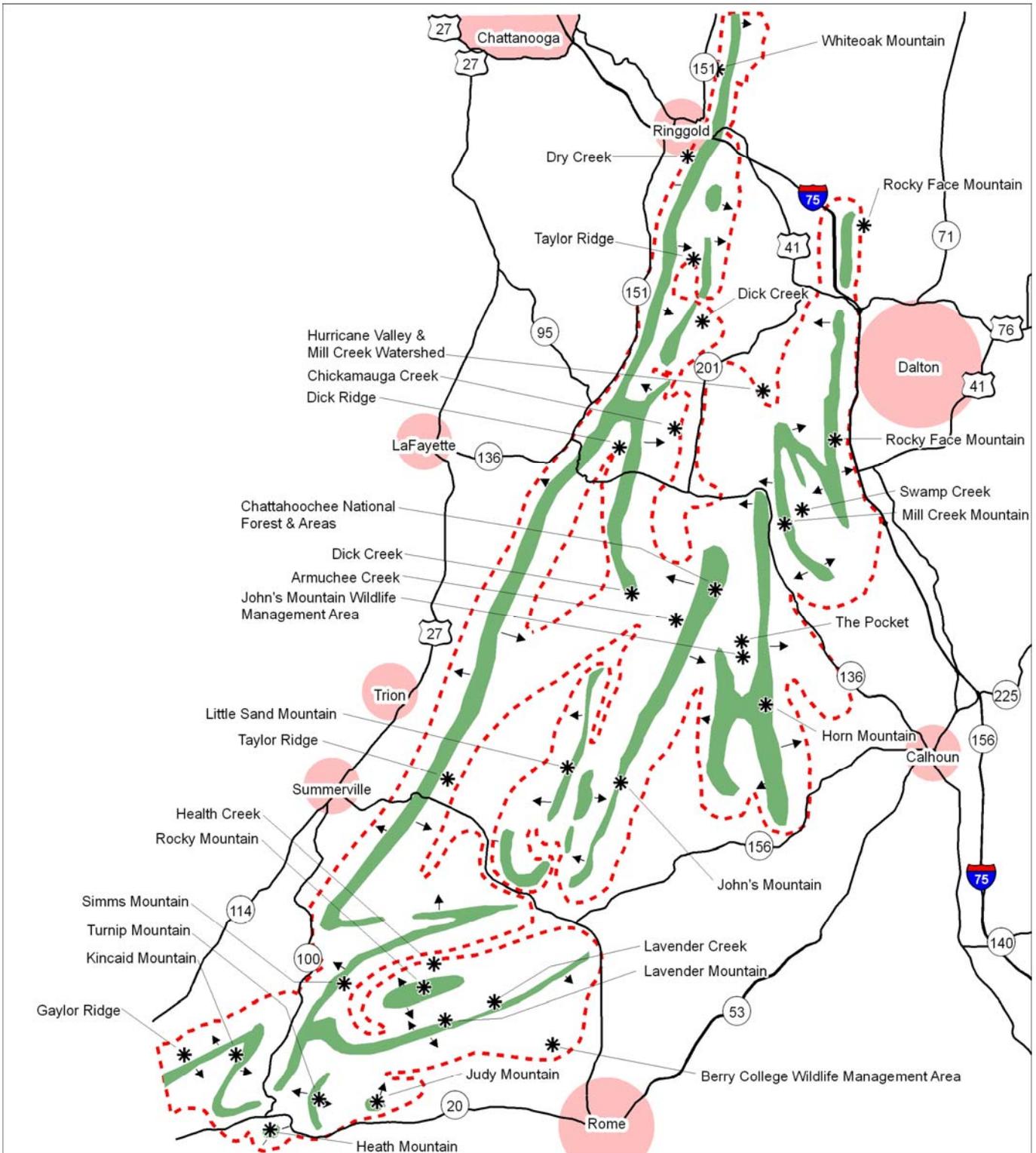
-  Panoramic Landscape
-  Corridor Boundary
-  Panoramic View Direction
-  Focal Landscape: River Corridor
-  Landscape Features

0 2.5 5 10 Miles



Map adapted from the Georgia DNR's 1976 Environment Corridor Study.

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Ridge & Valley Corridor Landscape Description Abstraction

LEGEND

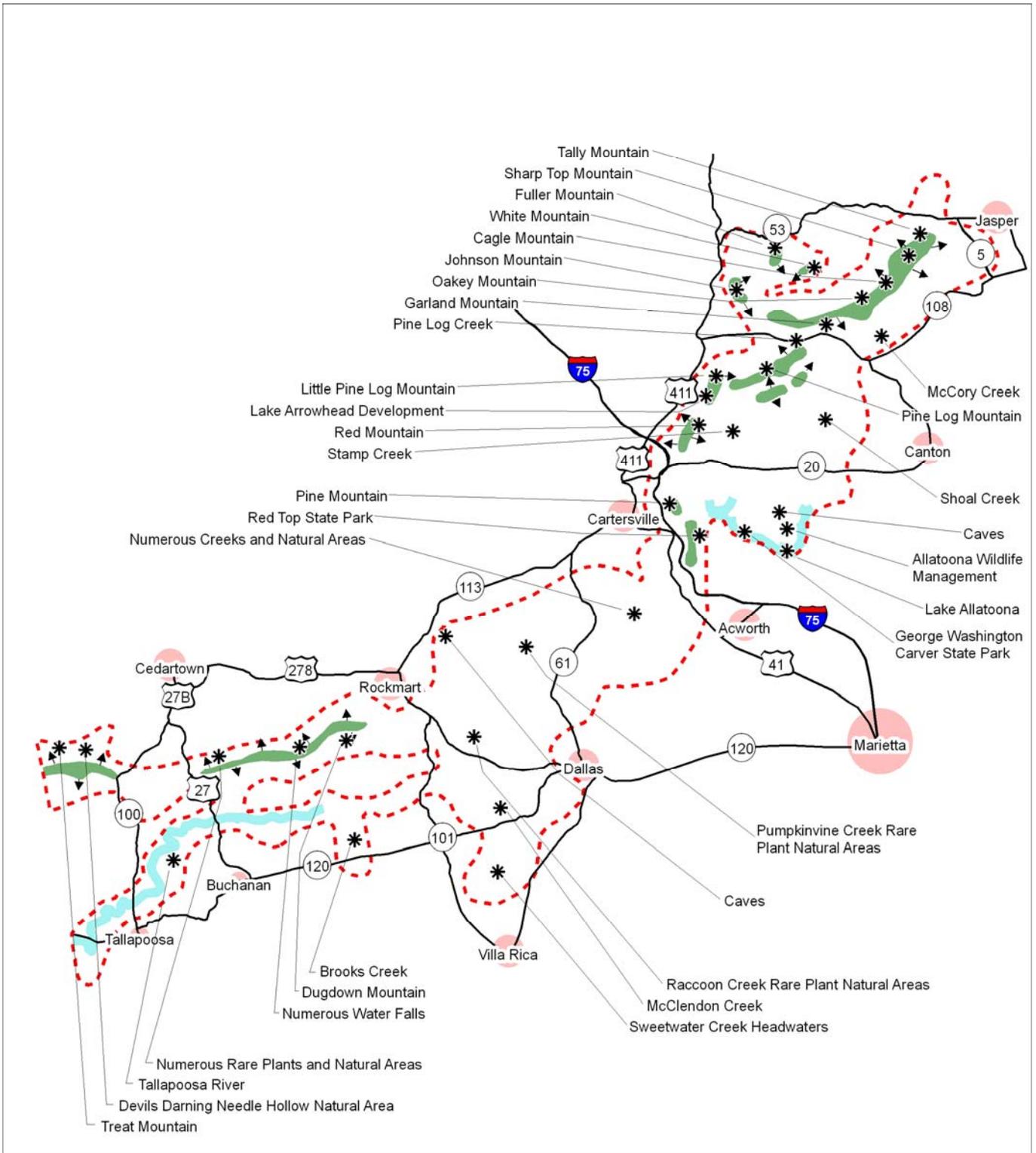
- Panoramic Landscape
- Landscape Features
- Panoramic View Direction
- Corridor Boundary

0 3.75 7.5 15 Miles



Map adapted from the Georgia DNR's 1976 Environment Corridor Study.

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Talladega-Great Smokies Fault Corridor

Landscape Description Abstraction

LEGEND

- Panoramic Landscape
- Corridor Boundary
- Panoramic View Direction
- Focal Landscape: River Corridor
- Landscape Features



Map adapted from the Georgia DNR's 1976 Environment Corridor Study.

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system. Where corridors are uninterrupted for extended lengths, they allow long distance movement of wildlife, thus providing the potential for a unique kind of wildlife management area. Further, the Environmental Corridors have great potential as educational tools. They can be ideal laboratories for the study of unspoiled ecosystems and past cultures. Conservation-recreation centers, to serve as focal point for activities that would combine recreation and education, might be placed in some corridors. However, because corridor benefits cross jurisdictional lines and because environmental degradation within one sector of a corridor can effect the corridor as a whole, no meaningful or effective management plan can be drawn from a purely local standpoint. Rather, a regional approach is necessary for the preservation of this valuable yet highly vulnerable system of natural resource amenities. While the total preservation of all of the corridors is not feasible, there does exist the significant opportunity for inter jurisdictional cooperation for the management and preservation of the highest priority corridors for the use and enjoyment of the public.

Major River Corridors

The Chattooga, Conasauga, Coosa, Coosawattee, Etowah, Oostanaula, Tallapoosa, and Toccoa Rivers are perennial rivers with an average flow of at least 400 cubic feet per second at various points (See Map XV-3). The Department of Natural Resources has deemed that rivers of this size are of vital importance to the State of Georgia in that they help preserve those qualities that make a river suitable for habitat for wildlife, a site for recreation, and a source for clean drinking water. These river corridors also allow the free movement of wildlife from area to area within the state, help control erosion and river sedimentation, and help absorb flood waters.

The environmental quality of the Chattooga, Conasauga, Coosa, Coosawattee, Etowah, Oostanaula, Tallapoosa, and Toccoa River corridors is highly vulnerable to unregulated development and potential runoff from agricultural activities. Development and intensive forestry activities in the immediate vicinity of these rivers increases storm water runoff that can contain sediment and other contaminating pollutants that can destroy water quality and plant and animal habitat. Further, development along stream banks can infringe on the recreational aspects of these river corridors by limiting access by the public. Development along the stream banks will also remove vegetation and destroy the scenic and aesthetic attributes of the river corridors that add to the quality of life in the northwest Georgia area.

A vast majority of the recent subdivision activity in Gilmer and Fannin Counties has occurred within the drainage basins of the Coosawattee and Toccoa Rivers respectively, with many lots adjacent to or near the river's edge. It is anticipated that many of these lots will be developed in the near future. A portion of the Coosawattee also passes through the urbanized areas of the City of Ellijay. Although much of the area along the river is already developed, there still remain sizable vacant tracts, which are likely to develop in the future. In addition, it is

expected that mountain subdivision development will likely occur along other sections of the river, possibly causing further sedimentation and non-point source pollution. Such development will be incremental and cumulative over the planning period with adverse impacts unless mitigation measures are put in place.

The Etowah River is also affected by land development activities but principally in Cherokee, Forsythe, and Dawson Counties. The river is still also impacted by PCB's, which were introduced into the river several years ago. The river is considered usable for limited activities.

Historically, the Conasauga River had been negatively impacted by wastewater discharges by Dalton Utilities. In the late 1990's the Utility conducted substantial improvements to its land application system, which adjoins the river and has alleviated any negative impacts to the river.

The Oostanaula remains somewhat degraded by the lingering effects of water from the Conasauga but is considered to be of good quality. Most of the impacts occur as a result of non-point source pollution from forestry and agricultural activity.

The Tallapoosa River is considered to be of good quality but is impacted by limited non-point source pollution from forestry and agricultural activity.

Steep Slopes

Mountainous areas are crests, summits, and ridges characterized by steep slopes and high elevations with a percentage slope of twenty-five percent (25%) or greater for at least 500 feet horizontally, which are at an elevation of 2,200 feet or above. Map XV-4 not only shows these areas, but also all areas where slopes exceed 25 % or greater in the northwest Georgia area. The only areas in Northwest Georgia where mountains exceed 2,200 foot in elevation are in Fannin, Gilmer, Murray and Pickens Counties.

Most mountain slopes are high in greenspace potential, particularly since they are related to water features and woodlands. Areas of steep slopes preserved in their natural state may also have scenic potential both as something to view and as vantage points from which to view surrounding areas. Ridges and valleys are also scenic features, which are useful for passive recreation. The mountainous areas of Northwest Georgia contain vital headwaters for numerous rivers, which provide water supplies to not only Northwest Georgia, but also adjacent areas. They provide unique habitat for a variety of vegetation and wildlife.

Historically, development within Northwest Georgia area has occurred with little regard for visual or environmental impacts on steep slopes. Mountainous areas are geologic features constituting environmentally sensitive and fragile slope, soil, geologic, and vegetative characteristics. Development in mountainous areas affects the natural equilibrium of these characteristics. Development and the

resultant removal of vegetation affects soil and slope stability, which can result in slippage and rock slides. Loss of soil stability increases erosion and the siltation of rivers and streams that affect fish and wildlife habitat. Extensive development, particularly in regards to second home and retirement homes has occurred in Fannin, Gilmer and Pickens Counties, and is having a significant impact on these mountain slopes. Projections indicate that additional second home/retirement home development will continue in these counties into the future.

Civil War Resources

Principal Civil War battlefields identified by the Civil War Sites Advisory Commission (CWSAC) are as follows:

- *Chickamauga* --Catoosa and Walker Counties
- *Allatoona Pass* --Bartow County
- *Ringgold Gap* --Catoosa County
- *Resaca* --Gordon and Whitfield Counties
- *Rocky Face Ridge* --Whitfield County
- *Davis' Crossroads* --Walker and Dade Counties
- *Dalton I* --Whitfield County
- *New Hope Church* --Paulding County
- *Adairsville* --Bartow and Gordon Counties
- *Pickett's Mill* --Paulding County

For battle summaries, see the *Civil War Sites Advisory Commission (CWSAC) Report on the Nation's Civil War Battlefields, Technical Volume II*. Of the eighteen battlefields identified in Georgia with fair or good integrity, ten are within the region. Fragmented battlefields with poor or lost integrity, such as Dallas, are not included in this inventory.

According to the CWSAC, seven of the battlefields retain good integrity, while three, Ringgold Gap, Dalton 1, and New Hope Church, retain only fair integrity. These ten battlefields are located in six of the region's counties --Bartow, Catoosa, Gordon, Paulding, Walker, and Whitfield.

A portion of Chickamauga Battlefield is included within the Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park, and Pickett's Mill is a State Historic Site. The Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park and Pickett's Mill Battlefield Site are listed in the National Register of Historic Places. In addition, much of the Davis' Crossroads battlefield area lies within the McLemore Cove National Register Historic District.

According to the CWSAC study, the core areas of four battlefields --Chickamauga, Adairsville, Resaca, and Ringgold Gap --cross jurisdictional boundaries. Core areas are the places where combat engagement and key associated actions and features were located. The maximum delineation of the historic battlefield sites are the study areas. Eight of the ten battlefield study areas cross jurisdictional boundaries.

Recent measures aimed at protecting the region's principal Civil War resources are encouraging, but are not fully adequate to protect these vulnerable properties. According to the CWSAC, the level of threat to the preservation of the region's principal Civil War battlefields, based on current conditions, is as follows:

- High --Resaca, Rocky Face Ridge, New Hope Church, Dalton I
- Moderate --Chickamauga, Allatoona, Ringgold Gap, Davis' Crossroads
- Low --Adairsville, Pickett's Mill

Battlefields with high to moderate levels of threat are expected to suffer substantial losses within ten years. The most common threats are from roads and from residential and commercial development

Other threats from inappropriate land use also exist. An earthen fort and trenchworks on Rocky Face Ridge, north of Mill Creek Gap, has sustained severe damage from commercial logging operations, and commercial development in the Gap has left a redoubt and trenches precariously positioned on a cliff created by bulldozing the hill to accommodate more commercial sprawl.

Numerous efforts, mostly in the areas of planning and education, are presently directed toward the preservation of these resources. Most of these efforts are being carried out by federal or state agencies and national, state, or local nonprofit organizations.

Although assistance in preserving these sites may be available from the federal or state government or from a national nonprofit organization, the ultimate decision of whether or not to preserve a battlefield often remains in local hands -- especially if the battlefield is exclusively or significantly in private ownership. Even when some portions of a battlefield are in public ownership and preserved, such, as at Chickamauga, large sections may remain unprotected and vulnerable to incompatible development.

Local land-use and community planning policies have the greatest influence over the preservation or loss of historic battlefield sites. Local officials and planning and zoning commissions have not, in general, joined the movement to preserve the region's Civil War battlefields.

National Register Rural Districts

McLemore Cove Historic District -- Walker County. Situated between Lookout and Pigeon Mountains, it is the largest National Register district in Georgia at 50,141 acres. Still relatively agricultural in nature, the district contains outstanding rural vistas and is one of the most intact rural landscapes remaining in the state.

Etowah Valley District -- Bartow and Floyd Counties. A large 40,202-acre, meandering district following the Etowah River and its major creeks from Allatoona Dam in Bartow County to Reynolds Bend in Floyd County. Contains more than sixty-five archaeological sites, twenty-four historic and prehistoric fish weirs, three communities -- Kingston, Euharlee, and Atco, numerous historic buildings, ruins of two industrial areas, Civil War fortifications, early roads, an abandoned railroad line, and several areas of scientific interest.

Pleasant Valley Historic District -- Murray County. A 905-acre district approximately one and one-half mile from Crandall, and containing several historic houses and farmsteads. The district includes most of valley after which it is named, and its agricultural fields and mountain views constitute a virtually intact historic rural landscape.

PROPOSED Murray County Rural Historic District -- Murray County. A proposed district of approximately 4237 acres in the southeastern corner of the county including Carter's Quarters (NR listed 1986.), the Hemphill Farm, the site of Fort Gilmer, Dennis Mill, and the Worley-Summey Farm. The proposed district is notable for its relatively intact 19th century agricultural landscapes and examples of significant house types.

Why Conserve?

The Atlanta and Chattanooga Metropolitan areas are expanding very rapidly in the Northwest Georgia region, imperiling sensitive natural communities and other resources. Paulding, Pickens, Bartow, and Haralson Counties lie within the Atlanta Metro Area, and Dade, Catoosa, and Walker are in the Chattanooga Metro Area. Floyd County, as well as Whitfield and Murray Counties have been considered Metropolitan Statistical Areas since the 2000 Census.

An ever-growing population requires more land to accommodate human activities, and urban sprawl is happening all across the Northwest Georgia Region. The American Farmland Trust estimates that each minute two acres of productive farmland are converted to residential, commercial, industrial, and other uses, and the rate is accelerating. The Pacific Forest Trust estimates that 1.5 million acres of forest are developed every year. This process reduces local food production, deprives wildlife of habitat and fragments the ecosystem, isolating plant and animal populations, resulting in the decline of biodiversity. Among the fifty states, Georgia is ranked fourth in ecosystems at risk.

As watersheds are developed, water quality is diminished, and drinking water sources are impaired by pollutants from storm water runoff that picks up contaminants from a myriad of sources. This same polluted runoff degrades the ability of streams and lakes to maintain healthy populations of aquatic plant and animal species. Many waterways in the region no longer support fishing, swimming, and other traditional activities.

Demand for water increases with population. In North Georgia, especially in Metro Atlanta, demand for water is threatening to exceed current supply. This has resulted in legal wrangling among Georgia, Alabama, and Florida. If water-demand problems continue, Georgia could suffer.

Sprawl increases dependence on the automobile and on fossil fuels. The demand for more and more road and highway infrastructure reinforces perceived need for public funding and, once constructed, roads and highways encourage ever-heavier traffic volumes. After it is built, infrastructure must be maintained, almost always at public expense. Along with transportation infrastructure, sprawl requires the extension of water, sewer, electricity, and every other common amenity regarded as normative in the second decade of the twenty-first century.

Georgia must be able to compete economically with other states, and to do so, has to offer a high quality of life. Permanent greenspace is increasingly recognized as vital to quality of life, and in conservation, Georgia lags behind most of the rest of the Southeast.

Threats

Disadvantages to Current Development Patterns

There are certain problems with existing patterns of development within the region that should be mitigated or corrected in the future in order to avoid long-range negative impacts on the area.

Low density, highly dispersed residential development is causing the loss of productive agricultural land, expansive open spaces, and other rural characteristics found throughout the region. Water quality of the area's many streams, rivers and reservoirs are also affected through additional runoff. In addition, in the mountainous regions this pattern of development also has a negative impact on scenic views. These views represented by natural, rugged mountain features are a unique asset for an important economic sector to the region, which is tourism. Unless efforts are made to accommodate development while preserving views and other significant natural features, the attractiveness of the area will be diminished.

Much commercial development in the region is characterized by leapfrog, strip development along major thoroughfares leading outward from the major cities. This pattern of development, largely in response to the area's primary transportation routes, contributes to traffic congestion that gradually gives rise to demands for more highway infrastructure, which draws yet more traffic, and compounds the problem. Encouraging nodal and infill development and minimizing individual driveway access can lessen the impact of development.

Industrial sites are scattered throughout the region, having located in response to market forces in vogue at the time they were developed. Environmental concerns were not prominent concerns when the region was more sparsely populated. In light of new state legislative initiatives to stimulate regional, multi-jurisdictional approaches to industrial development, efforts should be made to plan and develop regionally significant industrial areas, which take advantage of major transportation and other infrastructure investments, and are compatible with environmental constraints found throughout the region.

Vision and Goals

Vision: There will be a network of interconnected greenspaces throughout the fifteen counties of Northwest Georgia, preserving especially the region's environmental corridors, which will be linked by means of greenspace corridors and public trails such as the Silver Comet, Pinhoti, Benton McKaye, Appalachian, and others.

Goals: Land and easement acquisition, and development of contiguity among acquisitions will be primary goals. Parties striving to establish a greenspace network must seek out willing donors and sellers, and find funding to purchase both land and easements. While public accessibility is desirable, in the case of conservation easements this may not always be possible. Greenspace such as wetlands, marshes, and steep slopes perform important ecological functions, and should be conserved even when public access is not a possibility, or not even desirable. The same is true of farmland.

Connectivity is desirable not only in the case of publically accessible trails, but is necessary to protect species habitat from the kind of fragmentation that imperils local fauna populations as the human element becomes more invasive.

Measures in Place

STATUS OF LOCAL GROWTH MANAGEMENT TOOLS							
Jurisdiction	Green-space Plan	Agricultural/Forestry Conservation Ordinance	Conventional Zoning	Conventional Residential Subdivision Regulations	Conventional Comm/Ind Subdivision Regulations	Open Space/Conservation Design Regulations	Planned Unit Development Regulations
BARTOW COUNTY	X		X	X	X	X	X
Adairsville	X		X				
Cartersville	X		X	X	X		X
Emerson	X		X	X			
Euharlee	X		X	X			
Kingston	X						
Taylorville	X		X				
CATOOSA COUNTY	X		X	X	X		
Fort Oglethorpe	X		X	X	X		
Ringgold	X		X	X	X		
CHATTOOGA COUNTY							
Lyerly							
Menlo							
Summerville			X				
Trion			X	X	X		
DADE COUNTY							

STATUS OF LOCAL GROWTH MANAGEMENT TOOLS

Jurisdiction	Green-space Plan	Agricultural/ Forestry Conservation Ordinance	Conventional Zoning	Conventional Residential Subdivision Regulations	Conventional Comm/Ind Subdivision Regulations	Open Space/ Conservation Design Regulations	Planned Unit Development Regulations
Trenton			X	X	X	X	
FANNIN COUNTY				X	X		
Blue Ridge			X				X
McCaysville							
Morganton							
FLOYD COUNTY	X		X	X	X	X	X
Cave Spring	X						
Rome	X		X	X	X	X	X
GILMER COUNTY	X			X	X		
East Ellijay			X				X
Ellijay			X	X	X		
GORDON COUNTY	X		X	X	X		
Calhoun	X		X	X	X		
Fairmount							
Plainville							
Ranger							
Resaca							
HARALSON COUNTY	X		X	X	X		X

STATUS OF LOCAL GROWTH MANAGEMENT TOOLS

Jurisdiction	Green-space Plan	Agricultural/ Forestry Conservation Ordinance	Conventional Zoning	Conventional Residential Subdivision Regulations	Conventional Comm/Ind Subdivision Regulations	Open Space/ Conservation Design Regulations	Planned Unit Development Regulations
Bremen	X		X	X	X		X
Buchanan	X		X	X			
Tallapoosa	X		X	X	X		
Waco							
MURRAY COUNTY	X		X	X	X	X	
Chatsworth			X	X	X		X
Eton			X	X	X		
PAULDING COUNTY	X		X	X	X	X	X
Braswell	X		X	X	X	X	X
Dallas	X		X	X	X		X
Hiram	X		X	X	X	X	X
PICKENS COUNTY	X			need	need	need	
Jasper	X		X	X	X		X
Nelson	X		X				
Talking Rock	X		X				
POLK COUNTY			X	X	X		X
Aragon			X	X	X		
Cedartown			X	X	X		X

STATUS OF LOCAL GROWTH MANAGEMENT TOOLS

Jurisdiction	Green-space Plan	Agricultural/Forestry Conservation Ordinance	Conventional Zoning	Conventional Residential Subdivision Regulations	Conventional Comm/Ind Subdivision Regulations	Open Space/Conservation Design Regulations	Planned Unit Development Regulations
Rockmart			X	X	X		
WALKER COUNTY			X	X	X		
Chickamauga			X	X	X		
Lafayette			X	X	X		
Lookout Mtn.			X	X	X		
Rossville			X	X	X		
WHITFIELD COUNTY	X		X	X	X		
Cohutta			X	X			X
Dalton	X		X	X	X		X
Tunnel Hill			X	X			
Varnell	X		X	X			X

Conservation Tools

Conventional conservation tools

Permanent land conservation mechanisms:

Fee Simple Acquisition

Fee simple acquisition of the entire bundle of rights associated with a property is an expensive but very effective conservation tool, especially if the resource protected is to be open for public use. Fee simple acquisition by donation is also a possibility, since donors can realize tax benefits, and sometimes have personal reasons for wanting to see land protected in perpetuity.

Conventionally, governments have made extensive use of this method, and the State of Georgia has used it for park, wildlife management, and other greenspace uses.

Conservation Easements:

Easements are another commonly used conservation tool. A conservation easement is a legally binding, voluntary, agreement between a landowner and another party, usually a land trust or governmental entity, to restrict development on a property. The conservation easement is recorded in the office of the Clerk of the Superior Court, and transfers with the land if it is sold.

Land ownership consists of a bundle of rights including the right to sell, the right to subdivide, the right to produce crops and timber, the right to build, etc. In a fee simple transaction, the buyer acquires all rights associated with the land. A conservation easement is the transfer of one or more of those rights to a qualified easement holder.

Conservation easement holders are usually government entities, including cities and counties, or land trusts. In effect, the conservation easement holder owns the rights that have been deeded to the holder in the Deed of Conservation Easement. The land owner, having ceded one or more specified rights (typically development and subdivision rights) to the easement holder, can no longer exercise the right(s).

Since surrendering development, subdivision, and other rights reduces the value of land, the owner typically pays lower property taxes on the land, while continuing to use it as in the past. Owners deeding a conservation

easement can specify the rights they wish to retain, often including farming, timbering, and residential uses, among others.

The one disadvantage of conservation easements is that they must be monitored to ensure that the owner does not violate the terms agreed upon. Some easement holders may require the donor or seller of the conservation easement to give an endowment, or otherwise pay for monitoring.

Conservation Subdivisions:

Conservation subdivision design is a relatively recent technique for fostering greenspace preservation, and involves clustering development and preserving common open and greenspace areas. The practice is effectively inhibited by conventional zoning regulations in Northwest Georgia, which typically require certain minimum lot sizes, often large in rural areas, and limit the number of structures permitted on those lots.

Conservation subdivision regulations differ from conventional zoning and subdivision regulations in that, while allowing the same density that would be permitted in any given area, lots are small and clustered together, with the remainder of the land retained as greenspace.

For example, conventional rural development regulations might require a minimum subdivision lot size of an acre, meaning that a one hundred acre parcel could theoretically yield one hundred one-acre lots, each occupied by a house. In a conservation subdivision of the same size, required lot sizes might be a quarter-acre and clustered together on one part of the tract, but only one hundred lots would be cut, as in the conventional scenario, with the end result that twenty-five acres would be developed, each occupied by a house, for a total yield of one hundred lots and houses, and the other seventy-five acres would be left as permanent greenspace. To put it another way, the main difference between conventional and conservation subdivision design is not yield, but lot size and placement.

Naturally, conditions on the ground will determine many aspects of development processes. For example, an unsewered area of poorly percolating soil might be a poor candidate for cluster development, discouraging the development scenario described above.

To ensure that the greenspace remains in perpetuity, a conservation easement should be deeded to a qualified easement holder.

Chapter XIV, Model for Greenspace Development Guidelines, gives some idea of how effective greenspace development can be carried out.

Temporary land conservation mechanisms

Zoning:

Conventional zoning and subdivision regulations, entailing separation of uses and lot requirements, has tended to reinforce patterns of sprawl. Zoning can, however, become a tool for land conservation, at least on a temporary basis.

Jurisdictions can establish agricultural zones that keep farmland in large lots which, at a minimum, can delay development. In areas where there is an appreciation of agriculture, agricultural districts can help establish a cultural environment where its benefits are appreciated.

Conservation subdivisions, as described above, can be incorporated into zoning and subdivision regulations to act as a temporary greenspace protection mechanism if the local situation precludes the application of permanent conservation easements.

Historic Districts

Historic Districts requiring design review for proposed changes to structures or landscapes are an established conservation technique, although not yet common in rural areas. Under Georgia law, local governments can designate structures, neighborhoods, rural districts, and archaeological sites as historic. To do so, a jurisdiction must have a Historic Preservation Commission in place, and hold public hearings concerning local district designation proposals. Once a district has been designated, owners proposing projects entailing material changes in a property's appearance must request approval of the Historic Preservation Commission, which has the authority to establish its own design guidelines to conserve the character of the district, including greenspace within the boundaries.

For more information see:

<http://www.gashpo.org/content/displaycontent.asp?txtDocument=289&txtPage=1>

Conservation Use Valuation Assessment

Owners of agricultural land, timberland, and environmentally sensitive land in the State of Georgia may qualify for conservation use tax assessment. Qualifying properties are assessed at 40% of *current use* value, as opposed to 40% of *fair market* value. In return for favorable tax treatment, an owner must keep the land in a qualifying use for a period of ten years. Qualifying uses include undeveloped land, agricultural and

timber production, and certain environmentally sensitive lands such as ridgelines and wetlands.

Note that failure to maintain land in a qualifying use for the specified period of ten years can result in severe tax penalties.

For more information see:

<https://etax.dor.ga.gov/PTD/cas/cuse/assmt.aspx>

Funding Sources

Funding

While there are many potential greenspace conservation funding sources, a community program that seeks to preserve large amounts of greenspace may want to consider the following potential funding sources, since they are sometimes able to provide substantial grants and loans.

Georgia's Transportation Enhancement Program (TE)

The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) established the Transportation Enhancement program. The Federal Government sets aside funds for a variety of Transportation Enhancement projects, including certain types of land conservation. Projects must have some relationship to the surface transportation system, and can include acquisition of scenic easements and battlefield sites. For example, pristine ridges and battlefield sites visible from Interstate-75 in Whitfield and Gordon Counties could be eligible for conservation easement funding to preserve views from the highway.

For more information see:

http://www.dot.state.ga.us/localgovernment/FundingPrograms/TransportationEnhancement/Documents/TE/compete_for_TE_project.pdf

Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)

The Land and Water Conservation Fund program provides matching grants to States and local governments for the acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities. The program is intended to create and maintain a nationwide legacy of high quality recreation areas and facilities and to stimulate non-federal investments in the protection and maintenance of recreation resources across the United States. LWCF funding is also available through the **American Battlefield Preservation Program (ABPP)** for battlefield site acquisition.

For more information see:

<http://www.nps.gov/lwcf/manual/lwcf.pdf>

For a link to the American Battlefield Preservation Program see:

<http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/abpp/grants/LWCF/LWCFAcquisitionGrants.htm>

For a link to the ABPP Grant Application see:
<http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/abpp/LWCFAcquisitionGrants.htm>

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

The Conservation Reserve Program is a voluntary program that provides agricultural landowners annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish long-term, resource-conserving covers on eligible farmland. A CRP contract can be entered for a period of ten or fifteen years. The land must be cropland or marginal pasture, and meet other eligibility requirements.

For more information see:
<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/CRP/>

Georgia Land Conservation Program

The Georgia Land Conservation Program is intended to assist cities and counties conserve the State's network of land and water resources including prime agricultural and forestry lands, and natural, cultural, and historic, and recreational areas by providing successful applicants grants and low interest loans for fee title and easement purchase.

The program can preserve greenspace by setting aside riparian buffers, natural habitat, scenic views, corridors linking greenspaces, archaeological and historic resources, and recreational areas.

Applications are competitive and due on July 15th of each year, pending available funds.

For more information see:
http://glcp.georgia.gov/00/channel_title/0,2094,82613131_82969891,00.html

Potential Partners

To ensure that conservation easements and related transactions are properly executed, and to qualify for State and Federal land conservation tax incentives, a donor or receiver may need to partner with a government agency or a certified land trust. There are many land trusts in Georgia and, very often, a given land trust will be dedicated to a specific purpose that could either favor or exclude its participation in conserving a particular piece of land due to its location, ecology, or other considerations.

It is often assumed that land trusts are necessarily owners of land they protect. That is sometimes the case, but more commonly, a given land trust exists to facilitate land conservation, rather than actually purchasing and holding the land in question. In practical terms, this means that often a land trust will act as a broker to find a holder or purchaser (whether fee simple or easement) for the land to be preserved, and handle legal, tax incentive, and easement aspects of the transaction on behalf of the parties involved.

The Georgia Land Conservation Center is a resource that can link parties considering conservation transactions with land trusts that might be most compatible with the purposes of the proposed transaction.

Georgia Land Conservation Center contact information:

Telephone: 706-546-7507

E-mail:

Hans Neuhauser, Executive Director: hans@galandcc.com

Carol Martin, Administrative Assistant: carol@galandcc.com

Among land trusts listed as active in Georgia by the Georgia Land Conservation Center are:

Appalachian Trail Conservancy Land Trust

799 Washington Street

P. O. Box 807 Harpers Ferry, VA 25425-0807

Phone: 304-535-6331; Fax: 304-535-2667

Contact: Caroline Dufour

E-Mail: cdufour@appalachiantrail.org

www.appalachiantrail.org

Audubon Environmental Land Trust

1000 Saint Albans Drive Suite 350
Raleigh, NC 27609
Phone: 919-380-9640; Fax: 919-380-7415
Contact: Rich Henderson, Executive Director
E-Mail: rhenderson@audubonenv.com
www.audubonenv.com

Black Family Land Trust

509 West Poinsett Street
Greer, SC 29650
Phone: 864-469-0095
Contact: Executive Director: Teresa Cosby
www.bflt.org

Chattahoochee Hill Country Conservancy

6505 Rico Road
Palmetto, GA 30268
Phone: 770-463-1548
Contact: Chair: Alan Merrill
E-Mail: alan.conservancy@gmail.com
www.chatthillcountry.org

Chattahoochee Valley Land Trust

P. O. Box 175
Columbus, GA 31902
Phone: 706-662-2211; Fax: 706-596-1024
Contact: Program Director: Justin M. Park
E-Mail: jpark@galandtrust.org
www.galandtrust.org

Chattooga Conservancy

8 Sequoia Hills Lane
Clayton, GA 30525
Phone: 706-782-6097; Fax: 706-782-6098
Contact: Buzz Williams
E-Mail: info@chattoogariver.org
www.chattoogariver.org

Chattowah Open Land Trust

c / o Georgia Land Trust
428 Bull Street, Suite 210
Savannah, GA 31401
Phone: 866-656-5263; Fax: 888-876-3883

Contact: Executive Director: Katherine Eddins, Esq.
E-Mail: Katherine@chattowah.org
www.galandtrust.org

Georgia Agricultural Land Trust

P. O. Box 1680
Carrollton, GA 30112
Phone: 770-656-6743
Contact: John Pershing, Executive Director
E-Mail: john.pershing@gmail.com

Georgia Piedmont Land Trust

P.O. Box 3687
Suwanee, GA 30024
Phone: 770-945-3111; Fax: 770-614-0593
Contact: Executive Director: Carol Hassell
E-Mail: chassell@mindspring.com
www.gplt.org

Georgia Wildlife Federation

11600 Hazelbrand Rd
Covington, GA 30014
Phone: 770-787-7887; Fax: 770-787-9229
Contact: President and CEO: Jerry McCollum
E-Mail: jerrymc@gwf.org
www.gwf.org

Lookout Mountain Conservancy

Box 76
Lookout Mountain, TN 37350
Phone: 423-424-3882; Fax: 423-424-3882
Contact: Chief Executive Officer: Robyn Carlton
E-Mail: info@lookoutmountainconservancy.org
www.lookoutmountainconservancy.org

Lula Lake Land Trust

Suite A 29 Mount Olive Road
Lookout Mountain, GA 30750
Phone: 404-861-8567
Contact: Executive Director: Katherine Eddins
E-Mail: abratcher@lulalake.org
www.lulalake.org

Mountain Conservation Trust of Georgia

104 North Main Street, Suite B3

Jasper, GA 30143

Phone: 706-253-4077; Fax: 706-253-4078

Contact: Mark Dickerson, Acting Executive Director

E-Mail: mark@mctga.org

www.mctga.org

National Wild Turkey Federation

P. O. Box 530

Edgefield, SC 29824

Phone: 803-637-3106

Contact: Joel Pedersen

E-Mail: jpedersen@nwtf.net

www.nwtf.org

Natural Lands Trust

1031 Palmers Mill Road

Media, PA 19063-1006

Phone: 610-353-5587; Fax: 610-353-0517

E-Mail: nltinfo@natlands.org

www.natlands.org

North American Land Trust

PO Box 467

Chadds Ford, PA 19317

Phone: 610-388-3670; Fax: 610-388-3673

Contact: Stewardship Coordinator: Steven Carter

E-Mail: scarter@nalt.org

www.nalt.org

Rails to Trails Conservancy

2546 Blairstone Pines Drive

Tallahassee, FL 32301

Phone: 850-942-2379; Fax: 850-942-4431

Contact: Ken Bryan, Director

E-Mail: rtcken@transact.org

Southeast Land Preservation Trust

11 Wildwood Valley

Atlanta, GA 30350

Phone: 404-892-2912; Fax: 404-420-2299

Contact: Anne Forbes Spengler

E-Mail: spengler@slpt.org
www.slpt.org

Southeast Regional Land Trust

6111 Peachtree Dunwoody Road Building E, Suite 102
Atlanta,GA 30328
Phone: 770-351-0411 ext 307; Fax: 770-351-0495
Contact: Jim Wright
E-Mail: jimw@twcpaga.com
www.serlc.org

Southeastern Cave Conservancy, Inc

P. O. Box 71857
Chattanooga, TN 37407-0857
Phone: 615-585-5277
Contact: Chairperson: John Hickman
E-Mail: chair@scci.org
www.scci.org

Southeastern Climbers Coalition

Box 1212
Gainesville,GA 30503-1212
Phone: 770-535-7446
Contact: Pandra Williams
E-Mail: info@seclimbers.org
www.seclimbers.org

Southern Conservation Trust

201 McIntosh Trail, Suite B
Peachtree City, GA 30269
Phone: 770-964-5212; 770-486-7774; Fax: 770-486-7775
Contact: Executive Director: Abby Jordan
E-Mail: a.jordan@sctlandtrust.org
www.sclandtrust.org

The Archaeological Conservancy

Southeast Regional Office
5997 Cedar Crest Road
Acworth, GA 30101
Phone: 770-975-4344
Contact: Southeast Regional Director: Alan D. Gruber
E-Mail: tacsregion@aol.com
www.americanarchaeology.com

The Conservation Fund

PO Box 1362

Tucker, GA 30085-1362

Phone: 770-414-0211; Fax: 770-938-0585

Contact: Southeast Representative: Rex R. Boner

E-Mail: rrboner@aol.com

www.conservationfund.org

The Karst Conservancy

2911 SE 17th Street

Ocala, Florida 34471-5514

Phone: 352-425-0426

Contact: President: William Walker

E-Mail: bill@karstconservancy.org

www.karstconservancy.org

The Nature Conservancy in Georgia

1330 West Peachtree Street, Suite 410

Atlanta, GA 30309-2904

Phone: 404-873-6946; Fax: 404-873-6984

Contact: Georgia State Director: Dr. Shelly Lakly

E-Mail: mlakly@tnc.org

www.nature.org/georgia

The Trust for Public Land

One Georgia Center

600 West Peachtree Street, NW, Suite 1840

Atlanta, GA 30308

Phone: 404-873-7306 ext. 264; Fax: 404-875-9099

Contact: Georgia State Director: Helen Tapp

E-Mail: helen.tapp@tpl.org

www.tpl.org

Wetlands America Trust - Ducks Unlimited, Inc.

3870 Leeds Avenue, Suite 114

North Charleston, SC 29405

Phone: 843-745-9110; Fax: 843-745-9112

Contact: Craig LeSchack, Director of Conservation

E-Mail: clschack@ducks.org

Incentives

Since the mid-1980's, the federal and state governments have recognized the value of land conservation, and the advantages of providing financial incentives for landowners who wish to conserve their land in perpetuity. The financial incentives currently in place both nationally and in the State of Georgia have been effective tools for encouraging land conservation.

Federal income tax incentives for conservation easement donation

In the current economic climate (Spring of 2010), the status of federal easement donation incentives is in flux. The enhanced easement incentive expired on December 31, 2009 and, despite the high hopes of supporters, it has not been renewed, although its partisans continue to push for its extension.

Until the enhanced easement incentive is restored, federal law allows a deduction of the value of the donation up to 30% of the donor's adjusted gross income, with a five year carry-over period.

Federal estate tax incentives for conservation easement donation

Since conservation easements surrender certain rights associated with land ownership, an easement donation can substantially lower the value of the property, and so lower the heirs' estate taxes, which are calculated at post-donation value.

In addition, a certain percentage of the value of the land under easement may be exempted from estate taxation up to a value not to exceed \$500,000. The percentage exempted will vary depending on the percentage the easement devalues the value of the property.

Georgia income tax incentives for property and/or easement donation

A taxpayer can claim a Georgia State Income Tax credit of up to 25% of the fair market value of the donated property or easement, not to exceed more than \$250,000 for an individual, \$500,000 for a corporation, and \$1,000,000 for partnerships, with a ten year carry-over period.

Georgia property tax incentives for conservation easement donation

Owners of agricultural land, timberland, and environmentally sensitive land in the State of Georgia may qualify for conservation use tax assessment. Qualifying properties are assessed at 40% of *current use* value, as opposed to 40% of *fair market* value. In return for favorable tax treatment, an owner must keep the land in a qualifying use for a period of ten years. Qualifying uses include undeveloped

land, agricultural and timber production, and certain environmentally sensitive lands such as ridgelines and wetlands.

Note that failure to maintain land in a qualifying use for the specified period of ten years can result in severe tax penalties.

CAVEAT: All tax incentives mentioned above are subject to change! Please consult with a tax attorney before considering any kind of donation in anticipation of benefitting from a tax incentive.

Existing Public Resources

In Northwest Georgia, there is already what might be considered a skeletal greenspace infrastructure in the form of National Forests, Wildlife Management Areas, a national park, state parks and historic sites, and public trails.

The Chattahoochee National Forest

The United States Forest Service began purchasing land in Northwest Georgia in 1911, and currently owns 220,498 acres in nine of the region's fifteen counties, including the Cohutta and Rich Mountain Wilderness Areas.

A breakdown of acreages by county is as follows:

Catoosa County, 9 acres
Chattooga County, 19,572 acres
Fannin County, 48,227 acres
Floyd County, 6,521 acres
Gilmer County, 55,383 acres
Gordon County, 8,307 acres
Murray County, 52,219 acres
Walker County, 18,621 acres
Whitfield County, 11,684 acres

Originally, much of the Forest Service land was acquired for restoration and management of areas that had been degraded by poor stewardship, and to ensure a national reserve of forest products. Much of the National Forest land was never intended to be a pristine forest, but as actively productive timber land, combined with the Forest Service's responsibility to manage water, wildlife, and grazing areas.

Currently, recreation represents a major land use in the National Forests of the region, and the Forest can furnish connectivity between greenspaces located outside its boundaries, and should be considered for the possibilities it offers.

For more information go to: www.fs.fed.us/conf/

Wildlife Management and Natural Areas

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources maintains Wildlife Management Areas (WMA's) primarily to provide public access to lands suited to hunting, fishing, and other outdoor recreational activities. In some instances, the land is owned by the State of Georgia or in a National Forest, but there are a number of

WMA's that are in private or corporate ownership, and managed by DNR under any of a variety of possible arrangements. While State-owned WMA's can be generally regarded as permanent greenspace for practical purposes, that is not the case on DNR-managed private lands. Management agreements between the DNR and privately owned lands managed as WMA's are subject to termination, and the owner can develop the property, or sell it to another entity for development or other purposes. As a consequence, those privately-owned WMA's will not be considered in this discussion.

As is the case with National Forest land, WMA's and Natural Areas can furnish connectivity between greenspaces located outside its boundaries.

Below is a list of WMA's and their locations by county. Only governmentally, or mostly governmentally owned WMA's are included.

Floyd County:

Arrowhead WMA. Thirteen miles north of Rome. Hunting, fishing, hiking, interpretive trail.

Paulding County:

Paulding Forest WMA. Seven miles west of Dallas. 26,200 acres. Hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, field trail access.

Polk County:

J. L. Lester WMA. Five miles south of Cedartown. 500 acres. Hunting, camping, field trail access.

Walker County:

Crockford-Pigeon WMA. Five miles southwest of Lafayette. 16,400 acres. Hunting, camping, fishing, field trail access, horseback riding.

Otting Tract WMA. One-and-a-half miles north of Cloudland. 700 acres. Hunting, camping, fishing, field trail access.

Zahnd Natural Area. Thirteen miles north of Cloudland. 1,400 acres. Hiking.

Multi-county:

Floyd, Gordon, Walker and Whitfield Counties: **John's Mountain WMA.** Twelve miles northeast of Calhoun. 24,000 acres. Hunting, fishing, camping, field trail access, observation tower, firearms shooting range.

Fannin, Gilmer, and Murray Counties: **Cohutta WMA**. Fifteen miles northwest of Ellijay. 96,503 acres. Hunting, fishing, camping, horseback riding, field trail access, observation tower, firearms shooting range.

Fannin and Gilmer Counties: **Rich Mountain WMA**. Eleven miles northwest of Ellijay. 22,097 acres. Hunting, fishing, camping, archery, field trail access, horseback riding.

For more information on all the above, go to: <http://www.n-georgia.com/wildlife.htm>

Chickamauga-Chattanooga National Military Park

The Chickamauga-Chattanooga National Military Park encompasses preserved portions of the Chickamauga and Lookout Mountain Battlefields. The former battlefield lies in Georgia, and the latter in both Tennessee and Georgia.

The 5,500 acre site of the Chickamauga Battlefield is in Walker and Catoosa Counties, and the 3,000 acre Lookout Mountain Battlefield extends southward from Tennessee into Dade County, Georgia. These areas have been preserved by the federal government as a permanent military park, with a network of trails accommodating hiking and horseback riding.

On the battlefields, numerous monuments, historical tablets, and wayside exhibits commemorate the 1863 battles in the War Between the States.

State Parks and Historic Sites

There are eight state parks and historic sites in the fifteen-county region. They are diverse in their attractions and offerings. Some are very large with thousands of acres in permanent greenspace, while others are small. However, all should be considered as potential elements in a greenspace plan, since even if a particular site has little land associated with it, it will offer assets that are an intrinsic draw.

Bartow County:

Etowah Mounds State Historic Site preserves 54 acres of a Mississippian village site, occupied from ca. 1000 -1550 A.D. With six mounds, a plaza, and defensive wall, it is the best-preserved Mississippian Cultural site in the Southeast.

The complex is located at 813 Indian Mounds Road, Cartersville, five miles southwest of I-75 exit 288. More information can be found at: <http://www.gastateparks.org/Etowah>.

Red Top Mountain State Park features a reconstructed 1860's homesite, and offers twelve miles of hiking trails in addition to camping, swimming, boating, and fishing opportunities.

The park is at 50 Lodge Road, Cartersville, 1.5 miles east of I-75 exit 285. More information is available at:
<http://www.gastateparks.org/RedTopMountain>.

Chattooga County:

James N. (Sloppy) Floyd State Park's 561 acres is surrounded by National Forests, and near the Pinhoti Trail, offers three miles of trails in addition to camping, fishing, and boating opportunities.

The park, at 2800 Sloppy Floyd Lake Road, Summerville, is located three miles southeast of Summerville, near the junction of US 27 and Georgia Highway 100. Information can be found at:
<http://www.gastateparks.org/Sloppy>.

Dade County:

Cloudland Canyon State Park offers 3,485 acres of spectacular scenery around a deep gorge on Lookout Mountain. There are approximately 21 miles of hiking trails, distributed over several routes, and camping is available.

The park is located near the junction of SR 136 and I-59, eight miles east of Trenton, and 18 miles west of LaFayette. More information is at:
<http://www.gastateparks.org/CloudLand>.

Gordon County:

New Echota State Historic Site is the location of the last Cherokee national capitol, and features twelve original and reconstructed buildings, a one-mile nature trail, and a boat ramp and fishing in the Coosawattee River.

The site is located at 1211 Chatsworth Highway, NE, Calhoun, one mile east of I-75 exit 317 on Georgia Highway 225. For more information see:
<http://www.gastateparks.org/NewEchota>.

Murray County:

Fort Mountain State Park encompasses 3,712 acres with an 855 ft. long stone wall on the summit of the mountain. Though probably of Indian construction, there is no universal consensus on its origin or function. The park offers 27 miles of mountain biking trails, 25 miles of horseback

riding trails, and 14 miles of hiking and backpacking trails, along with camping and fishing.

The park, at 181 Fort Mountain Road, Chatsworth, is eight miles east of Chatsworth on Georgia Highway 52. More information can be found at: <http://www.gastateparks.org/FortMt>.

The Vann House State Historic Site occupies 109 acres of Cherokee Chief James Vann's plantation, and preserves his 1804 Cherokee mansion. There are springs and log out-buildings on the property, and a half-mile nature trail.

The Vann House is located in the National Register listed historic township of Spring Place at 82 Georgia Highway 225 North, at the intersection of 225 and Georgia Highway 52 Alt. three miles west of Chatsworth. For more information see: <http://www.gastateparks.org/ChiefVann>.

Paulding County:

Pickett's Mill Battlefield Historic Site preserves 765 acres of battlefield from the War Between the States. Roads from the time and earthen defenseworks still survive, and four miles of hiking trails are available.

The site is located at 4432 Mt. Tabor Church Road southeast of its intersection with the Dallas-Acworth Road. For more information go to: <http://www.gastateparks.org/Picketts>.

Established Trails

There are a number of established trails in the region that can provide connectivity between greenspace areas, even if they are located some distance from one another. Among the most important and best-known trails in the region are the Pinhoti, Silver Comet, and Benton Mackaye Trails. There is also a short segment of the Appalachian Trail.

The Pinhoti Trail links trail systems in Alabama to the Appalachian Trail via the Benton Mackaye Trail. This is in accordance with the original 1925 plan for the Appalachian Trail, which envisioned a spur leading from the Georgia mountains into northwest Alabama. The entire 164-mile Georgia Pinhoti Trail is within the fifteen-county region, where it extends from the northwest corner of Polk County, passes into Floyd County heading northward until it enters the Arrowhead WMA, and begins its traverse, mostly through National Forest land, of the Ridge and Valley Province through Chattooga County, the southeast corner of Walker County, and into Whitfield County, crossing the Rocky Face Ridge Battlefield just before it enters the Great Valley near Dalton. The trail

continues eastward across Whitfield County, and crosses the Conasauga River as it enters Murray County. On the eastern side of Murray County, the trail enters the Blue Ridge Province, passing in and out of the Chattahoochee National Forest, crosses the northwest corner of Gilmer County, where it briefly exits then re-enters the National Forest, through which it continues into Fannin County where it joins the Benton Mackaye Trail.

The Benton MacKaye Trail begins at Springer Mountain in southeast Fannin County, and intersects the Appalachian Train not far from there. It leads northward in Fannin County, then turns to the west, passing through part of Gilmer County before veering northward back into Fannin County, and then on to Tennessee.

The Appalachian Trail cuts a small crescent into the southeast corner of Fannin County, but enters the region nowhere else. However, it links to the Benton McKaye Trail there, and so is accessible from the region.

The Silver Comet Trail began as a rails-to-trails conversion of a 36-mile railroad bed through Polk and Paulding Counties abandoned by CSX Transportation in 1989, and later acquired by the Georgia Department of Transportation. The trail was eventually extended to the City of Smyrna, and now represents 61.5 paved miles for non-motorized multi-use.

The trail enters Georgia in West Polk County at the Georgia-Alabama border. From there it extends through Cedartown, Rockmart, Paulding Forest, and the Dallas Battlefield, just southeast of the city from which its name derives, and continues on to the Paulding-Cobb County border, where it leaves the fifteen county region.

Implementation Strategies

Though each community will have its own greenspace protection strategies, elements outlined below can be included in local program:

Organization

Individuals who would like to see greenspace set aside in their community can begin the process by organizing an effort to bring about their desired result. Established community and civic clubs may be willing to undertake such an initiative as part of their organizational objectives. Such groups might include biking and hunting clubs, or environmental organizations that have chapters in the community. In areas with Civil War battlefields and sites, local camps of Sons of Confederate Veterans, or Civil War Round Tables might serve as sources of support for preserving battlefields and other sites as permanent greenspace areas. Historical and archaeological societies might also serve a similar function.

Once a group of greenspace supporters has been assembled, either within an existing organization or as an independent group, they are in a position to influence public policy, and perhaps the easiest place to start is by providing input into the community's Comprehensive Plan.

The Comprehensive Plan

The Comprehensive Plan is the community's fundamental document outlining its vision for the future. In Georgia, all governments that wish to be Qualified Local Governments, that is to say to be eligible for state grants, loans, and permits (e.g. water withdrawal and sewerage discharge), must do a Comprehensive Plan and submit it to the Department of Community Affairs. It is common for cities to do joint comprehensive plans with the counties in which they are located, and public meetings are held to solicit public input during plan preparation.

The public meetings during the preparation period provide interested citizens and organizations an opportunity to make known their desire to have greenspace plans incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan. The Plan is updated every five years, and a new Plan is formulated every ten years. In conjunction with each of these occurrences, a five year work plan is put in place, and the inclusion of greenspace goals is a major step toward their implementation.

Note that community agenda items included in the Comprehensive Plan often enjoy a competitive funding advantage: potential funders often want to know if potential project has been included in any official local or regional plans, and an affirmative answer could possibly tip the balance in favor of a listed item.

Comprehensive Plan Implementation

Once greenspace preservation objectives have been included in the Comprehensive Plan, supporters have to insure that measures necessary to achieve those goals are established. The interest and cooperation of a good county manager/administrator who wants to implement greenspace provisions of the Plan might suffice, in some cases. In situations where a jurisdiction is willing to incorporate greenspace in the Comprehensive Plan, but cannot assign it a high priority, greenspace supporters could consider continuing the tactics that got greenspace goals into the Comprehensive Plan. As noted above, various established groups may be able to play a role.

Greenspace Concept Planning

Greenspace provisions may be incorporated in the Comprehensive Plan as a fairly general concept, taking a broadbrush approach. For example, a plan may call for the conservation of 10% of the county's landmass as permanent greenspace, noting that the areas to be preserved should include ecologically sensitive floodplain, steep slopes to help maintain drinking water quality, and an incidental archaeological or historic site. Such a mention is sufficient to qualify having gotten greenspace preservation into the Comprehensive Plan, but it may not provide the degree of specificity necessary to produce a coherent effort.

In order to successfully accomplish the aim of significant greenspace protection, supporters should carefully consider devising a coherent plan to allow a realistic approach to the project.

When planning for greenspace acquisition, unless there is a clear desire to protect certain particular land(s), greenspace supporters should consider their own local acquisitions in a broader regional context to enable linkages to other greenspace areas via existing trails and greenspace areas.

Two elements are crucial in greenspace plan implementation. One is finding willing sellers or donors, and another is locating funding sources. (Please see "Funding Sources," Chapter VIII, and "Potential Partners," Chapter IX.

One caveat is in order here: Donors and sellers of land or easements may be asked to furnish the recipient conservation organization with funding to monitor conservation easements that must be placed on land to qualify it as permanent greenspace. This often comes as a shock to donors, especially, but conservation easement holders must be able to monitor the land to ensure that inappropriate development does not occur, and have to be willing to litigate to remediate the

situation, should someone develop the land in contravention of the conservation easement. Litigation can be very expensive, but apart from legal action, easement holders generally have no way to enforce the terms of an easement.

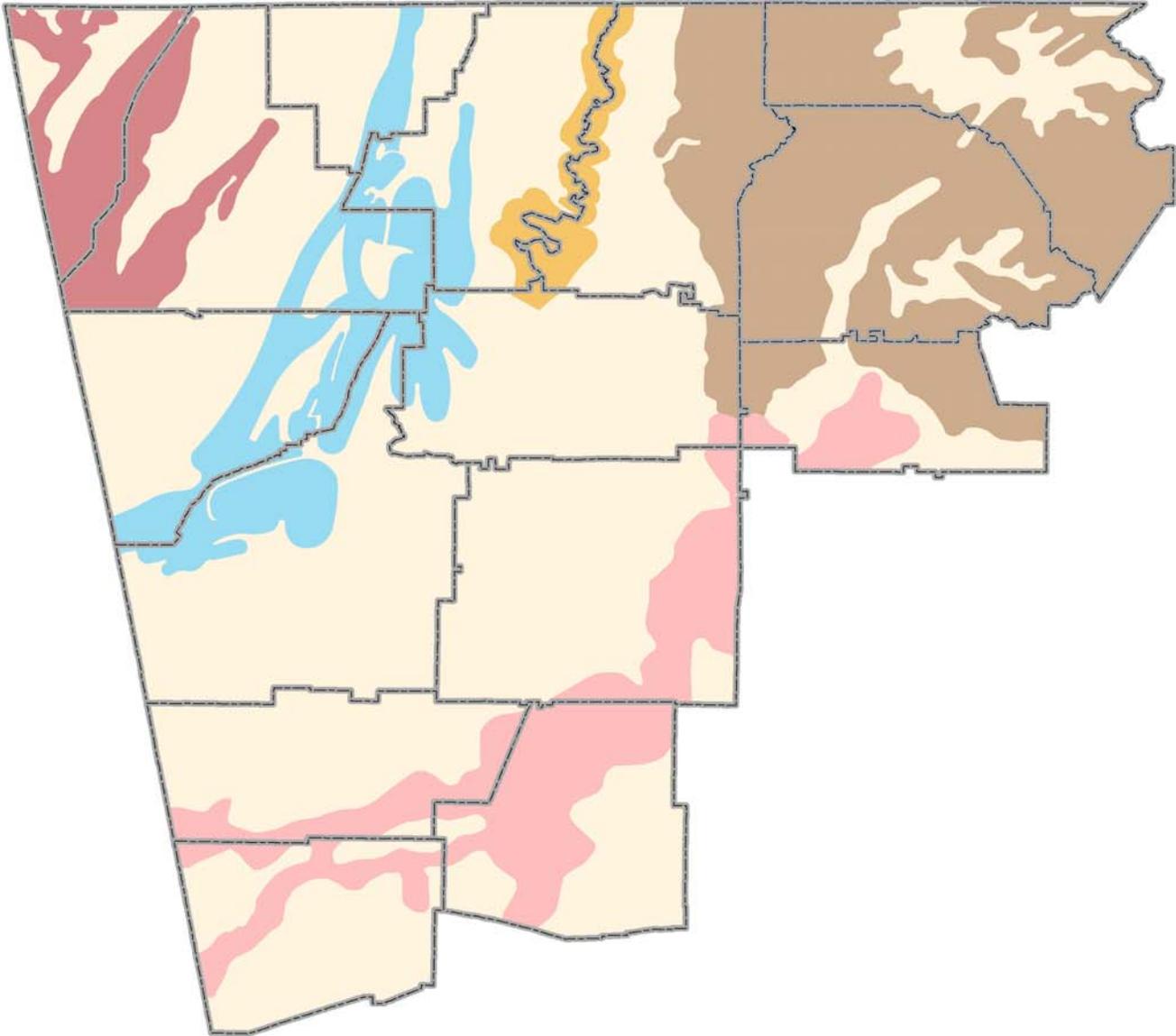
Greenways Concept Map

The map following depicts the skeletal greenspace infrastructure described above in Chapter X, Existing Public Resources, along with floodplains, and various other features, especially battlefields, that should be considered for conversion to permanent greenspaces. The map is not intended to be an exhaustive catalog of potential greenways and greenspace areas, but to suggest possible ways of constructing interconnected greenways and greenspace areas. The underlying theory in this paper is that usable greenways and greenspace areas are most easily and cost-effectively constructed by planning them around existing green infrastructure.

Greenspace and trail planners are encouraged to consider the configurations that are displayed on the Concept Map, remembering that the possible variations on its themes are almost infinite, and to imagine ways that the concepts could be applied in communities where they want to preserve greenspace, and establish interconnected greenways.

Model for Greenspace Development Guidelines

Map Appendix

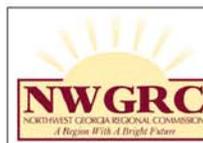


Environmental Corridors

Northwest Georgia

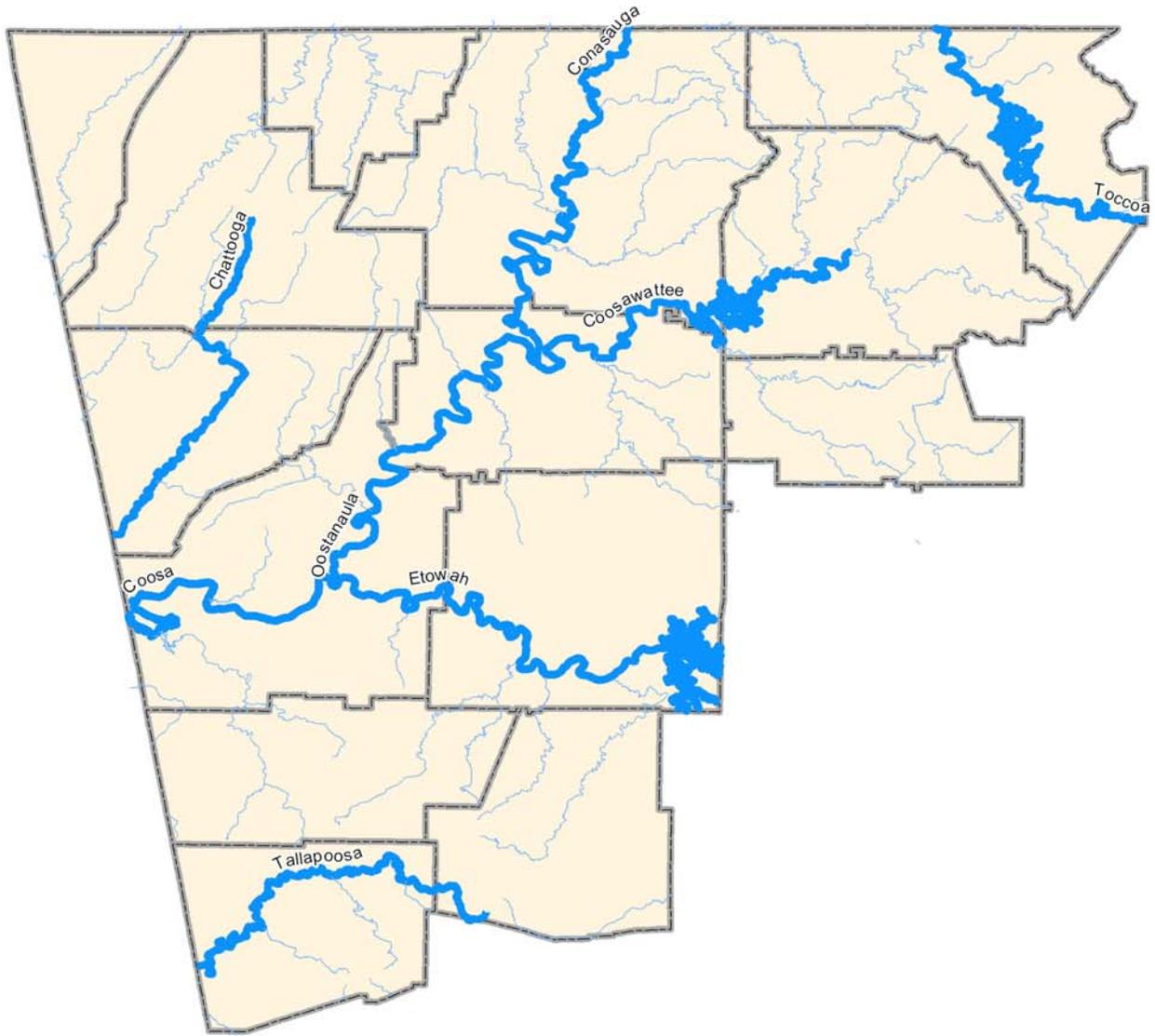
LEGEND

- | | |
|--|--|
|  Lookout / Pigeon Mountains |  Conasauga |
|  Talladega / Great Smokies |  Ridge and Valley |
|  Blue Ridge | |



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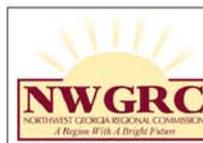


Major River Corridors

Northwest Georgia

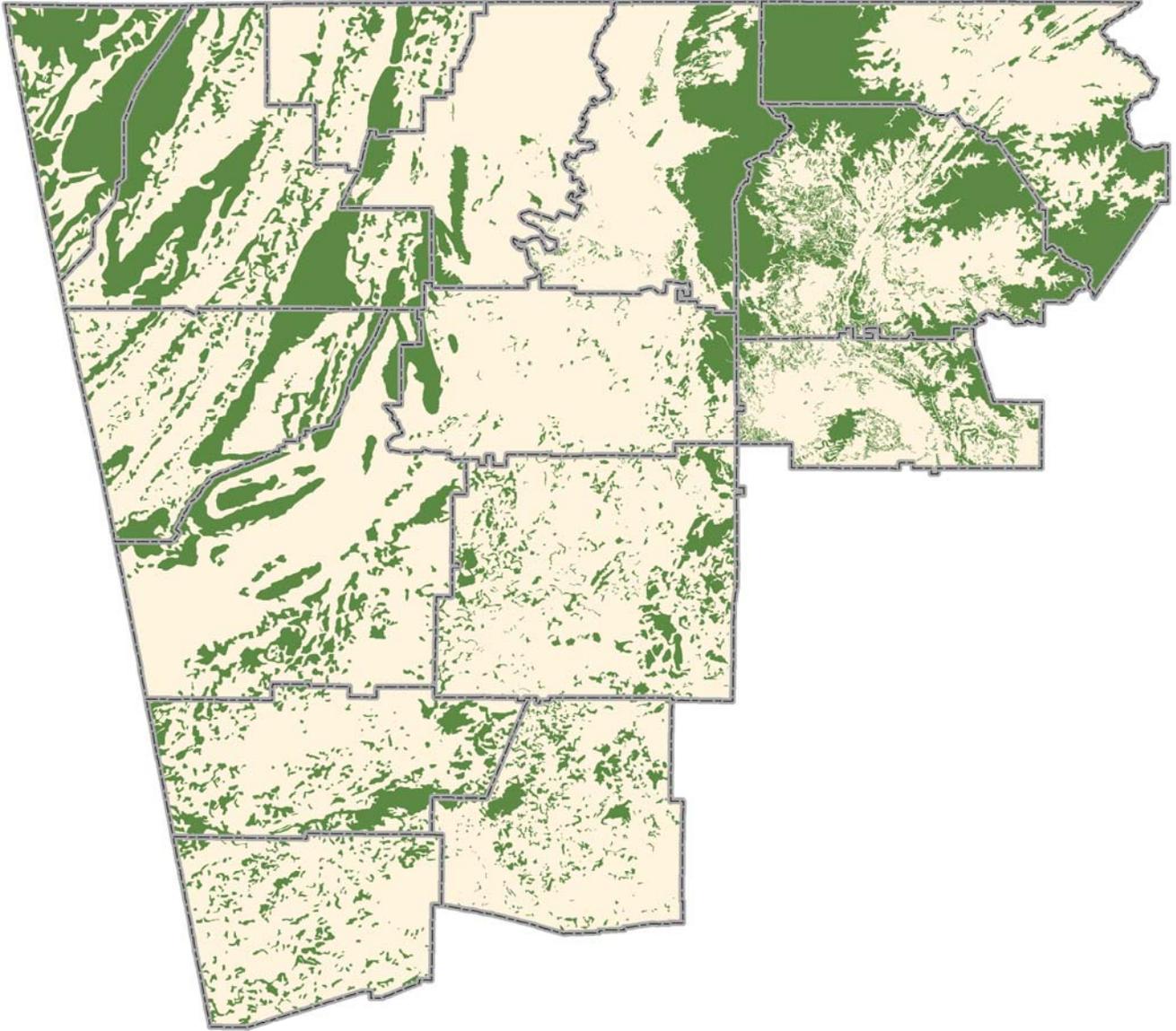
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-  Rivers
-  Major River Corridors



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Steep Slopes

Northwest Georgia

LEGEND

 Steep Slopes




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