



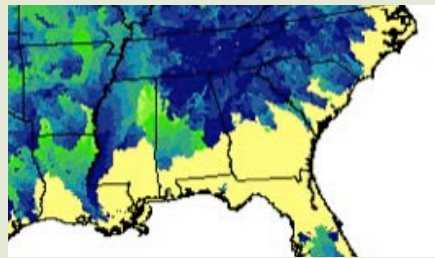
Burnt Mountain Preserve (photo by D.Akoubian)

Our Mission

The Mountain Conservation Trust of Georgia (MCTGA) is an accredited land trust dedicated to the permanent conservation of the natural resources and scenic beauty of the North Georgia foothills and mountains. With a mission focused only on the North Georgia mountains and foothills region, we serve as a regional catalyst for critical conservation efforts in North Georgia.

The mountainous region of North Georgia is celebrated for its ecological diversity and remarkable recreational opportunities. As the southern most reach of a vast mountain range, the hardwood forests of the Blue Ridge region are home to the richest temperate freshwater ecosystems in the world, providing refuge to native mussels, fish, crayfish, and invertebrates. The Etowah River, that drains a significant portion of North Georgia, is

renowned for its unique and globally significant biodiversity, or the variety of life found within it. The river and



The Etowah River watershed and Lake Allatoona are identified in the top tier of importance for protecting drinking water. Maps created by the US Forest Service show areas of the country that are experiencing high consumer water demand and are facing significant development threats. The darker blue the watershed, the higher the importance of the watershed.

its tributaries are home to several endangered and/or threatened fish species, which are indicators of watershed health. These species

include the amber darter (*Percina antesella*), the Etowah darter (*Etheostoma etowahae*) and the Cherokee darter (*Etheostoma scotti*) and are found nowhere else in the world.

The forests of the North Georgia mountains are prized as vacation and recreation destinations, supporting hundreds of thousands of visitors annually. Communities situated in North Georgia benefit from a high quality of life supported by natural resources of the area. Residents and visitors alike depend on reliable and safe water provided by the Etowah River. Lake Allatoona, formed by a dam built on the Etowah River in 1949, is a fisherman's playground and provides nearly 100 million gallons of drinking water every day to citizens of metro Atlanta and North Georgia.

The Changing Landscape

Forested land that surrounds bodies of water significantly influences the quality, as well as the quantity and timing, of the water flowing through the system. The land area drained by a particular river or stream, also known as a watershed, can naturally filter and protect water quality. When the land is undisturbed and critical features of the watershed are protected, water quality remains high and water flows are reliable enough to provide supplies of drinking water to humans.

The most critical features of the North Georgia watersheds are the headwater streams (small creeks that feed large bodies of water), the stream buffers (wooded area immediately adjacent to the streams), and the

wetlands (depressional areas within the watershed that help filter pollutants and provide refuge and feeding area for fishes).

Unfortunately, development practices and alterations to the land are threatening North Georgia's forests and the critical features of our watersheds. The changes are so great, the U.S. Forest Service considers the Etowah basin the fourth most threatened watershed in the United States, in terms of its projected loss of forest acreage to development. Much of our region lies within the metropolitan Atlanta area. Even in the face of slow economic growth, forested land is being converted to housing developments, second homes, business parks and parking

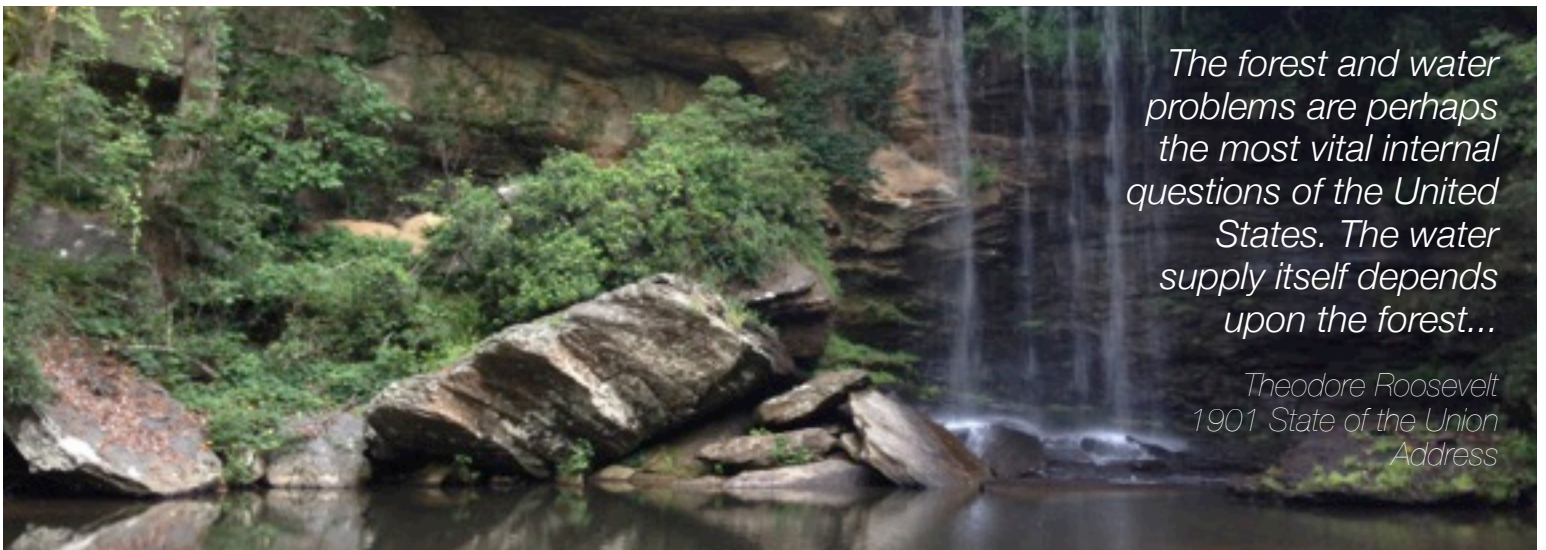
lots. Clear cutting forests, paving for development, and road maintenance, are eliminating the stream buffers and wetlands that protect our region's forests and water resources. As a result headwater streams and river systems are being filled with dirt and sediment that destroy the natural rocky habitat our native aquatic species need to survive. Additionally, our area is threatened by efforts to provide amenity lakes and excess water supplies to the growing population of metro Atlanta.

Without a concerted effort to protect North Georgia's forests, streams, and critical features, we risk losing the quality resources that make the North Georgia region such a desirable place to live, work, and play.

Why we are the Solution

Formed in 1991 by dedicated residents and champions of the North Georgia mountains, the Mountain Conservation Trust of Georgia is the only land trust with a stated mission to protect this region. MCTGA focuses on land protection, collaborative partnerships and education designed to preserve and enhance the environmental quality and rural character of the mountains.

Over the years, our tactics have evolved to meet the ever-changing challenges facing the region, but our mission is unflinching: **to permanently conserve the natural resources and scenic beauty of the North Georgia foothills and mountains.**



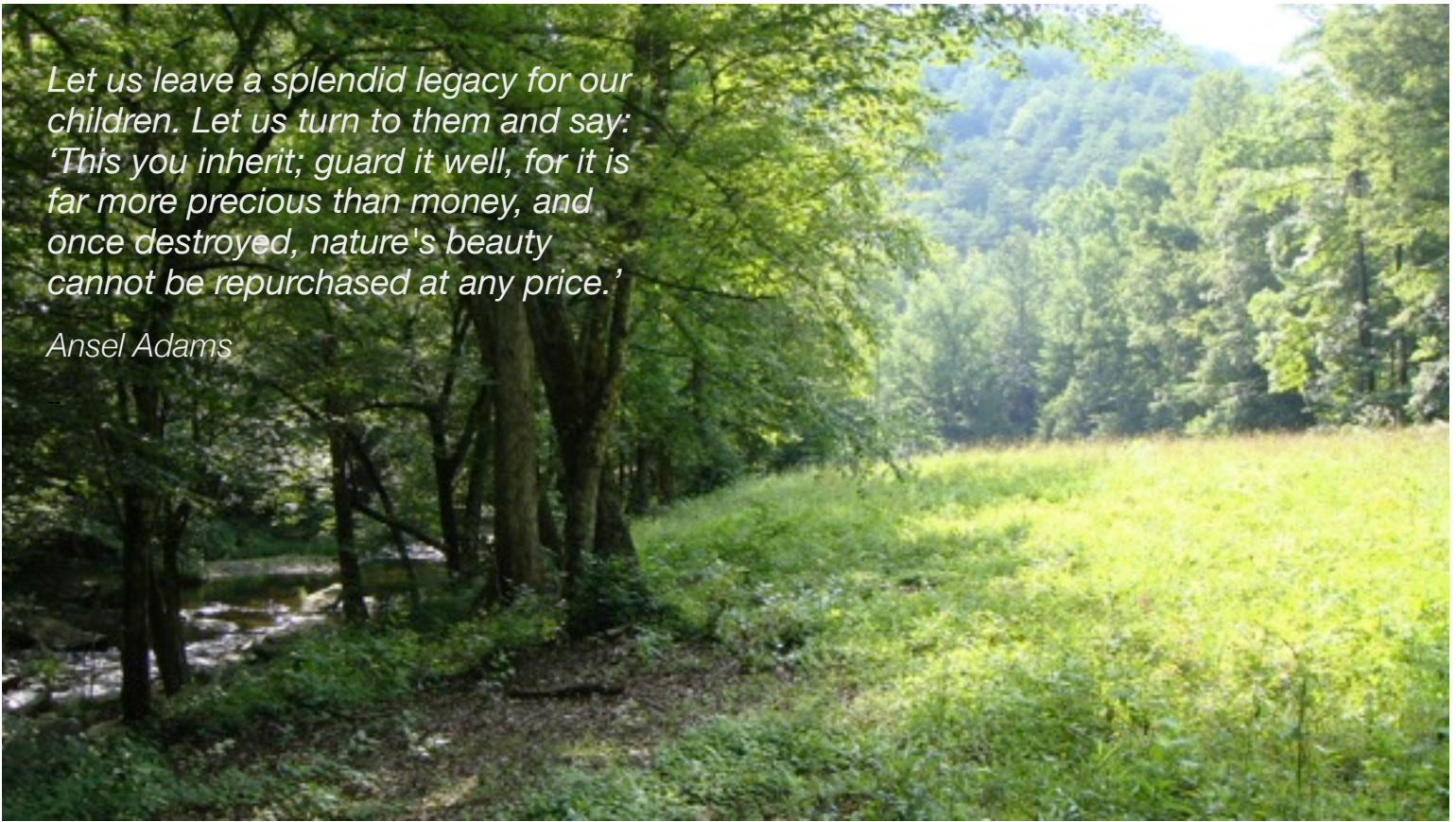
The forest and water problems are perhaps the most vital internal questions of the United States. The water supply itself depends upon the forest...

*Theodore Roosevelt
1901 State of the Union
Address*

Crawford Falls (photo by C. Johnston)

Let us leave a splendid legacy for our children. Let us turn to them and say: 'This you inherit; guard it well, for it is far more precious than money, and once destroyed, nature's beauty cannot be repurchased at any price.'

Ansel Adams



Rock Creek (photo by P. Sunderland)

Goals of the Organization

MCTGA is committed to engaging landowners, citizens and other stakeholders in planned, focused and effective conservation. We work hard to maintain a quality of life residents have enjoyed for generations and to develop a sense of community around the natural resources that make the areas so special. We strive to increase the impact of our efforts by partnering with government agencies and other organizations, as well as enhancing our own understanding of the intimate connection between the human and natural environments.

- ◆ MCTGA works with citizen groups and tax payers to strengthen support for conservation efforts. We believe that conservation of private land can significantly benefit existing communities, future neighborhoods, and natural habitats. MCTGA coordinates education and outreach programs to foster citizen support for individual action toward landscape conservation.

- ◆ MCTGA works with landowners to cooperatively build conservation plans that protect important conservation values that

benefit the community. We engage landowners in planning efforts through individual interactions and relationship building. As an organization founded by residents of the region, MCTGA respects the value of long-term trust building for land conservation.

- ◆ MCTGA works with local governments, influencing development of financial mechanisms to reward landowners for conserving their own land. Forests, stream buffers and undeveloped watersheds provide the community natural services, such as mountain vistas, smog-free

air, and high quality drinking water. As such, local and state governments can offer programs to offset the cost landowners may incur when voluntarily choosing to not develop their land.



(photo by P. Sunderland)

Our (Your) Success is Permanent

Building on relationships established over 20 years in the region, MCTGA has effectively helped protect nearly 3500 acres of land in North Georgia with strict criteria for public benefit. In the Etowah River watershed alone, MCTGA holds conservation easements on 1700 acres of stream buffers, headwater streams, and wetlands. We have partnered with the state Department of Natural Resources to secure over 1400 acres of land designated as public Wildlife

Management Areas and with county governments on 1378 acres for public wilderness recreation and education. Overall, our success has helped residents and visitors of this great region enjoy a high quality of life.

MCTGA has earned the seal of accreditation issued by the national Land Trust Accreditation Commission. In recognition of our demonstrated commitment to excellence and quality conservation

record, MCTGA is the only Georgia-based land trust selected to participate in the Southeast Land Trust Alliance's Excellence Enhancement program.



Black bear cub (photo by D. Akoubian)

We Need You!

MCTGA's successful conservation efforts are significant, but our challenges are great. Without doubt, the scenic mountains and foothills of North Georgia are a very appealing place to live and visit. While economic development and growth are important to the survival of our communities, we cannot risk losing the forests, streams and wetlands that make our region so desirable. If current trends continue, we risk diminishing our own quality of life and losing the forests and streams appreciated for generations. We also risk the permanent loss of amazing fish species and other animals that know no other home.



Kayaking the Etowah (photo by C.Laird)

MCTGA is the strongest non-government, non-profit advocate for conservation in our region. We are dedicated to preserving North Georgia's most sensitive areas. We have a demonstrated ability to cooperate and lead conservation efforts. We stand as an organization poised to act quickly for the protection of the mountains, the rivers and the streams of North Georgia.

However, pressure of development and loss of our natural resources are intensifying. As the only accredited and locally-founded land trust focused on mountain resources, we must expand our organizational capacity to keep up with the growing need for conservation action. MCTGA needs your help to advance the protection of our North Georgia mountains.

Please donate today! Your support will help protect the natural resources of this remarkably unique region.



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