



American Whitewater in the Southeast

The rivers of the Southeastern United States are some of the oldest and most biologically rich in the country and are world famous for their whitewater. American Whitewater has been working to protect and restore these rivers for over half a century, while enhancing opportunities to enjoy them safely. The paddling community in the Southeast is among the largest in the country and has helped American Whitewater tackle a wide array of river stewardship issues over the past decade. The results are nothing short of fantastic.

American Whitewater has helped make the Southeast such a great place to paddle we decided to move there! Now based in Cullowhee, NC, AW is playing an active role in the management of dozens of rivers throughout the region.



Restoring flows to the Cheoah River is a landmark success for AW's River Stewardship Program. Rob Maxwell.

- AW Focus Rivers over the Last Decade**
- Cartecay River
 - Catawba River
 - Chattooga River
 - Cheoah River
 - Coosa River
 - Daddy's Creek
 - Etowah River
 - Green River
 - Hiwassee River
 - Horsepasture River
 - Johnnies Creek
 - Little River (AL)
 - Little River (NC)
 - Nantahala River
 - Nolichucky River
 - Obed River
 - Ocoee River
 - Pigeon River
 - Saluda River
 - Stekoa Creek
 - Tallulah River
 - Toxaway River
 - Tuckasegee River
 - Twelvemile Creek
 - Watauga River
 - WF Tuckasegee
 - Wilson Creek
 - Yellow Creek

AW's Southeastern River Stewardship Projects

RESTORED RIVER FLOWS

American Whitewater works to restore both ecological and social values to rivers impacted by dams. This work includes our analysis of lost whitewater opportunities, research on preferred recreational flows, and advocacy for recreational releases. A host of recent dam relicensings have provided a once in a lifetime opportunity to restore some of the best regional rivers that were lost to dams in the early 1900's.

In the past 10 years we have completed **14 flow studies** on at different river reaches and negotiated **recreational releases on 17 river reaches**. When all these reaches are combined, we have negotiated with power companies and other stakeholders to provide over **938 days of recreational dam releases each year!**

Current and Pending Whitewater Releases Negotiated by AW in the Southeast in the Past 10 Years	
River Difficulty	Days
Class II/II+	572
Class III/III+	323
Class IV/IV+	43
Number of the above that are pending	236
Total Annual Whitewater Releases	938

RESTORED RIVER FLOWS CONTINUED



Nantahala River Photo: Rob Maxwell

In cases where there is significant ecological recovery potential, such as the Cheoah River, American Whitewater advocates recreational releases of variable flow and timing to mimic natural stream flows. These flows fulfill vital stream ecosystem functions while also supporting public use. Along with higher flows we have also successfully **advocated for base flows in 12 river reaches totaling over 100 miles.**

DAM REMOVAL

All dams have a lifespan, and old or especially harmful dams may be candidates for removal. American Whitewater is currently working on the **removal of four dams** in the region. Agreements have been signed that call for the removal of Dillsboro Dam on the Tuckasegee River, and two or possibly three dams on South Carolina's Twelvemile River. Both dam removals would restore fish passage and recreational opportunities.



Dillsboro Dam, Tuckasegee River

PUBLIC RIVER ACCESS



Cheoah Take Out. Photo: Rob Maxwell

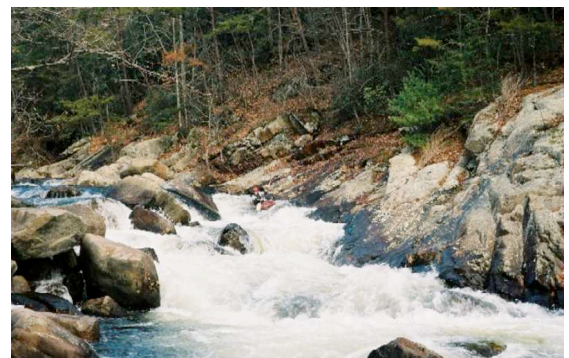
Public river access is critical to supporting public enjoyment and protection of rivers. American Whitewater has successfully negotiated the creation or maintenance of over **32 public river access areas**. Most of these access areas were achieved through the dam relicensing process, however American Whitewater actually purchased one access area in the Southeast. We own and manage the take out for the Watauga Gorge in North Carolina, and lease the put in for the popular Lower Cartecay River in Georgia.

LAND CONSERVATION

Protected riparian lands mean cleaner water throughout the southeast, and we are always seeking new land conservation opportunities. American Whitewater has played a significant role in the conservation of over **10,000 acres** in the Cheoah Watershed, **over 7,800 acres** in the Catawba Watershed (proposed), and helped secure roughly **\$1,000,000** from Duke Power for riparian land conservation in the Tuckasegee, Nantahala, and Little Tennessee Watersheds. In addition we have supported riparian restoration and conservation in the Chattooga, Wilson Creek, and other watersheds.

WILD AND SCENIC DESIGNATION

Wild and Scenic status grants rivers total immunity from dam building, and an added level of protection from land management activities that can impact ecological and recreational values of rivers. American Whitewater has actively **supported the recent designation of Wilson Creek** as a Wild and Scenic River, and has actively participated in the management of both Wilson Creek and the Chattooga River. We have also **advocated for the Etowah River to be designated** as a state scenic river.



Wild and Scenic Wilson Creek. Photo Rob Maxwell.

RIVER MANAGEMENT

American Whitewater seeks to be active participants in collaboratively managing whitewater rivers. We work with landowners, federal agencies, state agencies, other organizations, individuals, and anyone willing to assure that rivers are managed responsibly. Through working with other stakeholders we have:

- **Protected access to special places** like North Carolina's Little River.
- **Prevented unreasonable fees** on at least 5 rivers.
- **Advocated for fair permits and management** on rivers like Tallulah and the Chattooga.
- **Helped coordinate shuttles** and recreational use on the Cheoah and Tallulah rivers.
- **Helped organize River Cleanups** with many partners.
- **Helped organize encroaching vegetation removal** on the Cheoah.

RURAL ECONOMIC BENEFITS

The Southern Appalachians have experienced a steady increase in recreation based tourism over the past several decades. Ecotourism in the South has put a high value on protected lands, and rivers with water in them.



Cheoah River Shuttle

American Whitewater helps to protect and restore the natural environment and associated recreational resources in rural areas, and encourages boaters to "pay where they play." The recreational releases we negotiated on the Cheoah River are predicted to bring in **\$2,790,000** each year to Graham County, NC, and the releases on the Upper Ocoee are predicted to bring in **\$7,140,000** to Polk County, TN. The Nantahala River alone is worth well over **\$14,000,000** to Swain County, NC. In addition to the big dam release rivers, paddlers support rural tourism based economies during the critical winter and spring months when other tourists stay home. Our efforts to maintain public access and river health in these areas support this positive effect.

PARTNERSHIPS

American Whitewater strives to work in partnership with other groups to accomplish our river stewardship mission. We recognize that only a rich tapestry of support can create and protect enduring river conservation and access successes. While there are far too many to mention, we would like to acknowledge several groups we have worked with to create lasting positive changes on the whitewater rivers of the Southeast. We would like to thank:

- **American Whitewater's Affiliate Clubs** for their leadership and support on virtually every river we work on.
- **Commercial Outfitters** on the Nantahala, Tuckasegee, and Ocoee for collaborating on recreational release issues.
- **Duke Power** for working with us on the Nanty, Tuck, and Catawba.
- **Georgia Power** and **Tallulah Gorge State Park** for collaboratively managing the Tallulah with us.
- **Patton Boggs** and **Alston and Bird** law firms for their superb assistance in fostering responsible management of the Chattooga.
- **US Forest Service** for working with us on everything from dam relicensings, to Wild and Scenic designation, to stream clean ups.



Atlanta Whitewater Club members clean up the Tellico River with USFS Support



Mark and Ben at NPF

WHO WE ARE

American Whitewater is made up of about 6,700 members, hundreds of volunteers, 100 affiliate paddling clubs, 50 volunteer Regional Coordinators, 20 board members, and 7 paid staff. Together we seek to resolve almost every problem a whitewater river or whitewater boater encounters nationwide. We also manage the AW website which includes a database of over 4700 whitewater runs, a whitewater accident database, and our River Stewardship Toolkit. Since 1954 we have been publishing the iconic and volunteer driven American Whitewater Journal. We have become recognized national experts on river safety, river management, river access, and river conservation. We are a small organization with a dedicated and active membership that allows us to accomplish a great deal.

FUNDING

The vast majority of our efforts are funded by the paddling community through membership, additional donations, and event attendance. The generosity of the paddling community has maintained AW's river stewardship efforts since 1954. In addition to personal contributions, we also receive significant corporate support from civic and environmentally minded companies in the outdoor recreation business. Lastly, our river stewardship program has been supported over the years by philanthropic private foundations and funds.

AW IN THE SOUTH

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Mark Singleton
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Ben Van Camp

Southern AW Board

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Nantahala Racing Club
Triad River Runners
Warren Wilson College Paddling Club
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Chota Canoe Club
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GeorgiaTech Outdoor Recreation
Paddlers4Christ
Birmingham Canoe Club
Coosa River Paddling Club
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North Florida Whitewater Assn Inc

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THANK YOU EVERYONE!

You make everything we do possible

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THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR SUPPORTERS AND VOLUNTEERS!



Contact American Whitewater
PO Box 1540
Cullowhee, NC 28723
828-293-9791

www.americanwhitewater.org