

The Rough Creek Watershed Trail system incorporates historical road beds with ecologically sound trails. The 10+ miles of trails permit foot and mountain bike traffic.

While inside the watershed, all trail users are required to stay on signed trails. Off-trail use and the use of any unsigned trails and roadways is not allowed.

Trail Description

From the parking area below the caretaker's house, access the trail by following the roadbed through the pasture to the gated entrance of the watershed. (Please note that the road goes through private property and leaving the road bed is prohibited).

Cross the gate and continue up the road to a signed intersection. At the intersection, go either left or right and follow the signs to the lower trail head for Cherry Cove Trail. On Cherry Cove Trail, follow the trail signs to the West Boundary Road. Go right on the road and rejoin Cherry Cove Trail where it goes back into the woods (a right turn). Cherry Cove Trail will end at the East Boundary Road. To return to the parking area, either backtrack on Cherry Cove Trail or turn right and follow the signs back to the entrance road.

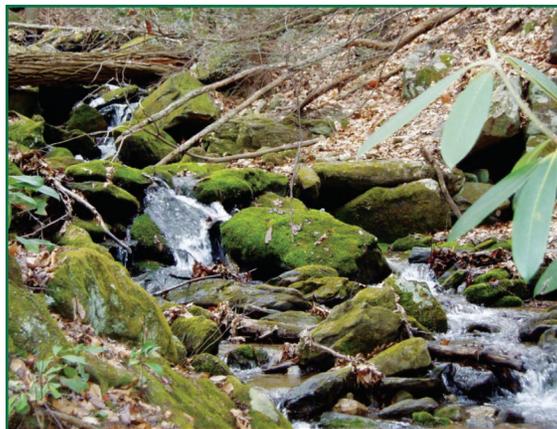


Ecology of Rough Creek

The Rough Creek Watershed is 870 acres of protected mountain land north of Canton, North Carolina. It was closed to public access when it was used as a water resource for the Town of Canton. This area is an excellent example of near pristine ecosystems of the Great Smoky Mountain Region. It contains nearly seven miles of streams, numerous seeps and springs, and swamp/bog areas which have become fairly uncommon with human inhabitation of the region.

The watershed contains many species of interesting and rare plants (painted trillium, whorled pogonia) as well as a large and diverse animal population (salamanders, turkey, bear, bobcat, songbirds). This diversity provides the residents of Haywood County, and particularly the Town of Canton, an opportunity to experience in their own back yard biodiversity similar to that found in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

The water found in Rough Creek Watershed is classified by the state of North Carolina as an outstanding water resource. The purity of the water rivals and often exceeds comparison to other protected waters in the state.



History of Rough Creek Watershed

The watershed was settled by early pioneers in the 1800's. There were several home sites and a school within the watershed which can still be located by observing rock walls, areas of naturalized plantings, and apple orchards. The orchards are interesting as they contain many species of heirloom apples which have become rare due to development and the advent of hybrid breeds. Higher elevation areas were used for grazing livestock and apple orchards. Lower areas of the watershed were left wild, indicated by the old-growth hemlock trees flocking the lower slopes of the creek. By the early 1900's, settlers had moved out and the Town of Canton designated the watershed as protected. From that point, very little human interaction occurred until selective logging in the 1970's and 1980's.

The waters of Rough Creek have special historical significance. They were used in a campaign to fight a nuclear waste facility proposed by the United States Department of Energy in the mid -1980's. Rough Creek water was carried by members of the community to Washington D.C. to represent the lives of the people of Western North Carolina. The effect of this gesture, as well as the purity of the water, prompted the eventual abandonment of plans for nuclear dumping in the area.



Directions to Rough Creek Watershed

The Rough Creek Watershed is easily accessed from the Town of Canton and Interstate 40. Take Canton exit 31 off I-40 and turn towards town. Take a left turn onto Crossroad Hill after the first red light. At the stop sign, take a left onto North Canton Rd. At the stop sign at the end of North Canton Rd., take a left onto Beaverdam Rd. Follow Beaverdam Rd 1.7 miles and take a left turn onto Rice Cove Rd. At the stop sign at the end of Rice Cove Rd., take a right. Follow this road to the end, where it will curve sharply to the left and cross a cattle gate. Go up the driveway (narrow road, so be aware of oncoming traffic). Park on the left near the old water treatment building in the designated parking area.

Rules for Use of the Watershed Trail System

- Hiking and mountain biking are allowed only on designated trails (no horses, dogs, or motorized vehicles). Remember not to leave the trails. Protection of the ecosystem and water quality is of utmost importance.
- Please try to avoid use of disposable containers within the watershed. Pack out what you bring into the watershed!
- "Leave No Trace" practices are required. This includes leaving what you find and respecting wildlife and other hikers. Take nothing but pictures and memories and leave nothing but footprints.
- Only day use of the watershed is permitted. No camping or fires allowed.
- No hunting, firearms, fishing, or harvesting of plants allowed.
- No drug or alcohol use or other illegal activities allowed.

Friends of Rough Creek Watershed

Mission Statement

The Friends of Rough Creek Watershed is dedicated to providing assistance to the Town of Canton in protecting, preserving and sustainably managing Rough Creek Watershed and its public use trail as directed by the watershed management plan.

Organizational Goals

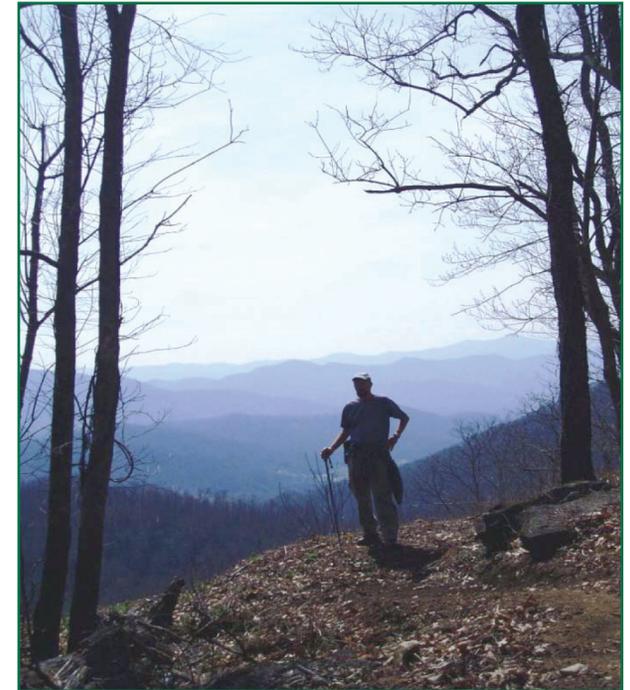
- To assist the Town of Canton in protecting the land resources within the watershed boundaries.
- To monitor and evaluate impacts on ecological stability & provide guidance to mitigate threats to water quality.
- To assist the Town of Canton in funding management of the watershed property.
- To foster environmental research and education.
- To provide recreational and interpretive experiences for the public.
- To help Haywood County residents become more physically active and find emotional and intellectual satisfaction by being a part of something larger than themselves.

If you are interested in becoming a Friend of Rough Creek, please contact the Town of Canton at 648-2363.

Thank you to the NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund, Blue Ridge Bicycle Club, Healthy Haywood and Haywood County Health Department, for funding this project.



Rough Creek Watershed



*Enjoy the History,
Ecology, and Beauty
of Haywood County*