

# Protecting THE Pigeon



Preston Jacobsen, Elizabeth Brazas and Chris Smith,  
photo by Michael Oppenheim

“AS POPULATION GROWTH CONTINUES, DEVELOPMENT EXPANDS, AND THE CLIMATE SHIFTS TOWARD A WETTER AND POSSIBLY MORE EXTREME FUTURE, CLEAN WATER AS A RESOURCE FOR LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND THE NATURAL ECOSYSTEMS IS ONE OF THE HIGHEST PRIORITIES ACROSS OUR REGION.”

“Haywood Waterways Association’s (HWA) mission mirrors that of CFWNC’s Pigeon River Fund (PRF), and sustained financial support from the Fund has had a positive impact on the watershed and enabled us to exist. We are not successful without our partners and local community members, who have helped us secure more than \$12 million in restoration, education and monitoring grants.

Like many WNC counties, Haywood County is facing a surge in development and steady population increase. Securing and protecting water availability is a high priority, and we applaud the recent efforts by NC State Director Bill Holman and The Conservation Fund and many other organizations that will provide positive benefits for generations.

HWA is also working with residents, towns and Haywood County to plan a response to the next major flood. Tropical Storm Fred (August 2021) and the devastation it brought to the County has spurred a leading-edge effort in flood resilience preparation and conservation. HWA has secured grant dollars to conduct planning, modeling and conservation projects from Clyde to Cruso over the next three years, the first of many necessary phases.

We recently wrapped up our 27th year of our Kids in the Creek program that has provided an experiential learning opportunity in the water for more than 17,500 8th-graders since 1997. We also conduct Aquatic Education Workshops throughout the warmer months, and last



Kids in the Creek, photos by Michael Oppenheim



year we brought more than 300 local youth and 50 adults to snorkel and conduct macroinvertebrate sampling and fish IDs. The goal is to educate and inspire people so that the long-term benefit is an educated community, one that holds environmental stewardship as a priority.

As population growth continues, development expands, and the climate shifts toward a wetter and possibly more extreme future, clean water as a resource for local communities and the natural ecosystems is one of the highest priorities across our region. Haywood County is a headwaters watershed, and we have a unique opportunity to ensure generational protections and solutions to keep our clean waters clean.

We are beyond grateful for the support and guidance of the PRF over the past 25 years. HWA relies upon the resources of CFWNC across many aspects of our operation and welcomes the insight, inspiration and funding opportunities that allow us to meet our mission.”

**Preston Jacobsen**

*Executive Director, Haywood Waterways Association*

Fly Fishing, French Broad River, photo by Derek DiLuzio

*All water is connected and only*