

## Resources

The Coalition office contains a wealth of resources for more information about nonpoint source pollution and best management practices associated with all activities that take place on the landscape. The office is open Monday-Thursday, 8:00-4:00 and Friday, 8:00-12:00.



Some of the information used in this publication came from the NC Division of Water Quality's "Buffers for Clean Water" brochure. To obtain a copy, stop by the office or contact Leslie by calling (828) 837-5414 or toll-free at (877) 863-7388.

Look for more information about BMPs, and a quiz about sustainability and water quality on our website this spring!

<http://www.hrwc.net>

### **WATER DROPS**

Volume 5, Number 1  
February 2005

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*Good riparian buffer along Ivy Log Creek in Union County*

The Coalition is made up of representatives from the Cherokee, Clay, and Blue Ridge Mountain SWCDs; Cherokee, Clay, Towns and Union County Commissions; individuals, families and businesses. We work to facilitate water quality improvements throughout the upper Hiwassee River watershed, across political boundaries, while honoring local initiatives.

HRWC is an incorporated §501(C)(3) non-profit organization to which all contributions are tax-deductible.

## Growth

Is it possible to have growth and good economic development in our communities *and* protect our natural resources? There is definitely a link between economic development and natural resource protection. People leave areas where natural resources have been depleted. When all the good timber was logged from the southern Appalachian region at the turn of the century, thriving communities were abandoned. One of our greatest natural resources is our abundant, relatively clean water. We can continue to grow, build, develop, harvest timber, and conduct agricultural activities, and if appropriate practices are in place and priority is placed on natural resource protection, our communities will be sustainable and will thrive economically. If priority is not placed on protecting our natural resources, our economy will ultimately suffer.



Learning what practices are needed to meet the demands of an ever-increasing human population while protecting water quality and water resources first requires an understanding of the causes of degradation. When one thinks of water pollution, industrial discharges or trash typically come to mind. Although point source discharges were once a major source of water pollution in the United States,

## Sustainability

environmental laws and strict enforcement of permits that regulate these discharges have almost eliminated them from concern. However, many of our waterways remain degraded.



Nonpoint source pollution, or pollution that runs off the land from all of the various activities that take place in our communities, causes degradation of water resources. The biggest nonpoint source pollution problem is excess sediment. This sediment comes primarily from construction sites and eroding streambanks, although runoff from developed areas, timber harvesting and agricultural activities also contributes. There are also problems with thermal pollution, or high water temperatures, caused primarily by a lack of shade along streambanks and lake shorelines.



Other water quality issues in more localized areas include elevated nutrient and bacteria concentrations. In general, toxic chemicals are not a problem for streams and lakes in the Hiwassee River watershed.

## Water Quality

Best management practices (BMPs) are tools that can be used to control nonpoint source pollution. BMPs have been developed, and are continually being updated, for all activities that take place on the landscape. These practices, when properly chosen and implemented, will help us use the land in a manner that is sustainable and protects water resources. One of the most important practices for protecting water quality associated with all sorts of land uses is maintaining the native trees and other woody vegetation along our waterways.



Wooded riparian buffers are important because they filter pollutants from runoff, provide shade and habitat for both aquatic and terrestrial animals, and help control bank erosion. When trees and other woody plants are removed, pollutants washed off the land by rainwater have a direct route to a stream or lake. Instead of seeping into the ground or slowly traveling downhill to streams through leaf litter and vegetation, larger volumes of water rush quickly over the developed land surface and into streams. Without the root systems that wooded riparian buffers provide, stream banks easily cave to the pressure of the fast-moving water.