

## The Nature Conservancy in Georgia

# Chattahoochee Fall Line



BLUFF ALONG UPATOI RIVER, CHATTAHOOCHEE WATERSHED © MARK GODFREY/TNC

Where the Chattahoochee River crosses the Fall Line, The Nature Conservancy is working to protect the natural heritage of a rapidly changing region.

### What's At Risk?

Flowing from the Piedmont, the Chattahoochee River and its tributaries cross the rocky shoals and sand hills of the Fall Line and flow through forests of fire-dependent longleaf pine and rich floodplain hardwoods. A diverse ecology, with an abundance of wildlife and fish, once graced these lands and waters known as the Chattahoochee Fall Line.

Today, many natural systems of the region are drastically altered or endangered. Water has been impounded and diverted, forests have been altered and fragmented, soil has been moved and paved over, and wildlife has diminished.



The Fall Line is an ancient shoreline separating the Piedmont and Coastal Plain.

Burgeoning populations and increasing development are threatening an array of species and natural communities, including upland longleaf pine forests which still support the state threatened gopher tortoise, the federally



GOPHER TORTOISE © KEITH LAZELLE

endangered red-cockaded woodpecker, and the declining bobwhite quail. Also remaining are fall line streams, shoals, seeps, and ravines that harbor imperiled plant and animal communities, such as pitcher plant bogs, rare freshwater mussels, and the endangered rocky shoals spider lily.

Over a quarter of a million people and a variety of interests – from industrial to military to tourism – have a stake in conserving the natural resources and the rural character of the Chattahoochee Fall Line.

## Science Guides Our Work

The Nature Conservancy is working with private landowners, business interests and the Department of Defense to protect the ecological diversity and natural heritage of the Chattahoochee Fall Line while meeting the needs of this growing community.

**Protecting Land.** From the Chattahoochee River, to Pine Mountain, to the woods and wetlands surrounding Fort Benning, The Nature Conservancy works with private landowners to protect natural areas throughout the Chattahoochee Fall Line. Guided by a regional conservation plan, The Nature Conservancy places special emphasis on restoring or expanding large-scale ecosystems, such as the pine forests, hardwood bottoms, and fall line streams that occur on and around Fort Benning.

In years past, the Conservancy worked with partners to protect 140 miles of Chattahoochee River shoreline north of Columbus, including 1,500 acres along Standing Boy Creek.

**Species Inventory.** MeadWestvaco has partnered with The Nature Conservancy to inventory rare species and natural communities across approximately 300,000 acres of its forest land, much of it in the Chattahoochee Fall Line region.

**Research and Monitoring.** The Nature Conservancy has worked side-by-side with Army land managers since the early 1990s, learning together how to manage and monitor Fort Benning's pine forests and fire-adapted habitats for both conservation and military training. The Nature Conservancy's work with nearby landowners and other conservation partners have provided opportunities to extend research and monitoring beyond Fort Benning, to improve conservation management regionwide.

**Community Partnerships.** The Nature Conservancy is working with local communities in the Chattahoochee Fall Line to conserve and showcase their natural heritage. One such project is restoring the Chattahoochee River's Fall Line shoals for recreation, scenic beauty and ecological enhancement. Community partnerships offer opportunities to promote conservation issues such as invasive species, water management, compatible development practices, and prescribed fire.



LONGLEAF PINE FOREST AT FORT BENNING, GA. © MARK GODFREY/TNC

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