

# The Nature Conservancy in South Carolina Southern Blue Ridge Escarpment



LAKE JOCASSEE FROM JUMPING OFF ROCK © TOM BLAGDEN

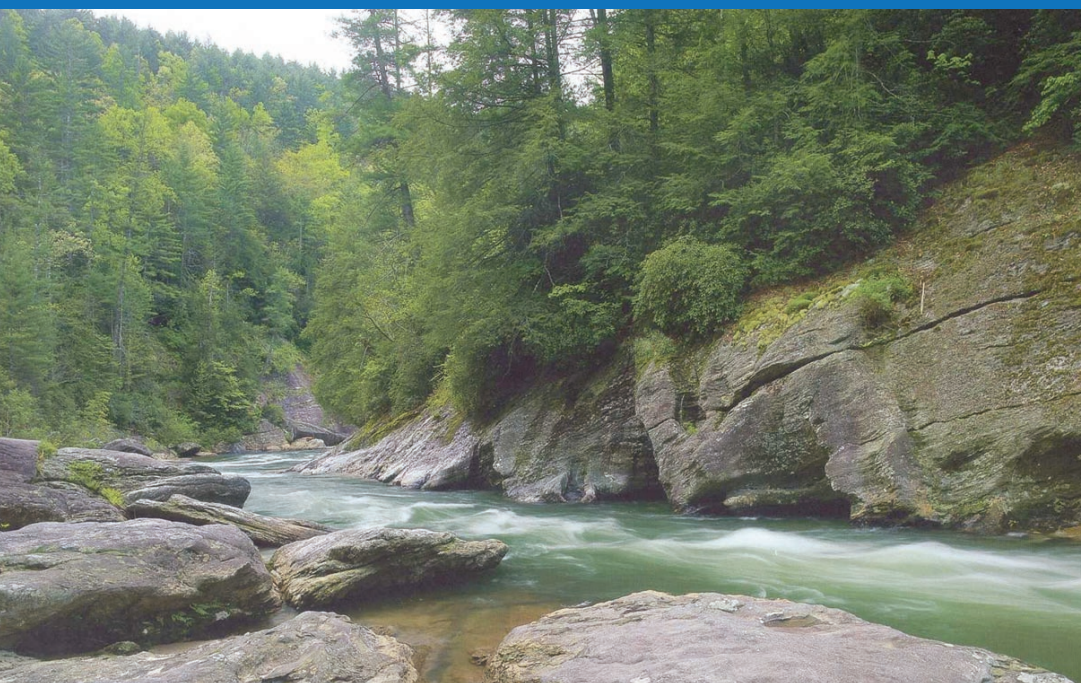
## At a Glance

- **Acres Protected:** The Conservancy has protected 38,709 acres in South Carolina's portion of the Southern Blue Ridge Escarpment
- **Ecological Significance:** Supports 40 percent of the state's rare plant species, and many rare animal species, including wood frogs, native brook trout, peregrine falcons and numerous reptiles
- **Threats:** Invasive species; incompatible development practices; forestry conversion



The Southern Blue Ridge Escarpment project area map indicates Conservancy projects in purple and federal, state, and private protected lands in green. The South Carolina Chapter's office for the Southern Blue Ridge Escarpment project is located in Greenville.

The ancient mountains and water-sculpted rocks of the Southern Blue Ridge dominate South Carolina's westernmost region, including the northern parts of Oconee, Pickens, Greenville, and Spartanburg counties and the escarpment ridges of North Carolina and northeast Georgia.



CHATTOOGA RIVER AT THE NARROWS © TOM BLAGDEN

## Biological Diversity

Encompassing less than 2 percent of the state's land mass, the Southern Blue Ridge harbors 40 percent of the state's rare plant species, including the federally listed small whorled pogonia and mountain sweet pitcher plant, as well as 200 rare plants and animal species tracked by the South Carolina Heritage Program.

Located in the Southern Blue Ridge ecoregion, the Southern Blue Ridge Escarpment supports an impressive array of rare species, including wood frogs, native brook trout and peregrine falcons. Center of the world's salamander diversity, this region is home to the majority of South Carolina's lizards and more than a third of its reptiles.

## Protecting the Southern Blue Ridge Escarpment

The Nature Conservancy has helped to protect 38,709 acres in South Carolina's portion of the Southern Blue Ridge, including Caesar's Head and the Blue Wall Preserve near Landrum.

Partnering with the City of Greenville, the Conservancy placed a conservation easement on 26,000 acres in the Greenville watershed, with 9,000 acres in the Table Rock Reservoir and 17,000 acres in the North Saluda Reservoir. Easements are a vital conservation tool, which allow landowners to voluntarily protect the ecological features of their property for perpetuity through a legal agreement with a qualified conservation organization. This easement in the Greenville watershed is protecting critical freshwater habitat and preserving the natural source of Greenville's precious drinking water.

## Threats

South Carolina has one of the highest rates of rural-to-urban land conversion. The Greenville-Spartanburg area, for instance, is developing at an astounding rate, placing an inordinate amount of pressure on undeveloped lands and degrading the habitat of freshwater river systems of the Southern Blue Ridge. Another threat to the natural ecological balance of the area is the introduction of non-native invasive species and their devastating impact on the rare natural communities of this region.



ALLEGHENY SPURGE © TOM BLAGDEN

## Goals

The Nature Conservancy strives to work with public and private partners to protect ecologically significant areas throughout the Southern Blue Ridge Escarpment project area. Conservation easements, acquisitions and other tools will be used to conserve the ecological integrity of the area.



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