

Western Carolina University Master Plan

Cullowhee, North Carolina



from top: Cullowhee Creek; a campus stormwater buffer opportunity

The main campus of Western Carolina University (WCU) lies in the Tuckasegee River valley, nestled between the Blue Ridge and Great Smoky Mountains. Among the important natural resources in this region, which ranges in elevation from 2,000–2,500 feet, is Cullowhee Creek, a trout stream and tributary to the Tuckasegee.

When the University initiated a master planning process to guide campus development and improvements over the next

By integrating sustainability goals into its master plan, WCU is able to protect Southern Appalachian Mountain habitat on their unique campus in the Great Smoky Mountains.

several decades, they required the integration of a sustainability plan. As a key member of the University's master planning team, Biohabitats contributed to the development of sustainability goals and integrated them into the comprehensive master plan.

Biohabitats began by conducting an assessment of three sites: the University's main campus (including Cullowhee Creek and its riparian corridor, the 300-acre, mountainous natural area of its west campus, and Cullowhee Creek. The assessments included inventory and analysis of features such as stormwater systems, forested areas, invasive species, riparian corridors and associated wetlands. Based on the findings, Biohabitats generated

sustainable development scenarios and recommendations for riparian enhancement and stormwater management and retrofits. Biohabitats also developed riparian enhancement concepts and presented them to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

With sustainability goals established, the University is now equipped with recommendations on how to retrofit green infrastructure into the main campus, enhance and protect the ecological integrity of Cullowhee Creek, and conserve the natural resources.

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