



# TU's Southeast Conservation Project Makes Strides in 2015

*Your Continued Support Important as Ever*

The story of our native brookies in peril is not a new one: warming temperatures, habitat loss, and fragmentation by dams and road crossings are just a few of the ongoing challenges that threaten their very existence. But TU's Southeast Conservation Project is writing a different story, a new story of the brook trout's triumph and survival. With your help, our native trout are fighting for a brighter future.



The Buck Creek AOP project will reconnect brook trout populations that have been fragmented for over 50 years in the Nantahala National Forest. Photo by Damon Hearne.

TU's Southeast Conservation Project out of Asheville is helping Southern Appalachian brook trout take back their home waters by reconnecting the most resilient populations. **By 2020, the Southeast Conservation Project aims to reconnect 10 critical trout populations with more than 30 miles of trout stream.** This means eliminating barriers to aquatic organism passage (AOP) on climate resilient and native fisheries and, where appropriate, constructing aquatic organism passage structures using stream simulation design.

Six projects are underway for 2015 with the first one breaking ground in June on Buck Creek in Nantahala National Forest (see photo). Right now, trout are swimming freely into waters they have been cut-off from for more than half a century. Within days of installing a temporary diversion stream lined with plastic sheeting, trout were observed in the 'plastic' pools and stacked up at the last cascade in the construction site. These trout are ready for new habitat!

Upon completion of these projects, 11 miles of stream will be reconnected on fishable, public lands giving trout and other species access to over 3,800 acres previously located above stream barriers. With thousands of stream crossings blocking trout passage in Southern Appalachia, the potential for restoring their habitat is huge.

Funders at all levels are needed to support these multifaceted projects. Generous donors, partners, and grassroots supporters, including many TU Chapters in NC and surrounding states directly financed the Buck Creek AOP project and others. **Donations from chapters, councils and individuals are the**

**foundation for every large grant we seek.** These donations leverage foundation grants, federal match from the US Forest Service and US Fish and Wildlife Service, as well as state and local agencies.

Through these innovative partnerships, the Southeast Conservation Project has been able to leverage almost \$1 million in resources for real, boots-on-the-ground conservation and outreach focused on creating resilient brook trout and great fishing in the Southeast. Thanks to the North Carolina Chapters and Council for annual support that sustains our efforts.



The Southeast Conservation Project is available to your chapter for meeting presentations (we won't put you to sleep), advocacy and conservation project support. Contact Tara Granke [tgranke@tu.org](mailto:tgranke@tu.org) to schedule a meeting or Damon Hearne, Southeast Conservation Director at [dhearne@tu.org](mailto:dhearne@tu.org) for more information.

Thousands of stream crossings block passage in Appalachia; the potential for restoring native trout habitat is huge. Photo by Chris Shockey.

Thanks for your interest and for your support for TU and your work to make trout and fishing better in the region.

With gratitude and hopes of good water this fall,

Handwritten signature of Damon Hearne.



Damon Hearne  
Southeast Conservation Director

Handwritten signature of Tara Granke.



Tara Granke  
Southeast Communications Specialist

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**P.S.** Interested in volunteering at a conservation site? We need help planting trees, sowing seed and installing erosion control after the projects like the one are complete – sign up now for notices at: <http://goo.gl/forms/nAa3F7PflA>