

Shade Your Stream is a campaign designed to educate the public about the importance of native riparian vegetation in protecting water quality, land quality, and aquatic life. The education and outreach plans locally benefit the western physiographic region of North Carolina. Mainspring Conservation Trust (MCT; formerly known as the Land Trust for the Little Tennessee) developed Shade Your Stream in 2013 as a streamside forest education concept, with funding provided by the North Carolina Ecosystem Enhancement Program. MCT initially developed a Landowner Action Guide and Shade Your Stream brochure for the Little Tennessee watershed and printed 1,000 copies of each. In addition, MCT has held several live-stake workshops, teaching participants a low-cost, simple way to shade their streams, which received great local participation and positive feedback. As the program gained momentum and media interest, partners across western North Carolina became eager to bring the concept to all of western NC.

The goal of the project has always been to expand the Shade Your Stream program across western North Carolina with input and collaboration between multiple partners, including non-profit organizations, watershed coalitions, and governmental agencies working toward water quality protection and restoration. The program now stretches into 13 other counties. Through this collaboration, watershed partners are able to deliver a common message with a unified and far reaching voice that can reach out to and educate homeowners, businesses, churches, and municipalities. The 13 counties that have adopted our Shade Your Stream program include: Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Clay, Cherokee, Graham, Haywood, Jackson, Macon, Mitchell, Swain, Watauga, and Yancey.

Partners include: Blue Ridge Resource Conservation and Development Councils (RC&D), Coweeta Long Term Ecological Research Station, Haywood Waterways Association, Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition, NC Cooperative Extension Service, NC Division of Water Resources, NC Wildlife Resources Commission, Southwestern RC&D, Tennessee Valley Authority, Toe River Valley Watch, Trout Unlimited, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Watershed Association of the Tuckaseegee River.

2015 has been an exciting year for the Shade Your Stream campaign. With the addition of an updated, user-friendly website ([shadeyourstream.org](http://shadeyourstream.org)) partners across western North Carolina are able to announce events, share materials, and connect interested landowners with the proper expert in their area. Six billboards have been (or are scheduled to be) placed in prominent locations in three counties. Recently, the Little Tennessee River was designated as the first Native Fish Conservation Area (NFCA) in the nation. Partnerships within the NFCA are supporting the Shade your Stream idea and have offered publicity and funding for on-the-ground projects and outreach materials within the entire Little Tennessee River Basin.