



NORTHEAST GEORGIA RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN for Regionally Important Resources

RESOLUTION

**AUTHORIZING SUBMISSION OF THE NORTHEAST GEORGIA
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR
REGIONALLY IMPORTANT RESOURCES TO
THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS FOR REVIEW**

WHEREAS, the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission prepared a Resource Management Plan for Regionally Important Resources; and

WHEREAS, the Northeast Georgia Resource Management Plan for Regionally Important Resources was prepared in accordance with the Minimum Planning Standards and Procedures for Regionally Important Resources effective July 2009; and


WHEREAS, a regional public hearing was held on November 1, 2017.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission Council will submit the Northeast Georgia Resource Management Plan for Regionally Important Resources to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs for review and comment.

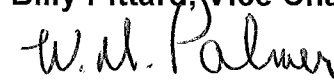
ADOPTED this 15th day of February, 2018.



Jerry Roseberry, Chairman

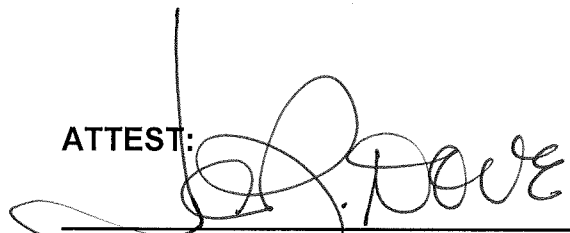


Billy Pittard, Vice Chairperson



Bill Palmer, Secretary

ATTEST:



James R. Dove, Executive Director

Prepared by the:



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INTRODUCTION

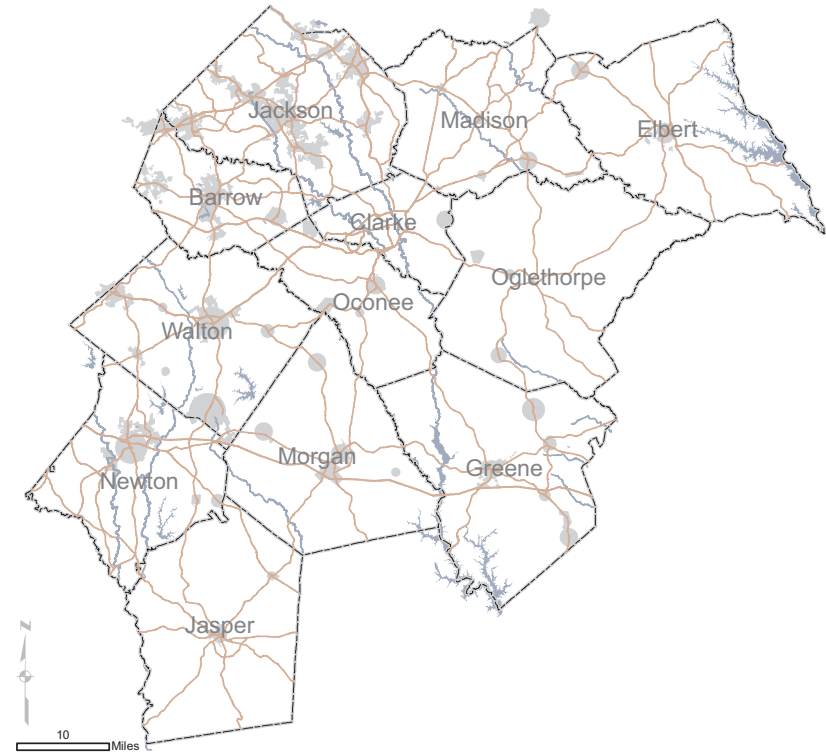
Purpose

The Resource Management Plan for northeast Georgia identifies significant natural and cultural resources found in the twelve-county region. These Regionally Important Resources (RIR) are assets to the region, creating a regional identity through preservation of significant historic sites and ecological areas. Whether the RIR provides habitat for an endangered species or supports economic development by attracting tourists, each resource provides value to the region. This document is intended to serve as a resource to educate and guide citizens, local government, regional, state, and federal agencies, conservation organizations, and land trusts as they work for the protection and management of the many important natural, cultural, and historic resources found throughout the region.

Originally developed in 2010, the Resource Management Plan was updated by Northeast Georgia Regional Commission staff in 2016 in accordance with the rules and regulations established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (effective July 1, 2009) for the identification of RIRs, the development of a plan for protection and management of the RIRs, and for review of activities potentially impacting the RIRs.

Overview

The plan contains the following categories for resources: Conservation, Recreation, Cultural, and Agricultural. However, many resources may provide benefits to more than one resource category. The Resource Management Plan is organized by the resource categories. Each RIR is



organized by its primary resource category and offers a description of the resource's value to the region, an explanation of its vulnerability to new development, and a list of appropriate development practices. These practices should be implemented by developers when new development is located within one mile of an RIR. Additionally, Developments of Regional Impact that will be located within one mile of an RIR will be evaluated against the identified practices. Finally, general policies and protection measures are recommended to provide guidance for local governments when making decisions or plans that affect RIRs.

Methodology

For the Resource Management Plan Update, the Regional Commission solicited regionally important resource nominations from local governments, land trusts, conservation and environmental organizations, and individuals active throughout the region in December 2015 and January 2016. Evaluation of the resources was based on the regional importance of the resource (versus the local importance) and the degree to which the resource is threatened or endangered. In addition to reviewing the regional value and vulnerability of each resource, the following evaluation considerations were utilized:

1. **The resource is valuable and important to the region.**

- Few similar resources exist within the region
- The resource contributes significantly to the region's history, culture, ecology, and/or identity
- The resource is recognized within a state or national designation
- The resource contributes to or has potential to contribute to economic development (e.g. tourism) in the region

2. **The resource is threatened or endangered and is not actively being protected.**

- The resource is experiencing pressures from development or other factors
- The resource is experiencing degradation (environmental, structural, aesthetic, etc.)
- Protection measures exist to safeguard the resource

3. **The resource promotes collaboration between organizations and/or jurisdictions.**

In addition to those resources nominated for the Resource Management Plan Update, those resources previously nominated and included in the previous Plan version were evaluated for inclusion in the update. During development of the plan in 2010, staff examined various planning documents such as the Georgia Land Conservation Partnership Plan, Georgia Wildlife Action Plan, Georgia Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, and the Northeast Georgia Regional Plan 2004.

State Vital Areas, as identified by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, located within the Northeast Georgia region, were included on the RIR Map. For a list of State Vital Areas, see the Appendix. These areas have preservation/conservation mechanisms in place either through federal, state, or local regulations and help serve to form a regional green infrastructure network as depicted on the RIR Map.

Public Involvement

In an effort to keep the public, elected officials, and NEGRC Council members up-to-date throughout the plan's development, the following was undertaken:

- Summary sheets were developed for each designated resource and State Vital Areas and posted to the agency website.
- Periodically, drafts of the Regional Resource Plan were posted to the web site for review and comment.
- Through an e-newsletter and e-mail blasts, the RC Council, elected officials, and interested parties were updated as to the plan's development.

In accordance with the Rules for Regionally Important Resources, as published by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA), a regional hearing was conducted in order to give the general public the opportunity to comment on the content of the plan. A copy of the plan was made available for review on the NEGRC's website.

Protection Measures

For the purpose of identifying protection measures, designated resources were divided into the following categories: Conservation, Recreation, Cultural, and Agricultural. Many resources will fit into more than one category and identified protection measures are applicable to multiple resource categories. Protection measures are application to land owners, developers, local government and are so identified to assist with implementation.

Timeline

Development of the Resource Management Plan began in September 2009 with the formation of the Planning Advisory Committee, development of the Regional Plan 2035 web page, and development of the RIR Selection Criteria, which was approved by the NEGRC Council at its December 2009 meeting.

Nominations were accepted December 1, 2009 through January 31, 2010. Thirty-five nominations were received. In February, Planning Division Staff mapped the resources and developed a preliminary evaluation of each nominated resource. During March and April, the Planning Advisory Committee evaluated nominated resources based on the selection criteria, vulnerability of the resource, and potential to facilitate the interconnection of a green network, and recommended resources to the NEGRC Council for designation. Mapping demonstrated that most of the resources were associated with river and stream corridors and the resource's ability to facilitate protection of water quality and quantity as well the interconnection provided by the river corridor was an important factor for recommending resources for designation. Of the thirty-five nominated, twenty-five were recommended for designation. (See Appendix A for the list of nominated resources and reason for denial.) Most of the nominated resources were adjacent to major river corridors or their

tributaries and, if vulnerable, were recommended for designation due to their value to help protect water quality and quantity. Linear resources (rail corridors) were recommended for designation because of their long-term potential for recreation, linkage to river corridors, and open space protection.

The NEGRC Council unanimously voted at its April 2010 meeting to designate the recommended resources. Following designation, NEGRC Planning Division staff worked with the Planning Advisory Committee, a subcommittee of the NEGRC Council, to formulate a list of recommended best practices to be used by developers when designing new developments within close proximity to the RIRs, as well as devising general policies and protection measures recommended for appropriate local management of the areas included on the RIR map. A public information meeting was held on September 13, 2010 during the Planning Advisory Committee meeting. A public hearing was held on September 14, 2010. The Resource Management Plan was recommended to the NEGRC Council for transmittal to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs for review and comment its September 2010 meeting. Upon receiving certification of completeness by DCA, the Resource Management Plan was adopted by the NEGRC Council November 18, 2010.

For the 2016 update to the Resource Management Plan, nominations were accepted in December 2015 and January 2016. Thirty-seven nominations were received and thirty-five nominations were recommended for designation. Additionally, those RIR previously nominated in 2010 were re-evaluated and it was determined that all should be included in the 2016 update. The NEGRC Council was involved and kept informed during the entire update process.

Implementation

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission will actively promulgate the plan in an effort to coordinate activities and planning of local governments, state agencies, land trust, and conservation or environmental advocacy groups toward protection and management of the identified RIRs. Specifically, the NEGRF will work with and encourage each of these stakeholders to coordinate their activities to foster protection of the RIRs.

Additionally, the NEGRC will encourage local governments in the region to adopt appropriate protection measures, policies, and enhancement activities that will promote protection of the region's important resources. The Regional Commission will also encourage local governmental to include the areas on the RIR Map as conservation areas in the respective local comprehensive plans and will review and evaluate local comprehensive plans for consistency with the Regional Resource Plan.

Finally, the listing of best practices to be considered by developers when designing new developments in close proximity to RIRs, will be used by the NEGRC when reviewing all Developments of Regional Impact (DRI) proposed to be located within one (1) mile of any area included on the RIR map. The DRIs will be reviewed for consistency with the recommended development standards.

HERITAGE RESOURCES



Overview

The Northeast Georgia region has an abundance of heritage resources, in addition to those presented in this plan, that are significant to the history and development of individual communities at the local level. Locally important heritage resources should not be disregarded or neglected as they are equally vulnerable to human intrusion. Communities with such resources are encouraged to continue their conservation and preservation initiatives and to pursue new policies and procedures that support protection.

The identification, documentation, and recognition of heritage resources are all extremely important components of the preservation process; however, the protection of heritage resources from insensitive treatment and outright demolition is essential. Unfortunately, protection provided through existing state and national recognition is minimal. For example, any resource listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register comes under the protective umbrella of the National Historic Preservation Act (Public Law 102-575). The Act mandates, under Section 106,

that any federally licensed, permitted, or funded project must be reviewed regarding its impact to the resource. While listing in the National Register does not guarantee protection for these resources, the Section 106 process does allow for alternate projects to be researched in order to minimize potential adverse impacts to these heritage resources.

Bostwick Cotton Gin

Location: City of Bostwick, Morgan County

Owner: Private

Value

The Bostwick Cotton Gin was constructed in the early 1900's by John Bostwick, the founder of the City of Bostwick. Cotton was the major crop in Morgan and surrounding counties at the time, and several gins were in local operation. A local family purchased the gin after World War II and kept it until retiring from the cotton business and passing the gin to relatives, including the Ruark family, who continue to own and operate the gin today. It is the only operational cotton gin in the region. The Bostwick Cotton Gin is a contributing resource in the Bostwick Historic District, listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2002. The gin is the focal point of the annual Cotton Gin Festival in the City of Bostwick. The Georgia Cotton Commission estimates there are only around 60 operational cotton gins in the state, most of which are located in southern Georgia, where cotton is still a main crop. The gin contributes to the historical identity of an agricultural area as a rare extant resource in this region.

Vulnerability

The Bostwick Cotton Gin is an annually operated cotton gin. It is best known in the region for the Cotton Gin Festival, which is held on the first weekend in November each year and draws an average one-day crowd of 5,000 visitors. The money raised by the festival goes to the City of Bostwick for repairs to municipally owned facilities. As the gin is privately owned, no money raised at the festival goes to the gin for maintenance or repairs. The gin building is structurally

stable and safely operational, and many of the repairs needed are aesthetic. However, the machinery requires constant maintenance, which is costly, especially considering the availability of parts for a historic gin. Many other buildings in downtown Bostwick are desperately in need of repair or restoration, which may discourage tourism and visitation to the gin during the festival. Additionally, a possible threat to consider is the US cotton market itself, which has seen a significant reduction in the price per pound for cotton recently due to foreign government policies.



Burge Plantation

Location: Newton County

Acres: 930

Owner: Private

Value

Burge Plantation is an active farm that has been in operation and ownership of a single family for 200 years. The Plantation represents not only European agriculture and settlement in Georgia but rural agricultural aspects of Newton County's history. The area where the Plantation is located was occupied by Native Americans for thousands of years and the farm has an extensive artifact collection of stone knives, tools and projectile points found on the property. The Plantation is listed in the National Register of Historical Places.

The Plantation protects water quality by maintaining vegetated riparian buffers and through responsible agricultural practices. Vegetated riparian buffers also protect and preserve wildlife habitat by creating and buffering habitat areas and corridors. Additionally, the Plantation preserves significant working agricultural or forest resources and/or creates opportunities for local food production activities.

Burge Plantation produces Southern Yellow Pine and organic produce and is a private hunting preserve.

Vulnerability

The Plantation is about 1 mile north of both Mansfield and Newborn and approximately 2/3 mile from the intersection of highways 11 and 142. It is anticipated that, over time, development will extend from this major intersection and the two communities, thus threatening the water and air quality value of the plantation. Area zoning allows 2-acre

minimum lot size and prior to the economic downturn, nearby properties were rezoned. Further, increased area development could lead to increased property values thus threatening the long-term survival of the Plantation.



Crawford Long Museum

Location: City of Jefferson, Jackson County

Owner: ????

Value

The Crawford Long Museum is valued and recognized locally for its historic significance of being the site of the “Birthplace of Anesthesia.” Dr. Crawford Long performed the first painless surgery using sulphuric ether on March 30, 1842. The Crawford Long Museum and its collection of Long family heirlooms and early medical equipment is irreplaceable and an important source of community pride. The Museum often serves as the central point for many county projects, such as the beginning of the heritage geocache trail and a drop off point for the county antique trail passports, as well as ticket purchase point for many community events and is utilized as the event venue for the fund raiser for the Downtown Development Authority.

Vulnerability

The original museum building opened to the public in 1957. Since then, the museum has gone through several operational changes and expansions. The latest structural renovations and exhibit upgrades occurred in 2008 and 2009. Currently, funding is being sought for the installation of a much needed fire suppression system to preserve and protect this historically significant building and the unique and irreplaceable collection housed within the exhibits.



Elder Mill

Location: Oconee County

Owner: Private

Value

Constructed near the turn of the 20th century, Elder Mill was a water-driven turbine grist and wheat mill that operated from 1904 until the 1940s and still contains its century-old milling equipment. The mill was operated by four generations of Elders.

The Mill was purchased by Dr. Charles Morgan in 1969. The milling equipment is still mostly in place as it was in 1941. Dr. Morgan with the help of John Cleveland has made many structural repairs, to the roof, siding, foundation and windows, but has kept the mill just as it was over a hundred years ago.

Vulnerability

The mill is located in the Rural Places Character Area, an area characterized by low-density residential, farms, forests, outdoor recreation, and other open-space activities. Allowable zoning in this character area include AR-3, AR-4, AR-5 or densities of 1 dwelling unit per 3, 4, or 5 acres respectively.

Although the mill is included in the county's Scenic Preservation Designation, an overlay district in the county's zoning ordinance, its long-term protection is uncertain due to its private ownership. While it has been cared for and restored by its current owner, long-term it is at-risk unless acquired by the government or some organization that will permanently protect the structure.



Elder Mill Covered Bridge

Location: Oconee County

Owner: Oconee County

Value

Constructed in 1897 by Nathaniel Richardson, this 99-foot-long bridge originally spanned Calls Creek on the Watkinsville-Athens Road. Due to new bridge construction on what would soon become Hwy 441 and its good condition, in 1924. The bridge was moved by wagon to its present location on Rose Creek by John Chandler of Watkinsville. The c.1900 grist mill ceased operation in 1941.

Constructed in the Town lattice design, the bridge's web of planks crisscrossing at 45- to 60-degree angles are fastened with wooden pegs, or trunnels, at each intersection. It is one of the few covered bridges in Georgia continuing to carry traffic without underlying steel beams. The Bridge was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1994.

Vulnerability

Although the bridge is listed in the National Register of Historic Places, and has a Scenic Preservation Designation, an overlay district in the county's zoning ordinance, neither listing offers any real, long-term protection.

The bridge is located in the Rural Places Character Area, an area characterized by low-density residential, farms, forests, outdoor recreation, and other open-space activities. Allowable zoning in this character area include AR-3, AR-4, AR-5 or densities of 1 dwelling unit per 3, 4, or 5 acres respectively. An important consideration in a rezoning to any of these districts is the condition or and level of service provided by road access.

Properties south of the bridge could accommodate a development density and related traffic that the bridge likely could not accommodate thus necessitating rerouting of Elder Mill Road to either bypass the bridge or widening the current road which would necessitate relocation or dismantling of the bridge.



Gaither Plantation

Location: Newton County

Acres: 150

Owner: Newton County

Value

The Gaither Plantation is located off of Davis Ford Road along the proposed Bear Creek Reservoir, and was acquired by Newton County 1996 for its proximity to this project and to preserve its historic nature. This site is one of the few remaining former 19th and 20th century cotton plantations in Northeast Georgia, and contains an historic farmhouse called the Gaither Plantation House (c.1855), a log smokehouse c.1830), a pole hay barn c. 1950), agricultural fields, and a number of other historic buildings relocated from elsewhere in Newton County to Gaither Plantation. In addition, two 19th century cemeteries, the Gaither Family Cemetery and the Gaither Slave Cemetery, are located here.

The Gaither Plantation Master Plan includes proposed gardens, natural areas and wildlife habitats, the preservation of an existing on- site pond that would open up into the Bear Creek Reservoir, and hard- and soft-surface trails throughout the property. Through master plan realization, Newton County hopes to preserve this history of this area, maintain and enhance the natural resources on the land, and develop and promote the recreational potential of the plantation. In total, construction costs for this plan are estimated to be just under \$3 million.

Vulnerability

Funding for maintenance and restoration is not sufficient; several important structures are in danger of deterioration.

In addition, the development of the proposed Bear Creek Reservoir has the potential to change this mostly rural area. Though the proposed

reservoir benefits from a required 150-foot natural buffer there is a risk of sedimentation and pollution as a result of more construction and increased impervious surface. It will be crucial for the Gaither Plantation to be developed in such a way as to contribute to the conservation of the natural resources on and adjacent to the site to avoid negative impacts on water quality.



Lyndon House

Location: Athens-Clarke County

Owner: Athens-Clarke County

Value

The Lyndon House Arts Center is dedicated cultural place-making and enriching the Athens area through art. With over 30,000 square feet, Lyndon House Arts Center offers rotating contemporary gallery exhibitions, an expansive art education program including classes, workshops and studio facilities for youth and adults as well as cultural festivals and community events. Attached to the Lyndon House Arts Center is the Ware-Lyndon house, built circa 1850. After undergoing many transformations in its almost 170 year history, the house was restored and placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1999. The two story home overlooks downtown Athens and is the only



surviving structure from the once-fashionable Lickskillet neighborhood. The history room showcases memorabilia of the resident families and of local and regional history. Visitors will also enjoy the recently constructed parterre garden, inspired by historic mid-1800s gardens of the region.

Vulnerability

The Ware-Lyndon House faces the unique challenges associated with historic properties. Regular use and the resulting maintenance of both the historic structure and the collections will be a long term funding challenge. Private funding and assistance continues to provide vital support for the house. Future challenges include the need to balance community use, preservation, promotion, funding, maintenance and ongoing restoration as the popularity of the Arts Center and Ware-Lyndon House continues to grow.

Madison-Morgan Cultural Center

Location: City of Madison, Morgan County

Owner: City of Madison

Value

The 1895 Romanesque Revival building is listed on the National Register as part of Madison's National Register historic district. It was built and served as one of the first "graded schools" in the southeast. When threatened with demolition, the community rallied to save it and created the Cultural Center in 1976, one of the first facilities of its kind in the region. Currently, the Cultural Center is used as a non-profit, multidisciplinary performing and visual arts facility. The Madison-Morgan Cultural Center is a key component to the historic district and tourism industry. It also serves as a performing and visual arts center for the region.

Vulnerability

With grant funding, the building is being rehabilitated and is currently not endangered.



Oxford College of Emory University

Location: Newton County

Acres: 145

Owner: Newton County

Value

Chartered December 19, 1836, Emory College, now known as Oxford College of Emory University, was established by the Georgia Methodists on 1,452 acres just north of the City of Covington. In conjunction with the school's creation, the intended collegiate community of Oxford, named in honor of the English university where

the founders of Methodism (John and Charles Wesley) were educated, was laid out with its main streets converging on the site of the central building of the college campus. Oxford College's first building was started in the spring of 1838, and on December 23, 1839, the Town of Oxford was incorporated.

The historical importance of Oxford College can be viewed from a number of perspectives. Its influence upon Methodism, its formative influence on prominent individuals whose lives impacted all of society, and its connection with significant historical events that have made a lasting impact on the state and nation are all points of reference for study of this institution's importance.



The college contains significant open space, providing active and passive recreation opportunities in abundance. Additionally, great interest in the college and the Town of Oxford has led to the area becoming a tourist destination, drawing benefits to the local and regional economies.

Vulnerability

Development pressures locally and regionally could threaten Oxford College. As the Town of Oxford, the City of Covington, and Newton County experience growth, communities should take care to minimize potential negative effects. Nearby population growth could conflict with preservation efforts by increasing traffic congestion and threatening aesthetic elements of both the historic campus and the College's more recently acquired natural areas.

Salem Methodist Church and Campground

Location: Newton County

Acres: 60

Owner: Salem Campground, Inc.

Value

Founded in 1928, Salem Campground is one of the oldest still-existing Protestant camp meeting sites in the nation. Except for during the years of the Civil War, camp meetings have been held every year at Salem since the campground's inception. Adjacent to Salem Campground is the property and site of the Salem United Methodist Church, established in 1824. The current sanctuary was constructed between 1865 and 1870, and replaced the log sanctuary that had been built near the Salem Campground spring. The nearby Town of Oxford and Oxford College of Emory University were formed less than a decade after the church and campground were instituted, and have strong ties to Methodism.

In 1854, the present open-sided tabernacle was constructed, allowing worship to move from an open-air setting to the more formal setting of the substantial and attractive timber-framed edifice. The tabernacle is on the Historic American Buildings Survey of the Library of Congress; the entire campground was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1998.

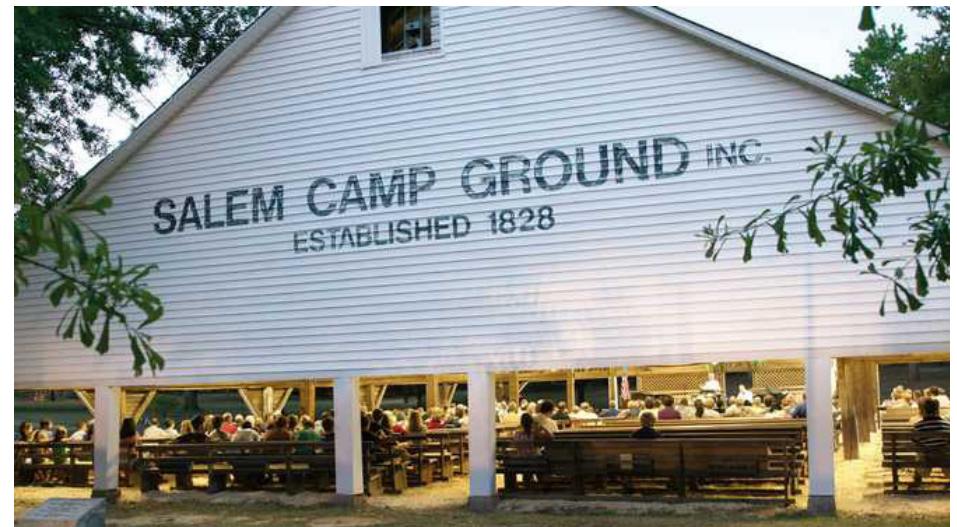
Undeveloped parts of the sixty-acre site could support the goals of local land conservation groups. Over half of the campground (approximately 35 acres) is currently a hardwood forest, which serves as protected wildlife habitat in a community that is rapidly losing such areas. Campground supervisors have no plans to disturb this area. Across Salem Road from the main campground is Salem Spring, a 30-gallon/minute source which is a part of the site. Further, the

campground will likely serve as part of a local trail/greenway system envisioned for the Salem Road Overlay, which the County will begin developing this year.

County reports also indicate that the wooden water tower - one of the last entirely wooden structures of its kind in North Georgia - that stores water from Salem Spring houses a family of endangered owls.

Vulnerability

The church and campground site is located on a rapidly developing corridor, surrounded by land that has been rezoned from agricultural and residential to commercial. Current and anticipated future traffic improvements threaten to encroach on the site; Newton County has referenced GDOT plans that appear to call for the widening of Salem Road to six lanes. The site has responsible custodians who recognize and intend to preserve the heritage of their sites as best they can; however, these caregivers are limited in their abilities to stave off potential off-site threats.



Shields-Ethridge Heritage Farm

Location: Jackson County

Acres: 154

Owner: Shields-Ethridge Farm Foundation

Value

The Shields-Ethridge Heritage Farm has been a working agricultural complex since 1799. The main house was built in 1866; its plantation plain facade was changed to represent the neoclassical style in 1914. Over sixty other structures are part of the historic district, including tenant houses, a two-room schoolhouse, barns and storage buildings, a cotton gin complex, a commissary, and a grist mill/hammer mill operation to serve the surrounding farm populations. Bachelors' Academy, located at the Shields-Ethridge Heritage Farm, is a restored two-room building that accommodated one teacher for seven grades.

The Shields-Ethridge Heritage Farm was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on June 25, 1992. The farm was also recognized as a Georgia Centennial Heritage Farm by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources in 1993. The Shields-Ethridge Heritage Farm Foundation, Inc., formed in 1994 to preserve the site's existing buildings.

The County views the farm complex as part of its historic tourism efforts, alongside those of the Chamber of Commerce and historic groups and societies. Additionally, it is used as an educational site for children and as a place for historic festivals, telling the story of Southern heritage and culture over time. The History Channel, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources' Historic Preservation Division, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation have all awarded funding to preserve and promote the farm site due to its historic and natural value.

The heritage farm complex is located 2.5 miles south of downtown Jefferson, the county seat and activity hub of Jackson County. The Farm Foundation holds 154 acres of the overall 500-plus acres.

Vulnerability

Jackson County cites regional and local growth as the main threat to the Shields-Ethridge Heritage Farm, but recognizes that the site could be protected via land use controls, particularly by designating it as an agricultural conservation area and by minimizing development impacts adjacent to it. Another critical threat to the sustainability of the complex as it exists now is the sensitive nature of such aged, historic structures, which, over time, require significant attention and maintenance.





The Morton Theatre

Location: Athens-Clarke County

Owner: Athens-Clarke County

Value

The Morton Theatre holds both local and national historical significance, as one of the first and the oldest surviving African-American built, owned, and operated vaudeville theatre in the United States, and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The National Trust for Historic Preservation also recognized the theatre when it named Athens as one of America's Dozen Distinctive Destinations in 2009. Built, owned and operated in 1910 by Monroe Bowers ("Pink") Morton, the theatre was also home to African-American owned businesses and professionals. Today, the Athens-Clarke Unified Government owns the building and provides staff to enable the theatre to function as a community performing arts space, while the non-profit Morton Theatre Corporation develops programming and maintains the financial operations.

Vulnerability

Regular use and the inevitable effect of time have caused declining facility conditions. Additional work is needed to maintain the important historical relevancy of the building, to make the facility functional for contemporary use, and to improve the efficiency of the building to save on energy consumption and costs. Future challenges include the need to balance preservation, promotion, funding, maintenance and ongoing restoration as the Theatre continues to grow in popularity.



Walton Mill Historical and Archaeological Site

Location: Morgan County

Owner: Private

Value

The manufacturing history of the Walton Mill Historical and Archeological site has been traced through deed documentation to William Whaley in 1809 and Jacob Gregg in 1810. The textile manufactories, powered by the Little River, encouraged the growth of a community, known alternately as Whatley's Mills or Antioch. Gregg's Antioch Factory is identified in early publications as being one of the earliest cotton mills in the southeast. By the 1850's, Walton Mill Plantation was nearly 4,500 acres and included a substantial slave community, an area known locally as Hamburg. The 71.25 acre tract, known as the Walton Mill Tract, remains intact and was purchased by William Killmer in 2001. The site contains the 1940 mill foundations, the former site of the PW Walton homestead, the truss bridge and roadbed (which served as a main road between Madison and Monticello), foundation ruins on the eastern bank, a tenant house, and both the Walton family cemetery and the slave cemetery. To the east of the Walton



Mill Tract is land owned by Wayne Vason, a direct descendant of PW Walton, which contains the partially standing remains of two homes, speculatively named the Overseer's House and the Cotton Foreman's House, and a collection of ruins identified as houses and a large barn or warehouse.

Vulnerability

Mr. Killmer's Walton Mill Tract is densely forested in most places and is actively managed for wildlife. The owner's home is located near the site of the former homestead. Mr. Killmer has taken efforts to prevent vegetation from claiming the known ruins on his property, although there is speculation that more ruins exist and are hidden by the forest. He has patched the roof of the tenant house in an attempt to prevent further deterioration. Mr. Vason's property is permanently protected by a conservation easement, but the historic resources are not currently protected from vegetation.

The known standing resources, such as the Tenant's House, Overseer's House and Cotton Foreman's House, are in need of stabilization. Continued efforts are necessary to keep vegetation from obscuring the foundation ruins. A management plan is needed to detail a potential schedule of research, documentation and stabilization, and should include methods of exposing the public to the site in ways that protect both the ruins and preserve the land conservation efforts of the property owners.

Oconee Hill Cemetery

Location: Athens-Clarke County

Owner: ????

Value

An historic but still active cemetery of national significance, Oconee Hill Cemetery is an outstanding example of the fashionable natural landscape cemetery movement that began early in the nineteenth century in Europe. Hallmarks of this kind of cemetery are wooded, grassy, and rolling terrain with flowing water, meandering drives, scenic vistas, and



the potential for an arboretum or botanical garden. Established by the City of Athens in 1855, with the first lot sales and burials following in 1856, Oconee Hill was among the first—and remains one of the finest—such burial grounds in the South. Oconee Hill Cemetery is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Like many historic cemeteries,

Oconee Hill attracts visitors from throughout the area, the state, and the nation. They come not only to see what one of the official site visitors reviewing and approving the cemetery's National Register of Historic Places designation called "the most beautiful historic cemetery in Georgia" but also to visit the graves of the many people of local, state, and national stature interred in Oconee Hill.

Vulnerability

Unfortunately, the very features that make Oconee Hill a uniquely appealing place also make for ongoing maintenance issues and significant expense. The act of the General Assembly of Georgia which established the responsibilities of Oconee Hill's Board of trustees in 1860 was amended in 1915 to create a perpetual care trust fund, but income from the trust fund is simply inadequate to maintain this beautiful, historic cemetery.

Nolan Crossroads

Location: Morgan County

Owner: Private

Value

Nolan Crossroads is located at the intersection of Highway 83 and Nolan Store Road in Morgan County. The crossroads includes a house, commissary, and mule barn at the intersection corners, each of which is owned separately. All of the structures were built between 1902 and 1905 by wealthy landowner James Alonzo Nolan. The crossroads is representative of the sharecropping era and contains no intrusions. While the property has experienced some loss of structures, Nolan Crossroads is a pristine example that is significant in terms of its agricultural and cultural history, as well as its architecture. It is listed amongst the top ten of Georgia's most photographed places.

Vulnerability

While the house was listed on the National Register in 2010, it is currently vacant and in danger of deterioration, either by neglect or trespassers. The commissary and barn are stable but in need of repair. To better manage the crossroads, ownership, either publically or privately, by one entity would help to more holistically encourage preservation, visitation, education, and recreation.



Malcom Crossroads

Location: Morgan County

Owner: Private

Value

The Malcom Family developed the crossroads between 1902 and 1906. The house, commissary, and barn all remain at the crossroads. The Malcom Family farmed a significant amount of land in the northern part of Morgan County. The Family's sharecropping operations was significant regionally, employing many people, producing tons of cotton, and keeping cotton gins and seed oil mills in business. Malcom Crossroads is an excellent example of the sharecropping era period in history. Plans for the future include interpretation of the site to educate the public about sharecropping, historic preservation, and planning and protection for cultural resources.

Vulnerability

A couple of modern intrusions exist (a metal barn and a 1980s barn) on the property, but otherwise the crossroads remains intact. The house located at Malcom Crossroads has been recently rehabilitated and is in the process of being listed on the National Register. The commissary building is currently threatened and in need of repair. The property is listed on the Morgan County Greenprint plan as a site that the County and surrounding towns would like to see preserved.



NATURAL AND RECREATIONAL RESOURCES



Alcovy River Greenway

Location: Walton and Newton Counties (other: Gwinnett County)

Length: 80 miles (55 miles in the Northeast GA region)

Value

The Alcovy River headwaters are located in Gwinnett County, north of Lawrenceville. The river flows into Northeast Georgia to converge with the South River at Lake Jackson in Jasper County.

The floodplain surrounding the Alcovy River is comprised of hardwood swamps which serve as habitat for diverse plant and animal species. Because the Georgia coast was located just south of Macon millions of years ago, many of the species that exist today in the Alcovy River is swamps are usually found in coastal plain areas. One of these species is the tupelo gum tree, and the confluence of the Alcovy River with Cornish Creek is the northernmost pure stand of tupelo gum in the state.

The Alcovy River is a drinking water source for both Walton and Newton counties, and it will be pumped to help feed the proposed Bear Creek Reservoir. The surrounding floodplain and wetlands help to filter stormwater and prevent pollutants from entering into the water supply. The river and floodplain provide a recreational resource to the surrounding area, and serve as a popular destination for sportsmen, hikers, and campers. Because of its unique ecological characteristics, the Alcovy River and surrounding floodplain are also valued as an educational resource and research site.

Vulnerability

As part of the 1999 Alcovy River Watershed Protection Plan, a computer model was run to determine the greatest threats to water quality of the Alcovy River. Of those run through the model, sediment posed the



greatest threat to this stream's health. For the year 2020, sediment was projected to increase by over 150% in some areas as a result of urban and suburban development. In the past, the Alcovy experienced increased sedimentation as a result of intense row-crop agriculture.

In addition to sedimentation, portions of the Alcovy River used for drinking and fishing have been listed in the "Not Supporting Designated Use" category of the 303(d) (of the Clean Water Act) list of waters in February 2010 due to the presence of fecal coliform bacteria as a result of non-point source pollution.

The Alcovy River is protected by a 100-foot natural, vegetative buffer in both Newton and Walton counties. However, this does not always cover the entire floodplain, increasing the chances for pollutants to enter this vital source of drinking water with increased residential, commercial, and industrial development in previous agricultural areas.

Apalachee River

**Location: Barrow, Greene, Morgan, Oconee, and Walton Counties
(other: Gwinnett County)**

Length: 68 Miles

Value

The Apalachee River headwaters are located in Gwinnett County, northwest of Dacula, and it flows into Northeast Georgia forming portions of five county borders to culminate at Lake Oconee.

The Apalachee River provides drinking water to Morgan County and the City of Madison, and may be a future drinking water source for Oconee County. In addition, the Apalachee serves as a recreation resource for campers, paddlers, and sportsmen. Two major recreation destinations, Hard Labor Creek State Park and Fort Yargo State Park, are situated on the Apalachee River in Morgan County and Barrow County, respectively. Citizens in Oconee County have come together with the Athens Land Trust to conceptualize the Apalachee River Walk, a proposed 5.5 mile greenway with one trailhead located at the county's Heritage Park, for the purpose of conservation and recreational use. The many intact shoals of various sizes along the corridor serve as important fish habitats.

Vulnerability

Barrow, Morgan, and Walton counties have established a 100-foot natural vegetative buffer along the Apalachee River. The Future Development Map for Barrow County identifies two "emerging suburban" neighborhoods and one industrial area immediately adjacent to the river. These land uses, though separated from the river by a 100-foot buffer, may have negative impacts on water quality due to increased sedimentation from construction and/or runoff. In Walton County, the Apalachee is also covered by the Greenspace Subdivision Overlay District, requiring the preservation of 25% of the gross acreage

of a development as greenspace deeded to the county. Oconee County has established a 50-foot conservation buffer along the Apalachee and other perennial streams, increasing in areas where the floodplain extends beyond this zone. In addition, the recently- completed Oconee County Greenways Plan identifies the Apalachee corridor as a potential active greenway and blueway, or paddling trail. Greene County has not established any additional protections for the Apalachee River aside from the required statewide stream buffer of 25 feet, though the Apalachee empties into Lake Oconee near U.S. 278, near the City of Madison's (Morgan County) water intake. For this reason, the Greene County portion of the Apalachee River is the most vulnerable. The addition of this watershed to the county's water supply watershed ordinance would create a 100-foot buffer and prohibit impervious surface and septic tanks within 150 feet of the stream bank, protecting the Apalachee from potentially negative impacts of spillover development from the growing Lake Oconee residential and commercial areas.

The Apalachee River was identified in February 2010 on the Section 303(d) (of the Clean Water Act) list of waters as "Not Supporting [its] Designated Use" for the segment from Williamson Creek in Barrow County to Lake Oconee in Greene County, spanning all five Northeast Georgia counties. The designated use in this instance is fishing, and the violation was cited due to the presence of fecal coliform bacteria as a result of non-point source pollution.

Another potential threat to the Apalachee is the development of the proposed Hard Labor Creek Regional Reservoir, as plans indicate that the Apalachee would be pumped to fill it. These withdrawals would likely have negative consequences for both water quantity and quality.

The Athens Line

Location: Athens-Clarke, Morgan, and Oconee Counties

Length: 32 mile corridor

Value

“The Athens Line” represents the portion of the Macon-to-Athens rail line that first went into full service in December 1888. The line between the City of Madison and the Center community (Jackson County) is now owned by Norfolk Southern and leased by Athens Line, LLC, a short-line operator. The rail bed is inactive from Madison to Bishop.

The depot in Farmington (unincorporated, Oconee County) is the only intact original structure of its type remaining on the line. The historic rail bed has the potential to become a significant greenspace corridor connecting communities across Morgan County, Oconee County, and Athens-Clarke County. This is particularly true in the short-term for the inactive section, which could provide a multi-use path and linear park/upland greenway (rails-to-trails) for residents and visitors in Northeast Georgia. The remaining active section could be maintained by rail transport while having a parallel multi-use path (rails-with-trails). The benefits of these types of facilities include economic development, habitat preservation, increased recreation and exercise opportunities, and, in areas where transportation cycling or walking are feasible, improvements in air quality. The line is located directly across US 441 from Oconee County’s 364-acre Heritage Park, which features trails, woodlands, and streams, as well as the University of Georgia’s Whitehall Forest.

In addition to the inherent environmental and recreational value, such an endeavor would facilitate the preservation of significant historical and cultural features such as the Farmington depot, historic warehouses in Bishop, two river trestles (Apalachee and Oconee rivers), and the general

agricultural and transportation history of the region. For example, the brick shells of buildings that once processed cotton for oil are still evident in Farmington along the rail line.

Vulnerability

Since no portion of the Athens Line is officially abandoned, the corridor remains fully intact. However, Norfolk Southern was granted approval to abandon the inactive segment of the line in 1987 but has not initiated the formal process to date. Abandonment could mean disintegration of the corridor in certain parts, depending on the proceedings of various different actors, including state and local governments, interested private-sector parties, and adjacent landowners; breaking up the corridor could make the prospects of rails-to-trails conversion much more difficult. On the other hand, swift action either by local or state government to acquire the corridor directly from the railroad could preserve its historic nature by minimizing threats to its integrity while likely facilitating an easier trail-building process than would occur if the line were first disassembled and ownership became fragmented.





Bear Creek Reservoir

Location: Newton County

Value

Bear Creek Reservoir is a proposed drinking water reservoir that, once established, will provide drinking water for residents of Newton and Jasper County. (A reservoir with the same name also exists in Jackson County.) A small stream, Bear Creek, will feed the proposed reservoir and will be supplemented by pumping from the nearby Alcovy River. The historic Gaither Plantation, another designated Regionally Important Resource in Northeast Georgia, is located along the edge of the proposed reservoir and will remain intact during and after development. In addition, public walking trails connecting to trail systems in neighboring jurisdictions, as well as picnic areas, are planned for the vicinity.

Vulnerability

Recreational activities and the cost of water treatment in Bear Creek have been negatively affected by increased development in the Alcovy River watershed. Though predominantly rural at present, the establishment of the Bear Creek Reservoir could dramatically change the surrounding area's landscape; some suburban residential developments have already been constructed in this vicinity. Even with the required 150-foot natural vegetative buffer surrounding the proposed drinking water source, the Bear Creek Reservoir will be at risk of sedimentation and pollution as a result of more construction and increased impervious surface, and state and federal regulations do not provide adequate protection. Newton County has discouraged the development of more residential subdivisions in this area for these reasons; the development of programs encouraging desired development patterns such as agricultural and conservation uses will strengthen this strategy.



Beech Haven

Location: Athens-Clarke County

Acres: Approximately 100

Owner: Athens-Clarke County

Value

Athens-Clarke County (ACC) is in the process of acquiring over 100 acres of “Beech Haven”, the Rowland family’s historic rustic retreat along the Middle Oconee River. Purchased by the family in 1909, Beech Haven is surrounded by suburban and commercial development, but remains a secluded forested sanctuary, essentially unchanged since the 1930’s. The 1911 Summer House, remnant garden beds and ponds, and Asian-

inspired stonework reflect the Arts and Crafts design movement popular in the early 1900’s. Beech Haven is also an important focal point on the county’s greenway network. The site has a long history as an important social and religious gathering place in Athens and, with new public ownership, will once again be a cultural and recreational hub for the community and region.



Vulnerability

Beech Haven is not currently open to the public because land acquisition is underway and management capacity is limited. The Summer House and Camelback Bridge have been stabilized and most of the decorative stone features are in good condition. Segments of walking and horse trails are still evident in the forested uplands and along the creeks and some may be redeveloped. Beech Haven has been threatened in the past by neglect and potential inappropriate development, but that risk has been alleviated by public ownership. Much of the site has been heavily invaded by Chinese wisteria, Asian bamboo, and other exotic species. In 2015 the county secured outside funding and assistance from the Southeast Conservation Corps to initiate invasive plant control measures. Control efforts will be carried out annually to conserve mature forest stands and the historic landscape.

Bert Adams Boy Scout Reservation

Location: Newton County

Acres: 1,250

Owner/Operator: Atlanta Area Council, Boy Scouts of America

Value

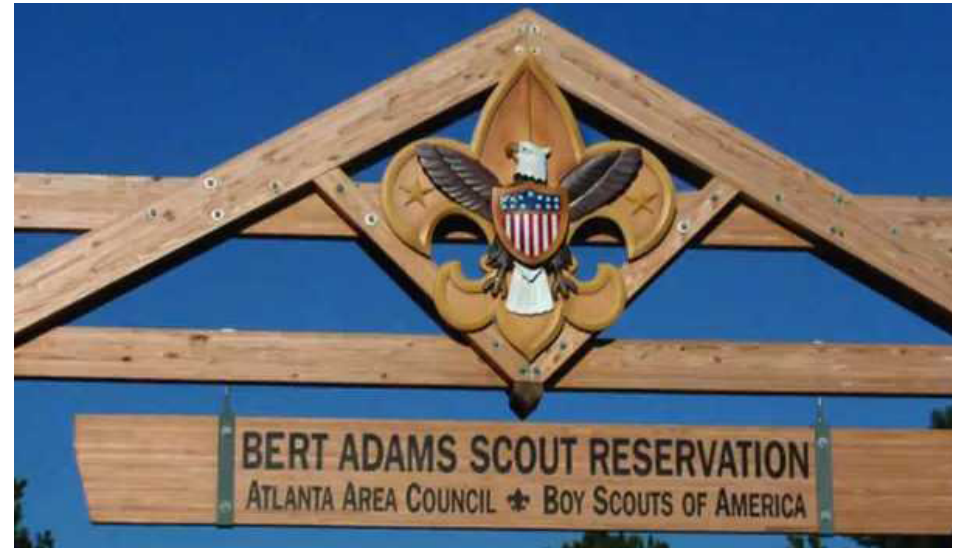
Located near Covington, the Bert Adams Boy Scout Reservation is a 1,250 acre site adjacent to the Yellow River that provides for long-term resident and weekend camping and training events. Thousands of Scouts come to Bert Adams each year to participate in Boy Scout, Webelos and JROTC Summer Camps, Order of the Arrow Events, Venturing and Explorer Outings, Cub Family Camping, Cub World Events, District Camporees, Cub Pack Picnics, ScoutReach Outings, Wood Badge Training, Junior Leader Training, and many other Scouting events. Bert Adams Scout Reservation includes Camp Gorman, Camp Emerson, Cub World and the redeveloped Camp Jamison.

Owned by the Atlanta Area Council of the Boy Scouts of America, it is one of only four Scout camps in the Atlanta area and the only such Scout camp in the northeast Georgia region.

Bert Adams is a unique facility that, in conjunction with the nearby FFA Camp, establishes the area and region as a center for camping, recreation and training opportunities for children. Additionally, the site provides water quality and quantity benefits.

Vulnerability

The Camp is in a rural area in southwest Newton County. It's rural location is deemed by its users as essential for camping and training functions. Long-term, the area is designation for Rural Residential land use. Presently, the area is beginning this transition with the development of two large subdivisions with one-acre zoning density on the Camp's



western property line. Presently zoned Agricultural, Little Springs Farm, a 1,977 acre farm immediately adjacent to the Camp's north property line, could be considered for similar one-acre density if sold for non-farm use.

The Newton County Comprehensive Plan Community Agenda identifies the county's current traffic congestion problems. As the southwest portion of Newton County develops, it is reasonable that area roads could be widened to alleviate congestion. However, road widening has the effect of promoting more development which would further jeopardize the Camp's rural setting.

Charlie Elliott Wildlife Center

Location: City of Mansfield, Jasper County

Acres: 6,400

Manager: Georgia Department of Natural Resources

Value

Charlie Elliott Wildlife Center is a 6,400 acre wooded land with 22 ponds, managed by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. Its vast acreage makes it home to several rare species of wildlife and plants. Charlie Elliott Wildlife Center also offers lodging with 28 hotel-style guest rooms, as well as a banquet hall and several conference rooms. The facility is utilized for various events such as: outdoor education programs for adults & children, day camps, recreation activities such as bird watching and fishing, teacher workshops and corporate meetings. The Charlie Elliott Wildlife Center is a valuable asset to the community and easily accessible from Atlanta, Athens and Macon.



Factory Shoals County Park

Location: Newton County

Acres: 400 (approximately)

Owner: Newton County

Value

Located approximately 10 miles south of the City of Covington, Factory Shoals County Park is situated on the Alcovy River, and boasts granite shoals and a 2-mile stretch of preserved forested river corridor. This park offers picnic areas, primitive campsites (with on-site restroom and shower facilities), and opportunities for a variety of recreational activities from kayaking and canoeing to hiking and fishing. Newton County acquired the property containing Factory Shoals from Georgia Power in 1982, and it was operating as a park by the end of the 1980s.

In addition to providing recreational amenities, Factory Shoals County Park is a historic resource for the local and regional community. The shoals served as a power source for cotton and grist mills dating back to the 19th century. Ruins of these factory buildings and supporting structures are visible today on both river banks as remnants of industrial activity in this area. Mills once operated at Factory Shoals include Newton Factory, White's Factory, and Jones' Mill.

Two cemeteries exist on the property; one on the west bank of the river was closely associated with a nearby church that burned in the early 1900s and contains numerous marked and unmarked graves. Another cemetery with no marked graves is located east of the river, and was once surrounded by a stone wall that has nearly collapsed; the remaining standing portions are roughly 4' in height. It is assumed that a prior logging operation inflicted the most damage to this area.

An aboriginal site is located on a prominent ridge overlooking the Alcovy River. This site has been classified as characteristic of the Middle

Archaic period (5500 to 2500 B.C.) due to the particular artifacts found. Archaeologists have opined that the site was likely used intermittently as a camp from which local food resources were exploited, as was common with hunting and gathering patterns.

Vulnerability

Even under County ownership, there remain a handful of threats to the health of the park. Water quality of the Alcovy River is a concern for recreation users. The recent construction of the Alcovy High School nearby has led to an increase in new residential subdivisions; in addition, the future widening of Jackson Highway is likely to increase growth pressures in this still-rural community.

Currently, the several worn foot paths leading to the water's edge present erosion concerns and safety hazards for park visitors. As population in Newton County increases, as projected, due to its proximity to the metropolitan Atlanta region, the increase in the number of visitors will necessitate path improvement of an appropriate scale. Plans exist for establishing a trail system connecting the new high school with the park and other recreational amenities as well as surrounding residential areas.

The primary threat to the archaeological resources at Factory Shoals is vandalism, followed by unauthorized digging and neglect.

Firefly Trail

Location: Athens-Clarke, Greene, and Oglethorpe Counties & Arnoldsville, Crawford, Maxeys, Winterville, Woodville, and Union Point
Length: 39 mile corridor

Value

The proposed Firefly Trail protects and reuses a 38-mile historic rail corridor from Union Point to downtown Athens, converting it into a path for walking and bicycling. The Trail features pastoral agricultural lands, quaint small towns, scenic rural highways, historical railroad structures, park space, and a bus transfer center that provides connections to nearly all of Athens and the University of Georgia.

The route, once referred to as the “Athens Branch,” was completed in 1841 as part of the Georgia Railroad and abandoned in 1984 by what is now CSX Transportation, Inc. The Firefly was the name locals gave to the locomotive that operated on this line; it was named for the sparks that flew from its wood-burning engine. Only three of the original depots remain of the original line. In addition to its potential as a recreation resource, the Trail could provide economic opportunities for the small communities along the corridor.

Vulnerability

Private ownership and resultant encumbrances threaten the integrity of the original rail bed in addition to the potential

increased cost of future trail property acquisition.

Development pressures in Athens-Clarke County could threaten the rail bed though, since most of the adjacent development is industrial, the threat is perceived as low. The remainder of the rail bed is in predominantly agricultural land use.



Georgia FFA-FCCLA Center

Location: Newton County

Acres: 452

Owner: State of Georgia

Value

Located in south-central Newton county, the FFA-FCCLA Center hosts more than 20,000 campers and serves approximately 100,000 meals annually. From its formation in 1929, the Georgia Future Farmers of America Association had envisioned creating a wholesome summer recreational camp for boys. The vision began to materialize in 1937 on a 150-acre hillside overlooking the headwaters of Lake Jackson on the Alcovy River. After the creation of the FHA (Future Homemakers of America, now FCCLA, Future Career and Community Leaders of America), the camp's forward-thinking leaders expanded the programs



to become co-educational. Now encompassing approximately 450 acres owned by the State of Georgia, the camp has grown into a nationally-recognized educational center, meeting and exceeding the original vision of its founders.

Initial site work and building began in 1937, conducted by student members of the National Youth Association who utilized granite quarried on the property to construct several of the main buildings. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt toured the site in 1938, and was able to secure funds for building and infirmary. The value placed on the camp may be recognized by the concerted effort and cooperation of individuals, corporations, and local and state governments in funding the growth and improvement projects that have taken place over many decades.

The Georgia FFA-FCCLA Center is located contiguous to two other designated Regionally Important Resources: Factory Shoals County Park and the Alcovy River Greenway. Together, the FFA-FCCLA Center and Factor Shoals County Park represent 750 acres of preservation space directly adjacent to the Alcovy River; protecting these two sites will bolster the Alcovy River Greenway's water quality efforts.

Vulnerability

Although no imminent threats to the site are known to exist, vulnerabilities could arise from the urbanization of Newton County and development in nearby Jasper County (directly across Jackson Lake/the Alcovy River), and from pollution upstream on the Alcovy River. Newton County land in the vicinity of the Center is zoned in a mix of agricultural and low-density residential; future zoning changes to more intensive uses could compromise the site's natural and pastoral features. Along Jasper County's side of the lake/river across from the Center, zoning is virtually all residential, with existing development at densities among the highest in the county; this could lead to water quality concerns from runoff as well as aesthetic impacts to the less developed Center.

Georgia Wildlife Federation/Alcovy Conservation Center

Location: Newton County

Acres: 115

Owner: Georgia Wildlife Federation

Value

The Georgia Wildlife Federation's beginning can be traced back to late 1935, when U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt called for the first North American Wildlife Conference to be held the following year. In late 1936, the first meeting of the Georgia Wildlife Federation (GWF) was held in Macon. Shortly thereafter, the GWF pushed the State to hire professional wildlife biologists for the purpose of managing the many wildlife resources in Georgia. In the 1960s, the GWF led the fight to stop the dredging and channelization of the Alcovy River by the Soil Conservation Service. In subsequent years, numerous other initiatives and campaigns have been carried out by this organization throughout the State for the purpose of "encouraging the intelligent management of the life sustaining resources of the earth...and promot[ing] and encourag[ing] the knowledge and appreciation of these resources." (Georgia Wildlife Federation Mission Statement, 1936)

The Alcovy Conservation Center, located in Covington, GA on the Alcovy River, is the headquarters of the Georgia Wildlife Federation. In addition, the location serves as a community center for environmental education, sportsman's issues, and natural resource

conservation. The site itself contains woodland, wetland, and meadow habitats and demonstration gardens for both appreciation and study. A famed tupelo gum river swamp, along the Alcovy River, is accessible via trails on the property.



Vulnerability

This site is threatened by imminent industrial development on three adjacent properties that are zoned for heavy industrial use. Pollution of the Alcovy River through point and non-point sources, either from future industrial developments or upstream locations along the riparian corridor, are also a concern for the health and vitality of the various species and habitats on the property. As of the February 2010, the segment of the Alcovy River from its headwaters in Gwinnett County through Walton County and into Newton County at Big Flat Creek was included on the Section 303(d) (of the Clean Water Act) list of waters as Not Supporting [its] Designated Use (fishing and drinking water) due to the presence of fecal coliform from non-point sources. An assessment is currently pending for the segment from Big Flat Creek to Cornish Creek, situated entirely in Newton County.

Hard Labor Creek State Park

Location: Morgan County

Acres: Approximately 6,000

Owner: State of Georgia

Value

Hard Labor Creek State Park is one of ten state parks in Georgia built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and contains the only extant CCC camp, Camp SP-8. Deeded to the State in 1946, the park continues to be used for public recreation, welcoming close to 400,000 visitors per year. Hard Labor Creek State Park was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on April 24, 2013 as an excellent example of a CCC built state park in Georgia.



Vulnerability

Hard Labor Creek State Park is a highly used public resource with recreation trails, an equestrian park and a golf course. The park's two campgrounds, Camp Rutledge and Camp Daniel Morgan, are both in need of repair and were listed in poor condition in the Hard Labor Creek State Park Business & Management Plan, which was finalized in February 2013. The plan noted repairs to both campgrounds and the CCC camp were high priorities. Additionally, the plan emphasized the need to repair the historic structures in the park, as well as the instigation of a preventative maintenance schedule for each facility. The Georgia Department of Natural Resources submitted plans for extensive campground renovation, which were approved in December 2015.

Hurricane Shoals Park

Location: Jackson County

Acres: 81 acres

Owner: Jackson County

Value

Located approximately six miles northeast of the City of Jefferson and approximately four and a half miles northwest of the City of Commerce, Hurricane Shoals Park is situated on the North Oconee River.

Believed to have been occupied at various points in early history by Creek and Cherokee tribes, this park officially opened in Jackson County in 1978 and subsequently began to grow in size through land purchases until 1994. The park contains disc golf and miniature golf facilities, the Pat Bell Conference Center, a horseback riding arena, Heritage Village (where historic structures from throughout Jackson County have been relocated to save them from destruction), and a covered bridge that recently underwent a restoration process after having burned in the

1970s. In addition, a working grist mill is located on site, which grinds corn meal for the annual Art in the Park Festival. This grist mill was built in the 1980s as a tribute to the former cotton gin and grist mill that operated at Hurricane Shoals from 1870 until the mid-1920s. Ruins of the original grist mill can still be seen in the western side of the park.

Vulnerability

The North Oconee River is protected by a 100-foot natural vegetative greenway along both sides, per the Jackson County Code of Ordinances. While this provides some protection from development along the river, the park is adjacent to Interstate 85 to the south. This corridor has the potential to negatively impact the water quality of the North Oconee with road runoff pollution. In addition, proximity to I- 85 is attractive to developers of industrial and manufacturing sites, and while the land surrounding Hurricane Shoals Park is currently zoned Agricultural Rural Farm District, the area may feel development pressures in the future.





Memorial Park/Bear Hollow Wildlife Trail & Zoo

Location: Athens-Clarke County

Owner: Athens-Clarke County

Value

Created in the late 1940s when a private collection of wild animals was donated to the city, the then-named Athens Zoo became a popular attraction for families throughout the area. The Bear Hollow zoo is a regionally significant wildlife education center focusing on conservation and native wildlife issues. The zoo houses over 40 species of wildlife, including 3 threatened or unique species as well as popular animals such as black bear, deer, and river otter. Each year over 70,000 people visit or participate in programs where they gain a greater understanding of and appreciation for conservation and biodiversity. With visitors regularly coming to the zoo from throughout Northeast Georgia and a significant number from elsewhere in the state and beyond, the zoo has a significant regional impact.

Vulnerability

Facilities at Bear Hollow Zoo are rapidly becoming outdated. Infrastructure is beyond its expected lifecycle and will, in the foreseeable future, be inadequate to meet animal care needs. If the current level of support is maintained, the zoo will not be able to keep pace with changes in animal husbandry standards and best practices for animal care or with visitor expectations for a quality experience. While deeply beloved, without substantial community investment in infrastructure and habitats in the future, the zoo's mission could be compromised.



Oconee River Greenway System

Location: Athens-Clarke County
Owner: Athens-Clarke County

Value

The Oconee Rivers Greenway Corridors are an important feature of Athens-Clarke County and the surrounding area. These corridors provide vital corridors for linking wildlife with nodes of habitat spread throughout Athens-Clarke County. Other portions of the Greenway corridor are currently or will at some point in the future host a multi-use path system that supports recreational use as well as transportation choices for those who would like to get out of their car and enjoy a

different means of travel. Water Trails along both the North and Middle Oconee Rivers will provide valuable recreation opportunities that will seamlessly flow into the water trail systems along these rivers in surrounding counties. This green infrastructure network will connect parks, schools, neighborhoods, commercial centers, cultural resources and the University of Georgia. As the corridors touch neighboring counties, efforts will be made to continue the network so that it becomes a truly regional system.



Vulnerability

The Greenway Corridors are prone to habitat fragmentation due to limited protections for the areas identified in current Greenway Maps. As development pressures increase, the opportunity for robust, healthy corridors is greatly reduced as the system becomes increasingly limited to a series of 30' wide easements through heavily developed properties. This same pressure also applies to large areas of undeveloped land that would serve as habitat nodes for connection via the Greenway corridor. These large parcels of land are increasingly being subdivided and/or developed with little protection provided for the sensitive habitats that may be present on that property.

Sandy Creek Nature Center

Location: Athens-Clarke County

Acres: 225

Owner: Athens-Clarke County

Value

The Sandy Creek Nature Center is 225 acre natural area located 1.5 miles from the center of downtown Athens. The site includes more than 4 miles of trails, extensive wetlands and flood plain resources (78% of the site), cultural and historic resources, classrooms, interactive exhibits that include live animals, a planetarium-style Sky Center, and more than 4,000 gallons of fresh and salt water aquaria. The site contains several High Priority Habitats as identified by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources as well as habitats that meet objectives delineated in the Georgia Forestry Commission's Statewide Forest Resources Strategy 2015.

Historic and cultural resources include a Log House (circa 1815), the Allen House (a frame house built circa 1917), the ruins of a brick factory (in operation circa late 1800's to 1920), and remnants of early 1900s farming and livestock activities. Sandy Creek Nature Center serves as a major entrance to the Sandy Creek Greenway and its 5.1 mile Cook's Trail/Christmas Fern Loop. The Center is also the northern-most terminus of the North Oconee River Greenway, a 3.1 mile multi-use path that connects the Nature Center to multiple parks and the University of Georgia campus.

Vulnerability

Trails are used for educational and recreational purposes and are subject to significant degradation from overuse. There are two US Forest Service long term research areas (5 acres each), a 38 acre Managed Forest

Project demonstration area, and a Piedmont Prairie restoration area. Historic and cultural resource features would benefit from additional protection and further interpretive planning and development. A formal archeological investigation may provide additional historic and cultural context for the site. Although eradication efforts have been made, more than 70% of the understory and ground cover consists of dense populations of invasive plants. Invasive species alter native forests and disrupt natural system functions, with a significant impact on High Priority Habitats and the site's biodiversity.



Sandy Creek Park

Location: Athens-Clarke County

Acres: 782

Owner: Athens-Clarke County

Value

Sandy Creek Park is Athens-Clarke County's largest park. It includes Lake Chapman, a 264 acre reservoir. At the north end of the lake, seasonally flooded wetlands provide excellent habitat for waterfowl and amphibians. Lake Chapman supplies the only public beach for the region. Visitors can also rent canoes, kayaks, and paddle boards for advanced water based recreation opportunities. The park has over 8 miles of hiking trails, a horse trail, a disc golf course, dog parks, picnic shelters, two cemeteries and a connection to the Greenway trail network. In addition, Lake Chapman is the only water rescue training site available for fire department staff. Sandy Creek Park sees over 100,000 visitors annually and hosts a thriving day camp that serves children from Athens-Clarke and surrounding counties. The Park hosts a variety of special events including 5k races, festivals, and one of the largest triathlons in the region.

Vulnerability

The facilities for the park were built in the late 1970's and have received limited upgrades since their construction. Dated buildings, site configuration and amenities are beginning to have an impact on the park. Lake Chapman is the core resource and attraction of Sandy Creek Park. The lake is continually fed from Sandy Creek and natural runoff from surrounding land and managing the accompanying sediment is critical to the long-term management of this water resource. The sediment buildup has reduced Lake Chapman's capacity for floodwater storage as well as contributing to unhealthy fish habitat and water quality issues

that would impact Athens' drinking water reserve. The forested areas of Sandy Creek Park have received limited management over the years. The Master Plan for Sandy Creek Park dates back to the late 1970's and needs to be updated to reflect current and future needs for park patrons. Lake Chapman would benefit from a cohesive management plan that would allow for regular dredging and maintenance of the lake that would increase water quality and habitat quality.



Tallassee Tract

Location: Athens-Clarke County

Acres: 310

Owner: Athens-Clarke County

Value

The Tallassee Tract is a 310-acre natural area recently purchased by Athens-Clarke County on the Middle Oconee River about 6.5 miles from downtown Athens. Serving as the northwestern anchor of the Oconee Rivers Greenway, the acreage includes seven of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) "High Priority Habitats" that are rapidly disappearing in the southeast. Tallassee also includes an extensive American holly forest and a bottomland forest with an extensive understory of native giant river cane – both rare communities in the region. Of particular ecological importance are the large unfragmented habitats that maintain stable, diverse plant and animal populations. Springs and streams with high water quality on the property contribute to the Middle Oconee, a primary source of drinking water for the county. Additionally, there is evidence of Native American presence with artifacts dated at 8,000-10,000 years, as well as historic archeological resources.

Vulnerability

The Athens-Clarke County government (ACC) is currently developing a master plan for Tallassee to address future public access and use, limited development, and ecological management of the area. The Oconee River Land Trust (ORLT) holds a conservation easement on the property that guides planning and management. The easement emphasizes resource protection and compatible nature-oriented recreation and education. Prior to the 2012 purchase of the property by ACC, Tallassee was privately owned. The land was historically used for farming, but over last 25 years the tract was managed as a hunting preserve. Aerial photography going back to 1937 indicates that many of the forest stands on the steeper slopes of the property are more than 80 years old. ACC is in the process of mapping such stands as "legacy forests" to encourage their protection. Invasive plants are limited on the tract, especially the floodplain canebrakes where Chinese privet is notably sparse.



Thompson Mills Forest Arboretum

Location: Jackson County

Acres: 337

Owner: The University of Georgia

Value

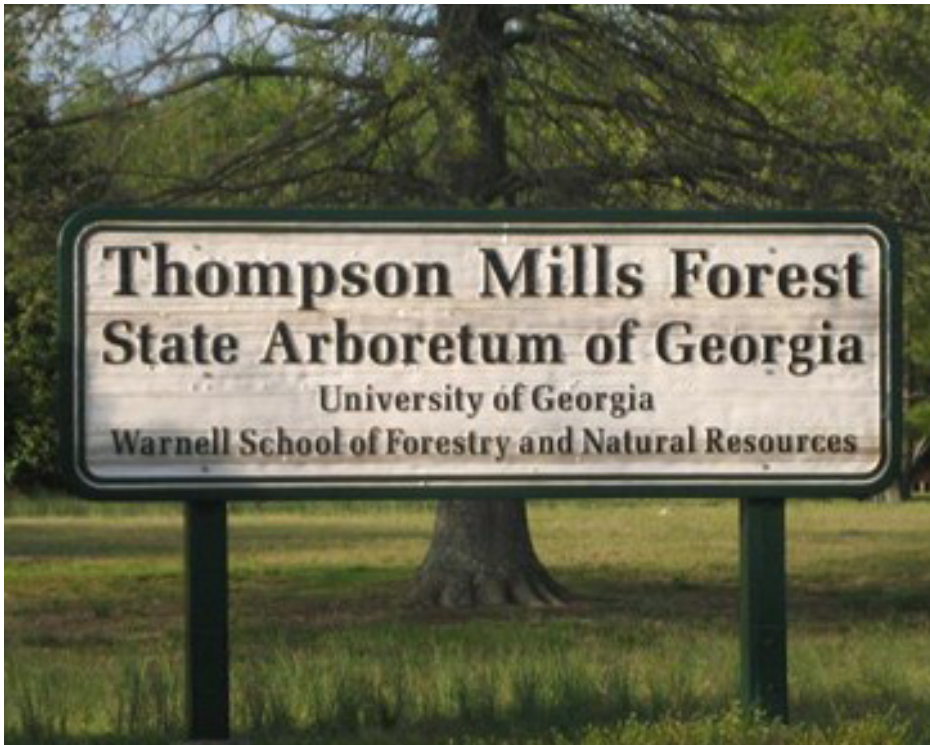
Thompson Mills Forest Arboretum is a 337-acre forest deeded to the University of Georgia in 1980 by Lenox Thompson Thornton. The forest, which was designated as the State Arboretum by the Georgia General Assembly in 1991, is two miles southwest of the City of Braselton and includes more than 100 species of native Georgia trees, representing approximately 90% of all the state's native trees. This forest serves as a

site for the study of trees and natural plant communities, and was named for the Thompson Mills community, a prominent turn-of-the-century agricultural center. The seven-acre Eva Thompson Thornton Garden features over 100 ornamental trees from around the world. Additionally, the arboretum includes an eight-acre granite outcrop and several miles of pedestrian-only trails.

Thompson Mills Forest Arboretum hosts Future Farmers of America (FFA) and 4-H dendrology teams from many Georgia counties. Other groups, such as forest dendrology classes, Cooperative Extension Service groups, church groups, and school groups, make use of the site for educational purposes.

Vulnerability

Development around the Thompson Mills Forest Arboretum could negatively affect the site if appropriate land use regulations are not put into place and enforced. Potential impacts could be realized in erosion and sedimentation, water quality, habitat, and viewsheds/aesthetics. The University of Georgia appears to have no plans to alter the site's character significantly.



Big Haynes Creek & Little Haynes Creek

**Location: Walton and Newton Counties
(other: Gwinnett and Rockdale Counties)**

Length: Big Haynes Creek - 5 miles, Little Haynes Creek - 11 miles

Value

Situated in the Ocmulgee River Basin, Big Haynes and Little Haynes Creek provide drinking water to nearly 100,000 people in Rockdale County; most of this comes from the 650-acre Big Haynes Creek reservoir, also known as Randy Poynter Lake. From this reservoir, Big Haynes Creek joins with Little Haynes Creek at the Newton County border to flow into the Yellow River.

The two streams also provide important wildlife habitats and contain several wetland areas and groundwater recharge areas.

Vulnerability

In February 2010, a section of Big Haynes Creek in Rockdale County was determined to be in the “Not Supporting Designated Use” category of Section 303(d) (of the Clean Water Act) list of waters.

The designated use of Big Haynes Creek in this area is drinking water, and the violation was cited due to the presence of fecal coliform bacteria potentially caused by urban runoff/effects. One intake point along Big Haynes Creek is less than one mile north of the confluence with the Yellow River as it enters Newton County from Rockdale County.

Both Walton and Newton counties have established a required 100-foot natural riparian buffer in the Big Haynes Creek watershed. While this offers some protection, there are numerous reasons to coordinate conservation efforts with the metropolitan Atlanta counties in which the

headwaters of the Big Haynes Creek watershed are located.

Development in Rockdale and Newton counties is also causing some stream bank erosion, leading to sediment deposits in the area where Big Haynes Creek meets the Yellow River.



Tributaries of the Broad River: South Fork, Dove Creek, Long Creek, which includes Indian, Macks, Dry Fork, Buffalo and Clark Creeks

Location: Madison, Oglethorpe, and Elbert Counties

Value

The Broad River is among the last free-flowing rivers in Georgia. While its headwaters originate in Banks and Stephens counties, the Broad River is formed by the confluence of the Hudson and Middle Fork rivers at the Franklin/Madison County boundary. The river flows through Elbert, Madison, and Oglethorpe counties to its confluence with the Savannah River at the Strom Thurmond Reservoir.

The Broad River is critical to the health and economic well-being of the citizens of northeast Georgia providing drinking water for the cities of Royston and Franklin Springs, industrial and agricultural water supply for the region, as well as an array of recreational activities including boating and fishing. The river supports a variety of fish including bass, catfish, and as of 2008, the robust redhorse. Currently, public access to the river is quite limited.

The National Park Service recognized 99 miles of the Broad River as being pristine enough to qualify as part of the Federal Wild and Scenic Rivers System. In 1976, The Georgia Department of Natural Resources, recognizing its good environmental condition, proposed that the Broad River be designated an environmental corridor. The Broad River from the Hudson River to its confluence with the Savannah River is designated a Protected River by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.

The river's 944,000 acre watershed includes parts of thirteen counties. The northern portion of the watershed is confined by steep forested ridges and has very little development. The southern portion is flatter

and agriculture extends into the flood plain. Sedimentation is high in this part of the river. Agriculture is the primary land use throughout the valley and includes some managed forest land. Industrial use in the watershed is limited to a few granite quarries.

The watershed remains in a largely natural state. Its position in the Piedmont with the Appalachians to the north and the coastal plain to the south allows for a highly diverse assemblage of plant and animal communities. It provides habitat for deer, turkeys, bobcats, foxes, beavers, otters, muskrats, quail, dove, mallards, wood ducks, turtles, crayfish and many others. Among the rare and endangered species that live in the watershed is the Shoal Lily (*Hymenocallis occidentalis*) which grows on rocks in and around the river.

Vulnerability

The watershed is in better condition than many Piedmont rivers, but its threats are not taken lightly by its residents. Agricultural non-point source pollution, effluent from septic systems, landfill leachate, litter, construction in the floodplain, riverbank erosion, destruction of the vegetative buffer, lack of tributary protection, and poorly planned development all pose threats to the river. Additionally, lack of public access to the river encourages trespassing which contributes to the degradation of river banks and destruction of vegetation.

Counties within the watershed are taking measures to protect it. Both Elbert and Madison counties require a 100 foot undisturbed vegetative buffer adjacent to the river. Oglethorpe County requires a 150 foot buffer. The Broad River Watershed Association, a local land trust, was formed with the mission of protecting the Broad River through partnerships with watershed residents and public and private organizations in several conservation projects.

Hard Labor Creek

Location: Walton and Morgan Counties

Length: 32 Miles

Value

Hard Labor Creek and its watershed, situated within the greater Oconee River Basin, is a contributor to the Apalachee River and Lake Oconee, meeting these two other designated RIRs along the Morgan County/Greene County border. This stream runs through Hard Labor Creek State Park at the Morgan-Walton border, joining the two counties, and is a source of fresh drinking water to Morgan County residents; two intake points are located along Doster Road just northwest of the City of Madison. In Walton County, Hard Labor Creek is planned to feed the proposed 1,634-acre Hard Labor Creek Regional Reservoir that is expected to yield treated water by 2015 to Walton and Oconee counties, as well as other interested jurisdictions.

In addition to its value as a drinking water source, Hard Labor Creek and associated wetlands and floodplain provide habitats to a variety of land-based and aquatic species. The stream and State Park serve as recreational areas offering hiking, horseback riding, camping, swimming, canoeing, and kayaking to Northeast Georgia residents and visitors. This tourist destination is promoted in part by the Friends of Hard Labor Creek State Park.

Vulnerability

The primary threat to water quality in Hard Labor Creek is pollution from nearby roads and agricultural land uses. According to the 2006 Walton County Comprehensive Plan, land use surrounding the stream is mostly agricultural/forestry, with sporadic residential uses. This is also the case for much of the land use surrounding Hard Labor Creek

in Morgan County, according to its 2004 Comprehensive Plan, save for the segment traversing the State Park. The Morgan County Zoning Ordinance establishes a 100-foot vegetative buffer along Hard Labor Creek; however, west of the park, the stream runs through a handful of commercial forestry areas before meeting the Apalachee River, opening the door to potential negative impacts as a result of tree harvesting activities. The Georgia Forestry Commission's Best Management Practices for Forestry Manual (2009 version) may help to protect water quality in these areas by providing guidance for operations such as site preparation and pesticide and fertilizer application within the stream management zone (SMZ), or buffer.

The portion of the creek in Walton County is offered some protection by the Cornish Creek, Beaver Dam Creek Watershed & Hard Labor Creek Overlay Protection District, requiring a 100-foot natural greenway buffer along the stream and prohibiting construction of any impervious surface within 150 feet from the stream bank, in addition to the Greenspace Subdivision Overlay District, requiring the preservation of 25% of the gross acreage of a development as greenspace deeded to the county. Even with these protections against development pressures, the stream is threatened by the construction of the proposed Hard Labor Creek Regional Reservoir. This project would have severe impacts on Hard Labor Creek, both in how it functions within Walton County and in Hard Labor Creek State Park, downstream from the site in Morgan County.



Lake Oconee

Location: Morgan and Greene Counties (other: Putnam County)

Size: 21,000 acres

Operator: Georgia Power

Value

Lake Oconee was developed by Georgia Power to create electrical power; it is fed primarily by the Oconee River, which flows along the boundaries of and/or through Athens-Clarke County, Greene County, Oconee County, and Oglethorpe County. The lake provides recreation and tourism opportunities through fishing tournaments, boating events, sightseeing, and other means including picnicking, swimming, and camping. Ten official boat ramp access points, three camping locations, and four marinas exist along the lake.

Georgia Power holds three 85-acre parks along Lake Oconee, each of which offers a picnic pavilion, full-service campgrounds, day-use areas, playgrounds, boat ramps, and a beach with a beach house that includes restroom facilities and a dressing area. The presence of these amenities boosts the regional and local economies by drawing tourists and attracting real estate development, increasing opportunities for collection of both retail sales tax and property tax.

Lake Oconee and its surrounding areas provide wide-ranging land and water habitat for wildlife, Bald Eagle and the Oglethorpe Oak. Both species are threatened and therefore protected by the Georgia DNR and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Used also as a reservoir, the lake provides valuable flood-protection benefits to the surrounding areas; Georgia Power manages its water levels and protects its shorelines.

In addition to its economic and environmental benefits, Lake Oconee, through its Wallace Dam and Hydroelectric Plant, is an important power source. The 120'-high, 2,395'-long dam, completed in 1980, features six

units that combine for a capacity of 321,300 kilowatts.

Vulnerability

The State of Georgia's listing of the Bald Eagle and the Oglethorpe Oak as "threatened" means that both species are likely to become endangered in the foreseeable future. While the Oglethorpe Oak's habitat exists in several other places in Northeast Georgia, the Bald Eagle's may be found only near Lake Oconee and potentially near Lake Russell, in Elbert County. The lake environs represent a unique haven for these two sensitive species in the region.

A contributing factor to the lake environs' desirability as a tourism and recreation destination is the scenic nature that characterizes the area. However, as Georgia's Lake Country develops with residential communities and the associated commercial, employment, education, recreation, and other



uses, rapid growth may bring adverse consequences. In addition to accompanying loss of aesthetic integrity, inappropriate types and scales of development could impair habitat, water quality, air quality, and other aspects of the natural environment that contribute the lake's ecosystems.

Both Morgan and Greene counties have water intakes at different locations near US278/SR12 as it crosses Lake Oconee, Morgan's being approximately three miles north of Buckhead and Greene's five miles west of Greensboro. Water quality throughout Lake Oconee - and upstream along the Oconee River, North Oconee River, and Middle Oconee River - must be protected to ensure that these sources remain viable to support nearby populations.

South River

Location: Newton County
(other: DeKalb, Rockdale, Henry, and Butts Counties)
Length: 22 miles

Value

From its headwaters in DeKalb County to its discharge into Lake Jackson, the South River traverses DeKalb County, Rockdale County, Henry County, Butts County, and Newton County. It is an important recreational resource, providing fishing, boating, space for trails, and associated greenspace.

DeKalb, Rockdale, and Newton counties all have greenway projects or activities along the South River, involving governments, landowners, the Georgia Wildlife Federation, and groups such as the PATH Foundation and Newton Trails. Historic and cultural resources along the river are, and will continue to be, designated, preserved, and managed by public and/or private groups. Georgia Power, the Lake Jackson Homeowners Association, and environmental groups are working to improve the quality of the river's discharge into Lake Jackson.

The South River provides natural wildlife habitat in a developed area. Most significantly, habitat for the Piedmont Blue Burrower (*Cambarus harti*), an endangered crayfish, is found along or near the South River where it flows through Newton County. As an endangered species, this crayfish is protected by the Georgia DNR and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Native American settlements dating back to 5,000 B.C.E. have been found and documented in the area of the confluence of the South River with the Yellow River, at the entry of Lake Jackson.

Vulnerability

The State of Georgia's listing of the Piedmont Blue Burrower as "endangered" means that the species is in danger of extinction throughout all or part of its range. The South River is the only location in Northeast Georgia where the Burrower's habitat may be found, and thus, this resource is critical to the region.

While Newton County maintains a River Corridor Protection Overlay District as part of its zoning ordinance, single-family dwellings are allowed throughout this district, provided they adhere to certain standards. These include a 100-foot local buffer (with an additional 50' buffer for septic tanks and impervious surfaces) and situated on at least two acres of land. Other uses, such as road and utility crossings, timber production and harvesting, wastewater treatment, agricultural production, and recreational facilities, are permitted but must also meet specified conditions. The County has expressed a desire to preserve more of the riparian area through means including conservation easements, increased development regulations, and fee-simple acquisition of flood zones, buffers, and wetlands along the corridor.

Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) have been found in fish tissues in the section of the South River in Newton County. PCB testing has revealed toxicity to the liver, gastrointestinal system, blood, skin, endocrine system, immune system, nervous system, and reproductive system, according to the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD), and effects of PCB ingestion can be especially severe in fetal development. While the source of PCB contamination is unknown, it is attributed to contamination from urban runoff from Metropolitan Atlanta and combine sewer overflows. Other possible sources could include movement of contaminated bedload sediment, soil erosion, air deposition, and other nonpoint source discharges. Continued presence of these contaminants could adversely affect the fishing-related uses along the river, including the economic benefits they bring.

Yellow River

Location: Newton County (other: Gwinnett, DeKalb, Rockdale Counties)
Length: 27 miles

Value

From its headwaters north of Lawrenceville to its discharge into Lake Jackson, the Yellow River traverses Gwinnett, DeKalb, Rockdale, and Newton counties. It is an important recreational resource, providing fishing, boating, space for trails, white-water rapids, and associated greenspace.

DeKalb, Rockdale, and Newton counties all have greenway projects or activities along the Yellow River, involving governments, landowners, the Georgia Wildlife Federation, and groups such as the PATH Foundation and Newton Trails. Historic and cultural resources along the river are, and will continue to be, designated, preserved, and managed by public and/or private groups. The realization of a master plan for multi-use trails connecting Conyers to Covington via the Yellow River could provide significant economic and transportation benefits to the area.

The Newton County Water and Sewer Authority and the City of Covington are involved in protecting the river under the terms of their wastewater discharge permits. Georgia Power, the Lake Jackson Homeowners Association, and environmental groups are working to improve the quality of the river's discharge into the lake.

The Yellow River provides natural wildlife habitat in a developed area. Most significantly, habitat for two state- and federally-listed species is found in or around the Yellow River: the Black-Spored Quillwort (endangered) and the Pool Sprite (threatened).

Native American settlements dating back to 5,000 B.C. have been found and documented in the area of the confluence of the South River with the Yellow River, at the entry of Lake Jackson. The Hightower Trail, the boundary between the Creek and Cherokee nations, crosses the Yellow River in Gwinnett County.

Vulnerability

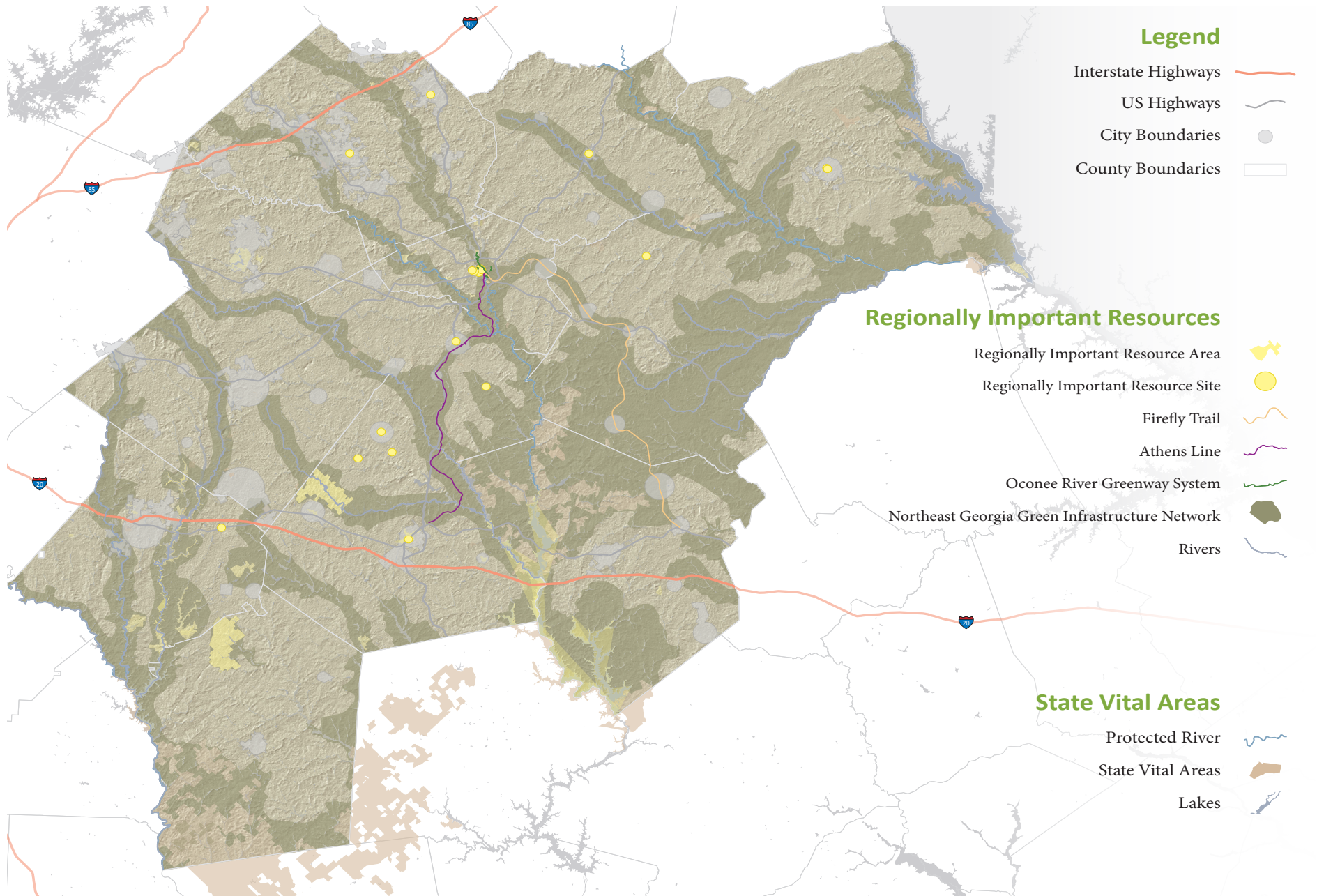
The Black-spored Quillwort (*Isoetes melanospora*) is an endangered perennial whose only known location is six Georgia counties; the Quillwort's "endangered" status means that it is in danger of extinction throughout all or part of its range. The Pool Sprite (*Amphianthus pusillus*) is listed by the federal and state governments as "threatened," meaning that it is likely to become endangered in the foreseeable future throughout all or parts of its range. Along the Newton County section of the Yellow River, habitat for both species is found only around the upper reaches of the river, near the border with Rockdale County.

After sampling in 1999, the section of the Yellow River in Newton County was listed as "not supporting" its designated use for fishing and drinking water due to the presence of fecal coliform, carried to the river by urban runoff (nonpoint). If conditions do not improve, potential detrimental impacts to the health of humans and wildlife, as well as to fishing-related tourism and economic development, could occur.

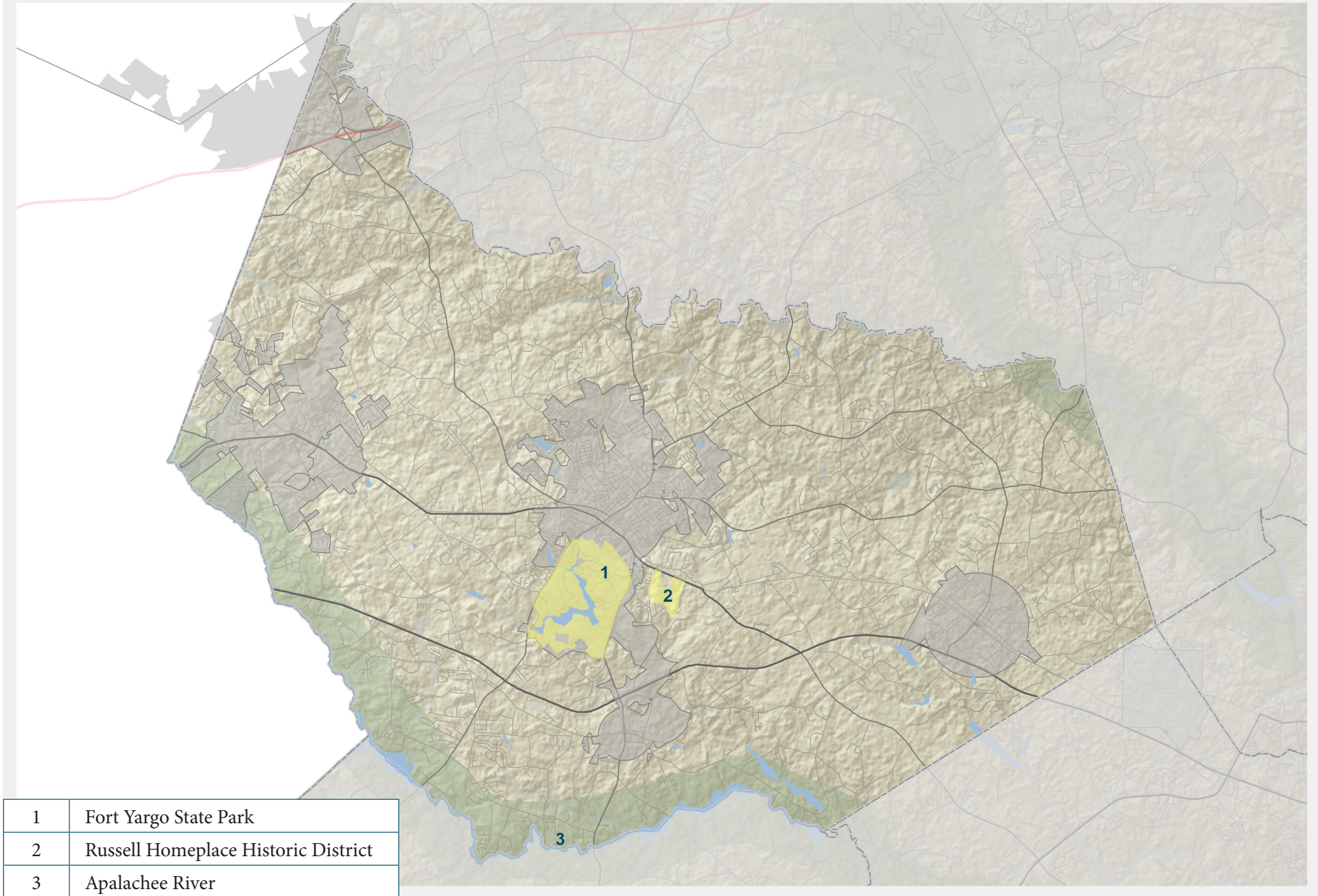
Newton County maintains a Watershed Protection Overlay District (including the Yellow River) as part of its zoning ordinance. The district requires a 100 foot natural and undisturbed buffer adjacent to perennial streams and an additional 50 foot setback for septic tanks and their drain fields and structures. Other uses must also meet specified conditions. The County has expressed a desire to preserve more of the riparian area through means including conservation easements, increased development regulations, and fee-simple acquisition of flood zones, buffers, and wetlands along the corridor.



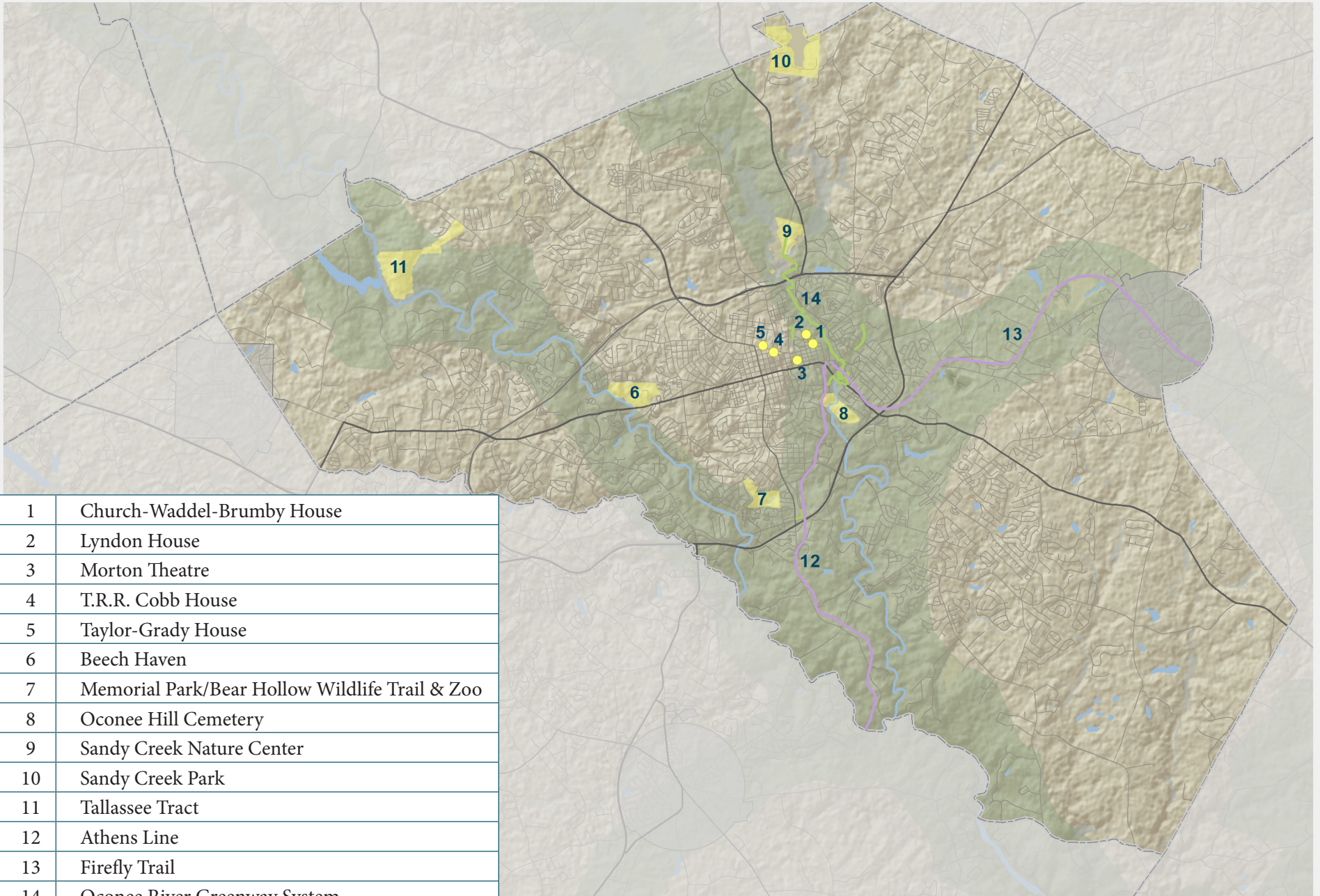
Northeast Georgia



Barrow County

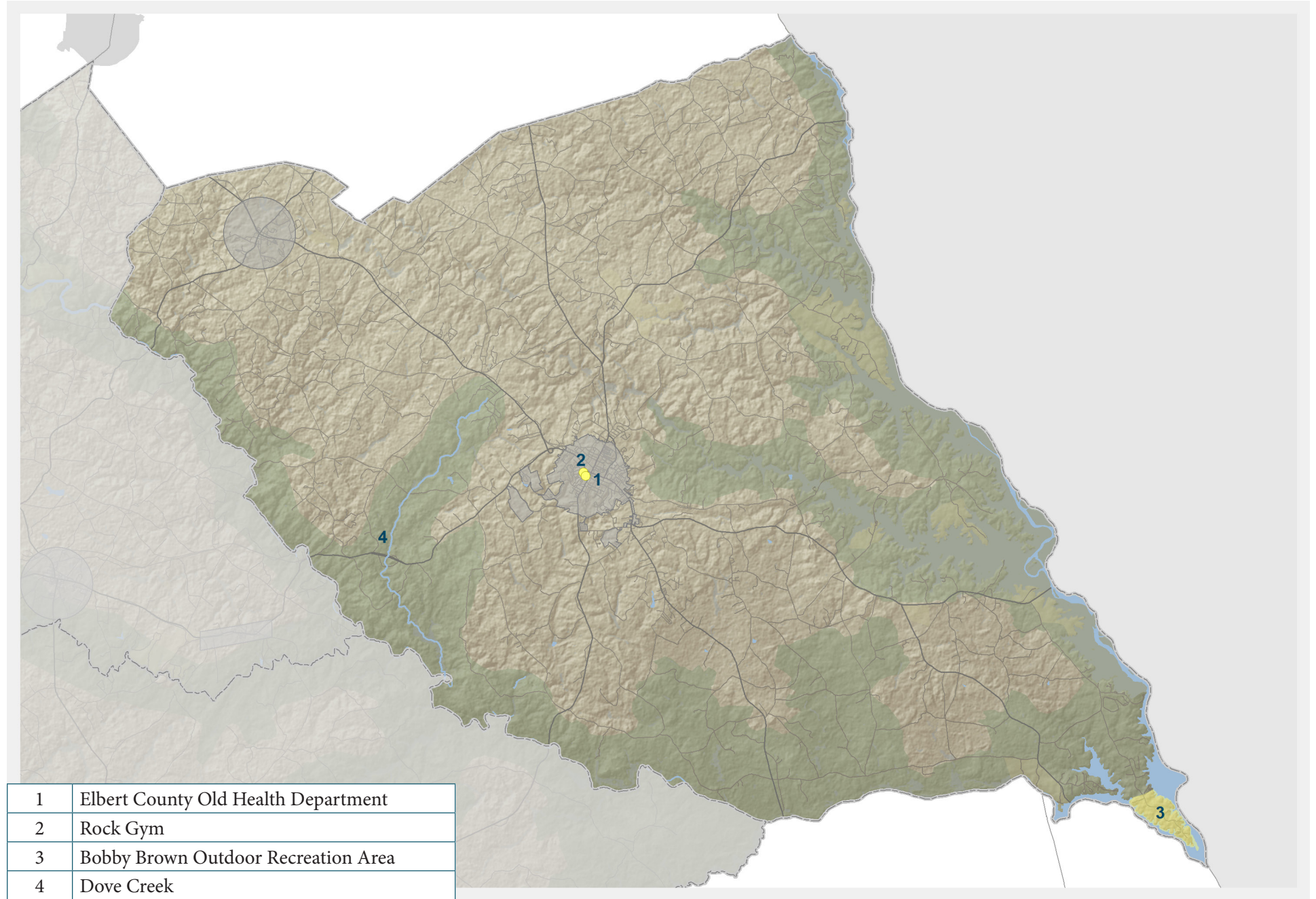


Athens-Clarke County

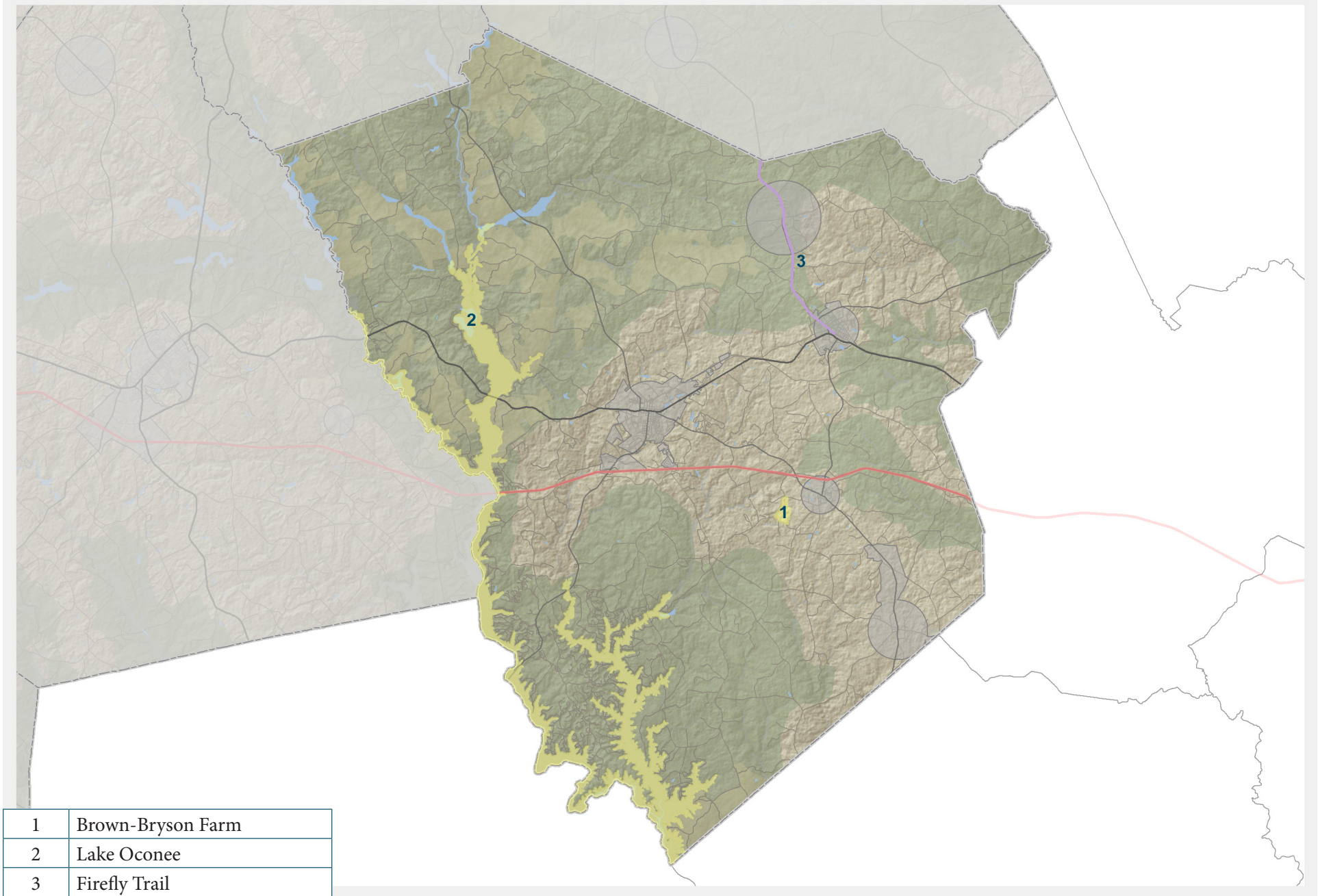


1	Church-Waddel-Brumby House
2	Lyndon House
3	Morton Theatre
4	T.R.R. Cobb House
5	Taylor-Grady House
6	Beech Haven
7	Memorial Park/Bear Hollow Wildlife Trail & Zoo
8	Oconee Hill Cemetery
9	Sandy Creek Nature Center
10	Sandy Creek Park
11	Tallassee Tract
12	Athens Line
13	Firefly Trail
14	Oconee River Greenway System

Elbert County

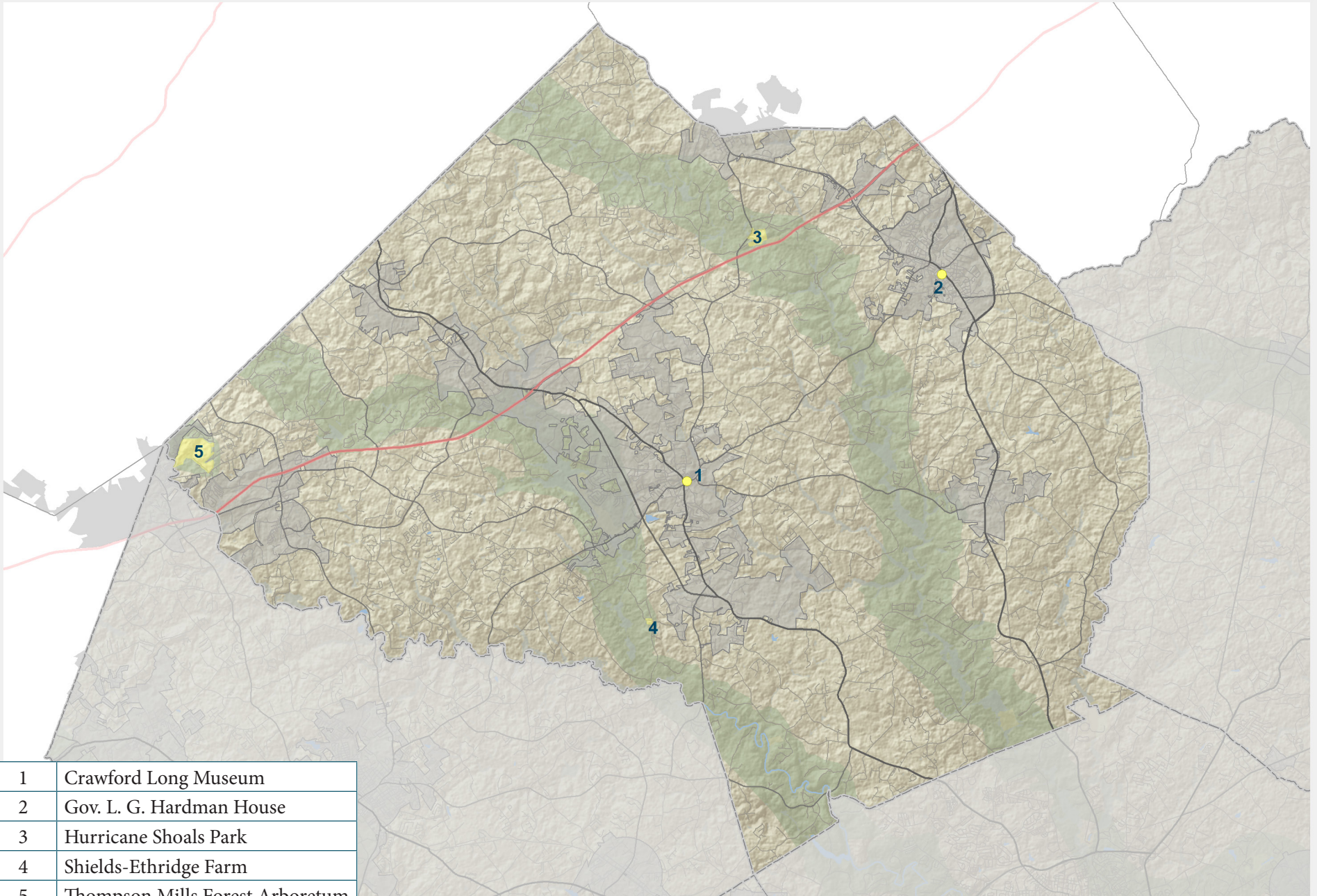


Greene County



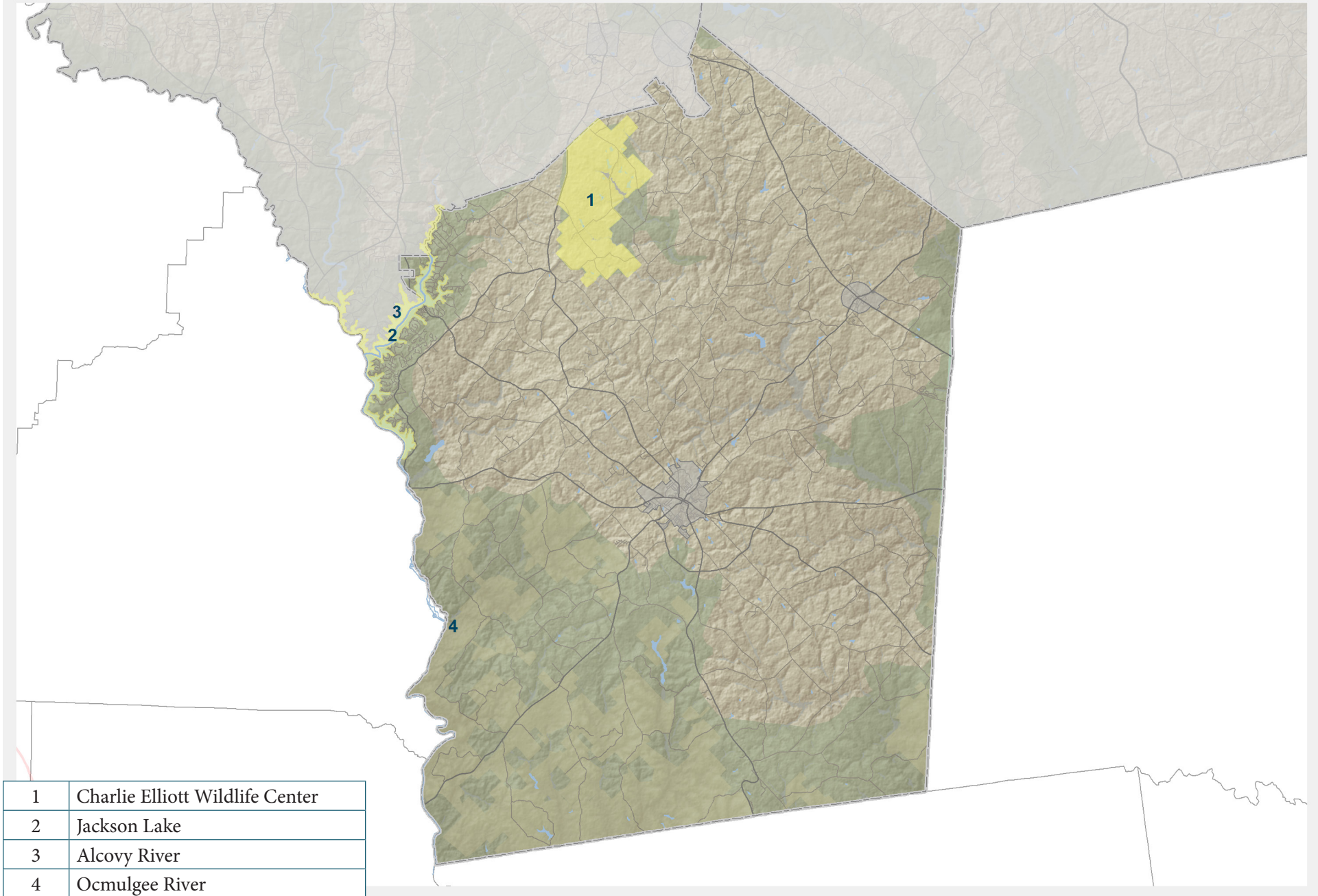
1	Brown-Bryson Farm
2	Lake Oconee
3	Firefly Trail

Jackson County

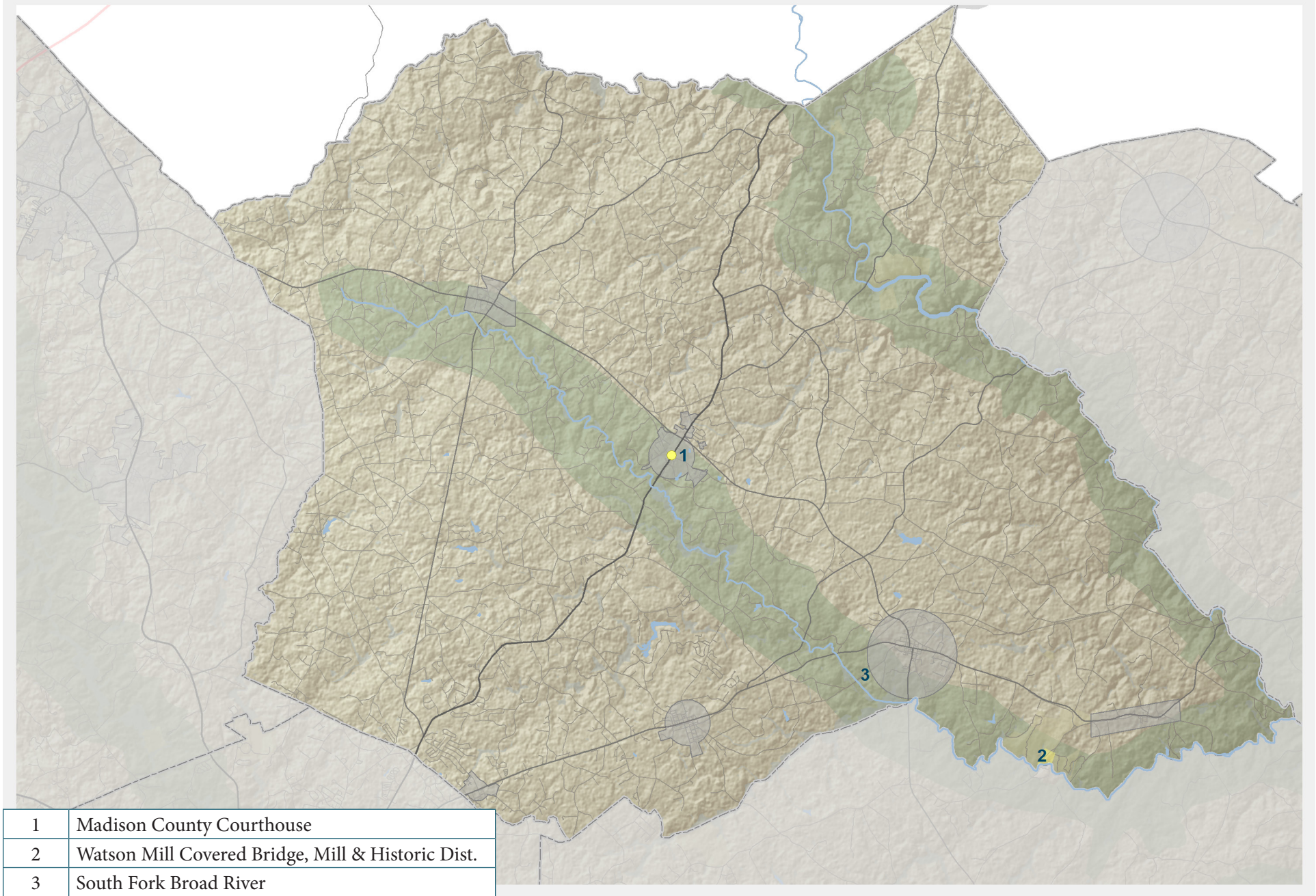


1	Crawford Long Museum
2	Gov. L. G. Hardman House
3	Hurricane Shoals Park
4	Shields-Ethridge Farm
5	Thompson Mills Forest Arboretum

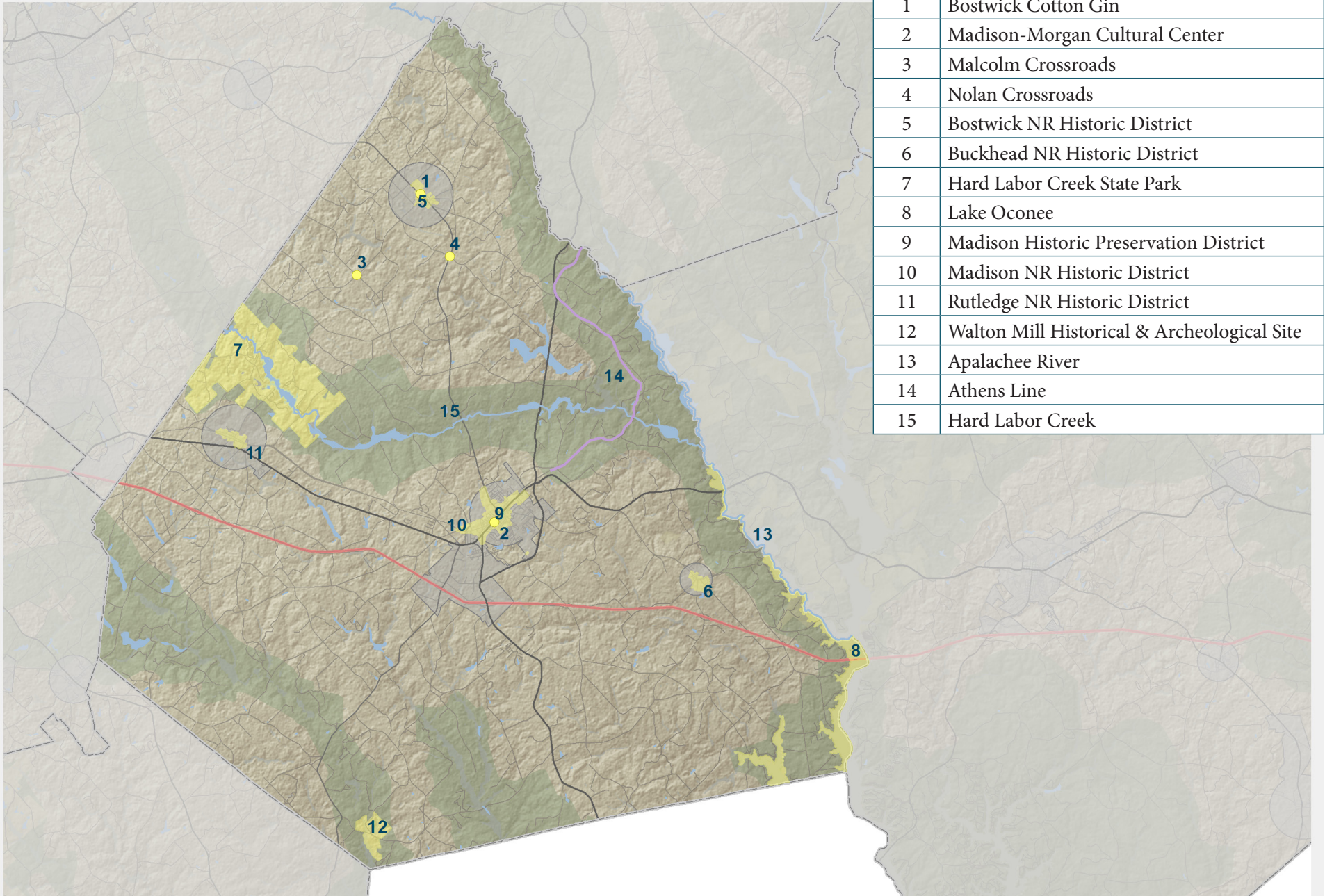
Jasper County



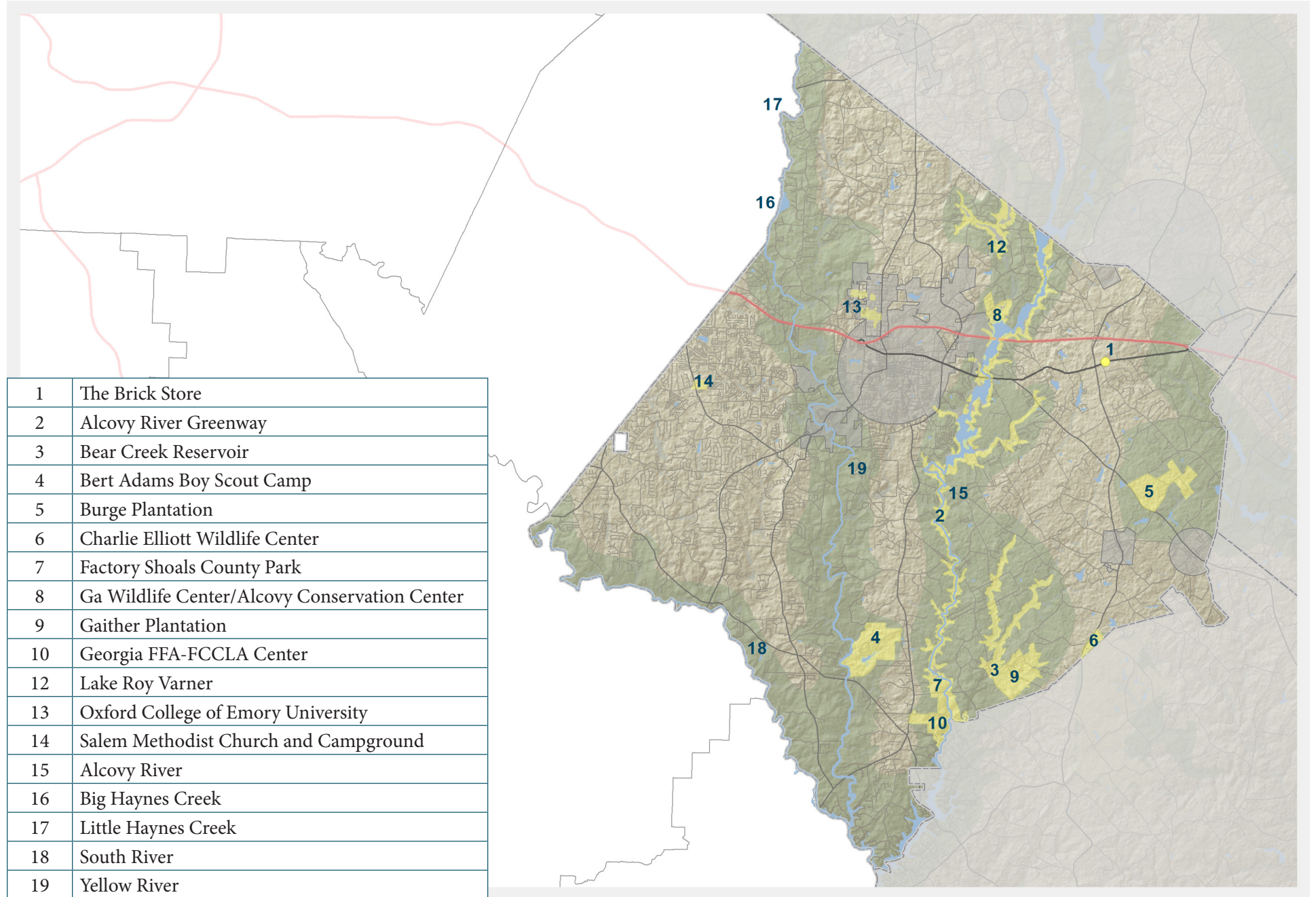
Madison County



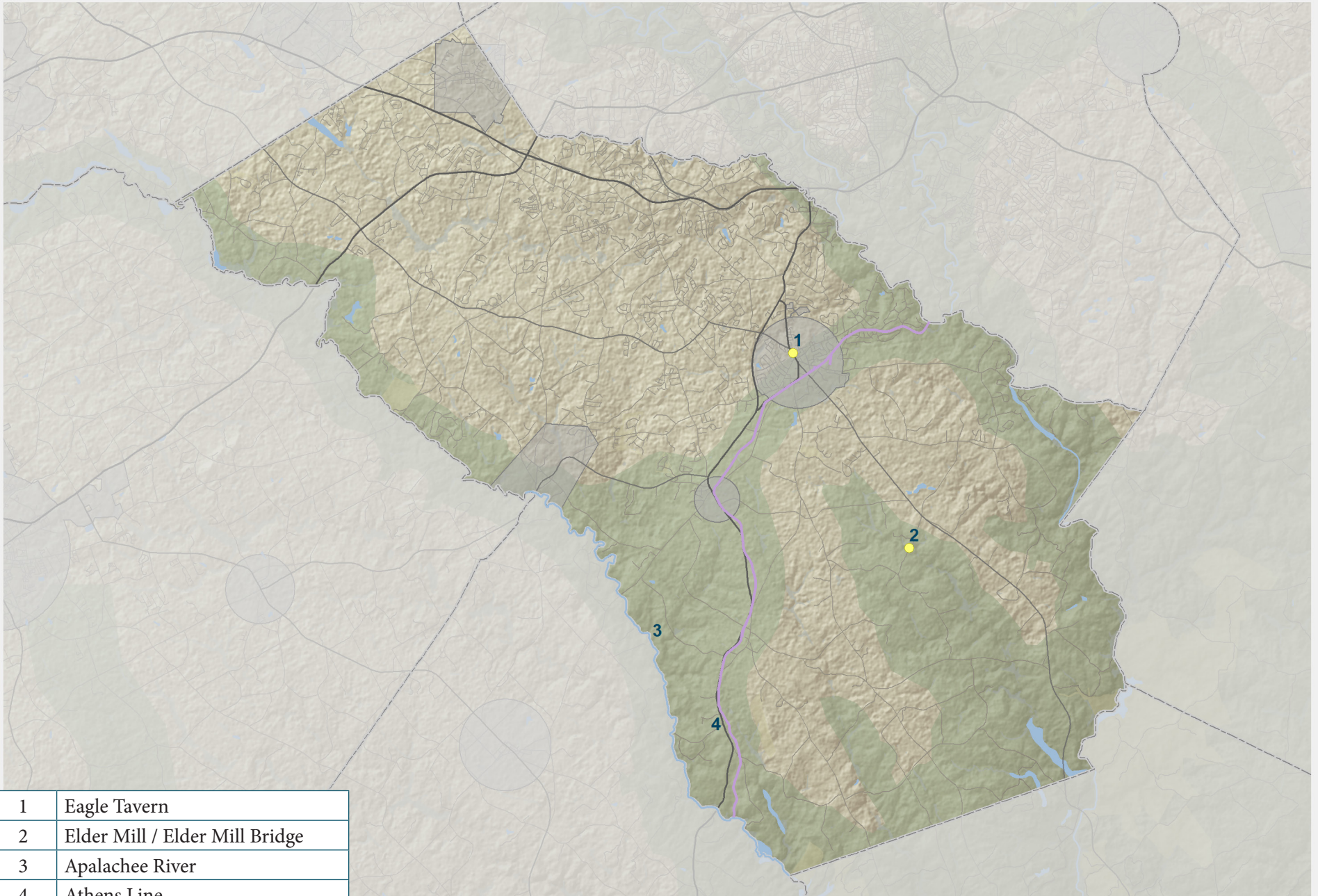
Morgan County



Newton County

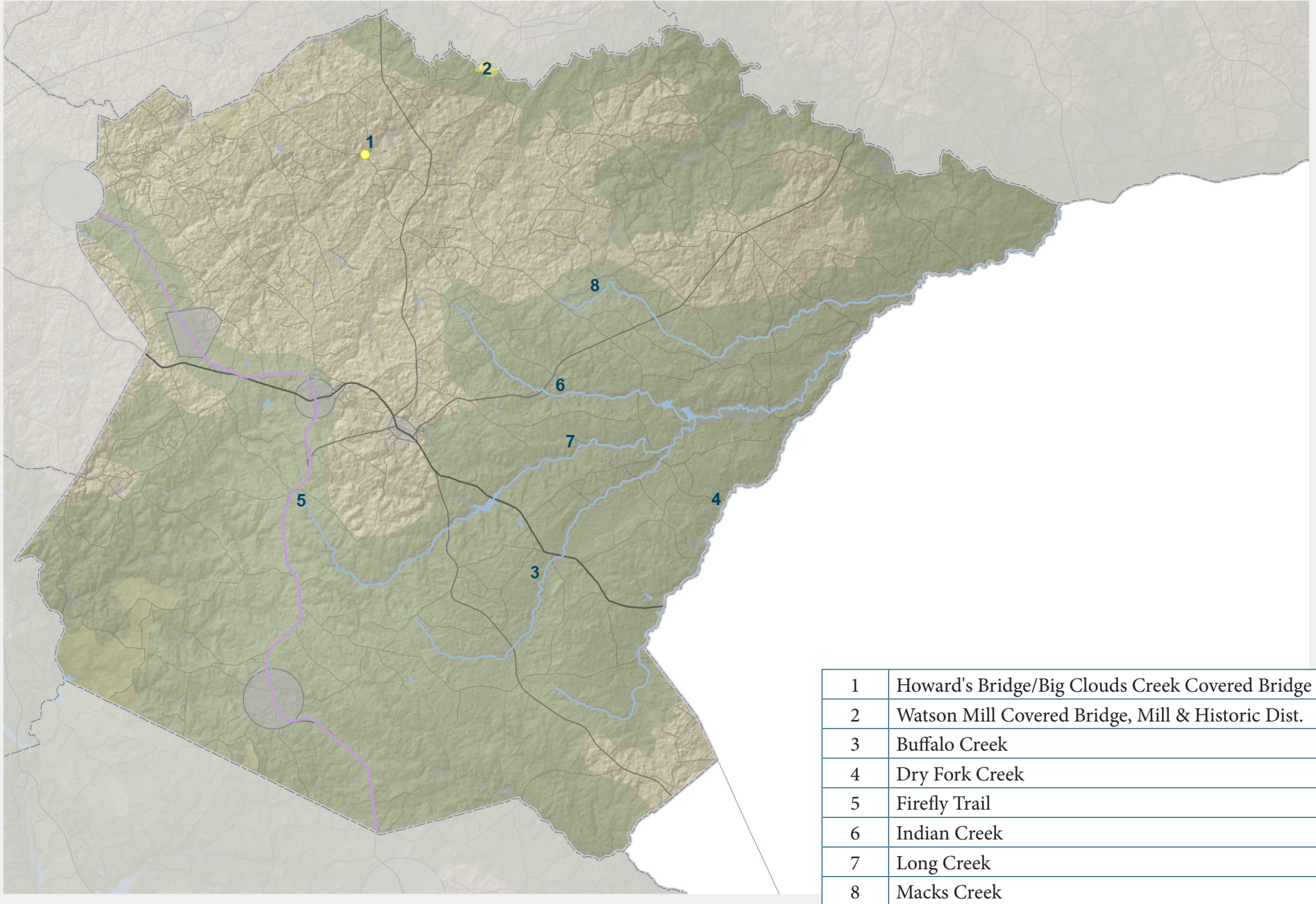


Oconee County

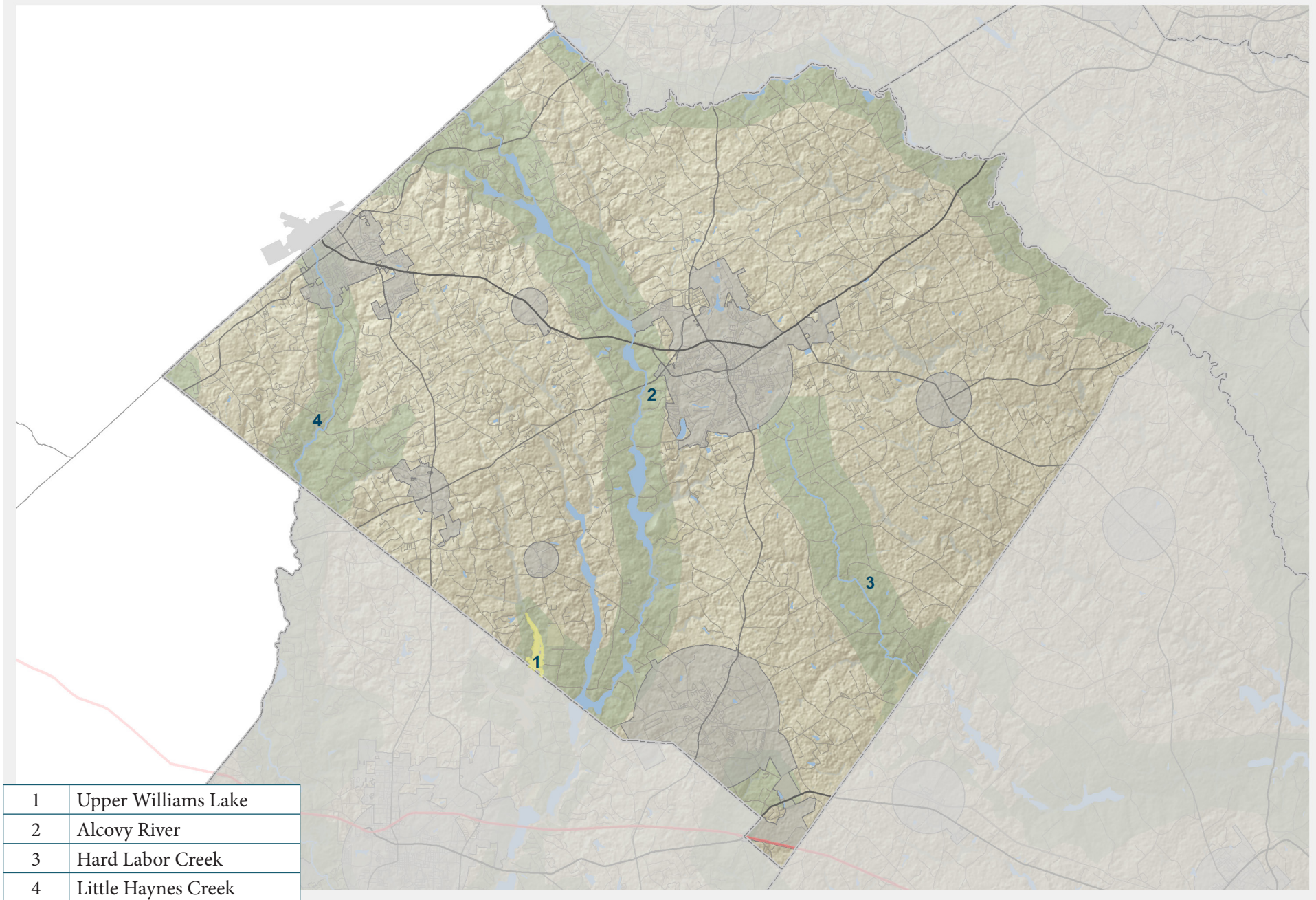


1	Eagle Tavern
2	Elder Mill / Elder Mill Bridge
3	Apalachee River
4	Athens Line

Oglethorpe County



Walton County



1	Upper Williams Lake
2	Alcovy River
3	Hard Labor Creek
4	Little Haynes Creek

The following are recommended appropriate development practices that should be used by developers for designing new developments to be located within one mile of an RIR. The practices will be used by the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission for reviewing and evaluating Developments of Regional Impact located within one mile of a resource.

- Establish a complementary mix of land uses (residential, commercial, civic, etc.), both vertically and horizontally, within convenient walking distance of one another (a quarter-mile, or 5-10 minutes) via direct and safe connections. By creating projects with multiple land uses, automobile trips become less necessary and pavement may be used more sparingly, reducing impacts to traffic, air quality, and water quality.
- Use infrastructure availability to steer development away from areas of natural, cultural, historic, and environmentally sensitive resources.
- Link to adjacent developments and neighborhoods via a trail and/or greenspace system.
- Utilize shared parking opportunities and seek reduced parking requirements in areas to decrease the total impervious surface area and protect water quality.
- Encourage the redevelopment or adaptive reuse of existing buildings, sites, and districts, including brownfields and greyfields.
- Cleaning up and reinvesting in these properties protects the environment, reduces blight, and takes development pressures off greenspaces and sensitive lands.
- Coordinate new development patterns with those of existing neighborhoods by use of compatible scale and design. Examples include appropriate housing size and style, lot size and setbacks, street design (especially width), landscaping, tree preservation, and grading.
- Site plans and building design should be sensitive to the natural features of the site, including woodlands, steep slopes, wetlands, and floodplains.

- Enlist significant site features including view shed corridors, trees, and existing heritage resources, as amenities that shape the identity and character of new and infill development, and redevelopment.
- Preserve historic and cultural resources located on or adjacent to the site.
- Buffer the periphery of the development site with natural landscaping that maintains the vegetative and aesthetic character of surrounding roadways.
- Create linkages to and between existing or planned green infrastructure corridors (riparian areas, utility easements, etc.) within and adjacent to the site through the use of conservation easements or other tools. This reduces direct water pollution and can also serve as a tool for natural stormwater management
- Cluster development on designated portions of the site to permanently protect the balance of the total acreage, avoid disturbances to environmentally-sensitive areas, incorporate natural



Creating a buffer along the periphery of development helps maintain the vegetative and aesthetic character of the surroundings.

features as amenities, and promote shared water/sewer infrastructure, where possible. This is also known as conservation development.

- Establish aquatic buffers, beyond the minimum required by state law, that serve as natural boundaries between waterways and new development to provide greater filtering and better protect wetlands and water quality.
- Utilize Low-Impact Development (LID) practices to employ a range of economical devices to control runoff at the source instead of relying solely on complex and costly collection, conveyance, storage and treatment systems to protect water quality.
 - Limit the proportion of the site that can be covered in impervious roofs and pavement to protect water quality through the use of green roofs and porous pavement materials, where possible, to allow underlying soil to absorb rainfall and treat pollutants, shared parking, shared driveways, or landscaped detention islands within cul-de-sacs.
 - Address stormwater management through site design modification and BMPs to reduce runoff volume and decentralize flows to allow natural infiltration to occur as close as possible to pre-development conditions through the use of bioretention areas

or rain gardens, vegetated swales, filter strips, cistern collection systems, preservation of existing wooded areas, mature trees, and natural terrain, and clustering homes on smaller lots. This will create a more hydrologically functional landscape and offer developers a more cost-effective alternative to address storm water management in lieu of costly conveyance systems.

- Limit clearing, grading, and disturbance to those areas that construction actually requires to preserve existing trees and soils that attenuate, treat, and infiltrate rainfall and runoff.
- Survey and analyze the environmental features of the site (topography, soils, wildlife habitat, hydrology, trees and vegetation, and historical and cultural sites) to minimize the potential for negative impacts; to avoid sensitive areas, land physically unsuitable for development, and prime agricultural land; and, to identify areas that may be suitable for parks, trails, or greenbelts.
- Utilize drought-tolerant species in landscape design to promote water conservation. A species list is found in Appendix C.
- Utilize WaterSense® products in new construction and renovation projects to promote water efficiency. Products include showerheads, toilets, bathroom sink faucets and accessories, and urinals.



Example of a green roof at the Federal Army Hospital at Fort Stewart, GA

GENERAL POLICIES AND PROTECTION MEASURES



General policies and protection measures are intended as guidance for local governments in planning and decision-making that affects Regionally Important Resources. In addition, the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission will use these policies and protection measures when reviewing local comprehensive plans for consistency with Plan 2035, the Northeast Georgia regional plan, and to encourage local government to adopt the policies and implementation measures most appropriate for the protection of the resources in their community.

In order to effectively implement these policies and protection measures, consider the following:

- Incorporate Regionally Important Resource protection into local planning efforts.
- Reach out to and encourage involvement by local and regional stakeholders in planning and development processes.
- Offer educational opportunities related to Regionally Important Resources through increased public involvement.
- Work with adjacent communities to ensure uniformity in regulations affecting resources that cross or are situated near jurisdictional boundaries.

Each policy is followed by identified applicable implementation measures that can be utilized by local government, developers, and property owners for resource protection. A description of each implementation measure follows the list of Policy and Protection Measures.

Policy 1: Protect water quality by ensuring that development allows for the greatest amount possible of direct infiltration of rainwater (rather than relying on detention/retention ponds). Applicable Implementation Measures:

- Buffers
- Cluster Development
- Connectivity Corridors
- Conservation Easements
- Low-Impact Development (LID)
- Restrictive Covenants

Policy 2: Reduce contamination of the natural environment by pollutants. Applicable Implementation Measures:

- Chemical Application Reduction
- Low-Impact Development (LID)

Policy 3: Avoid disturbances of pre-development conditions whenever possible to prevent unnecessary harm to the environment. Applicable Implementation Measures:

- Buffers
- Cluster Development
- Connectivity Corridors
- Conservation Easements
- Environmental Management
- Focused Growth Areas
- Low-Impact Development (LID)
- Restrictive Covenants
- Species and Habitat

Policy 4: Designate and preserve natural corridors for habitat and water quality protection. Applicable Implementation Measures:

- Buffers
- Cluster Development
- Connectivity Corridors
- Conservation Easements
- Overlay Zoning
- Restrictive Covenants
- Species and Habitat
- Transferable Development Rights (TDRs)

Policy 5: Create buffers between developments and sensitive water, conservation, and heritage resources. Applicable Implementation Measures:

- Buffers
- Cluster Development
- Connectivity Corridors
- Conservation Easements
- Restrictive Covenants

Policy 6: Situate development in appropriate areas of the community or site, conserving open space and protecting sensitive environments, including wildlife habitat. Applicable Implementation Measures:

- Buffers
- Cluster Development
- Connectivity Corridors
- Conservation Easements
- Focused Growth Areas
- Overlay Zoning
- Restrictive Covenants
- Species and Habitat
- Transferable Development Rights (TDRs)

Policy 6: Design new projects that complement existing communities and resources such as historic structures and sensitive ecosystems.

Applicable Implementation Measures:

- Buffers
- Cluster Development
- Connectivity Corridors
- Conservation Easements
- Design Guidelines
- Form-Based Zoning
- Historic Preservation
- Performance Zoning
- Restrictive Covenants

Policy 7: Concentrate community development efforts on existing, underused sites and structures (infill development, adaptive reuse of existing structures). Applicable Implementation Measures:

- Focused Growth Areas
- Historic Preservation
- Overlay Zoning
- Transferable Development Rights (TDRs)

Policy 8: Encourage concentrations of complementary activities and land uses. Applicable Implementation Measures:

- Cluster Development
- Focused Growth Areas
- Mixed-Use Development
- Transferable Development Rights (TDRs)

Policy 9: Link to adjacent developments and neighborhoods via a trail and/or greenspace system. Applicable Implementation Measures:

- Connectivity Corridors
- Focused Growth Areas
- Form-Based Zoning
- Mixed-Use Development

- Transferable Development Rights (TDRs)
- Transportation and Recreation

Policy 10: Connect to and create recreational opportunities within and between residential areas and activity centers. Applicable Implementation Measures:

- Cluster Development
- Connectivity Corridors
- Focused Growth Areas
- Mixed-Use Development
- Transportation and Recreation

Policy 11: Plan for new projects with regard for the significant linkages between Regionally Important Resources protection and local economies. Applicable Implementation Measures:

- Historic Preservation
- Low-Impact Development (LID)
- Mixed-Use Development
- Overlay Zoning
- Species and Habitat
- Transferable Development Rights (TDRs)
- Transportation and Recreation

Policy 12: Promote and incentivize best development practices. Applicable Implementation Measures:

- Cluster Development
- Conservation Easements
- Historic Preservation
- Low-Impact Development (LID)
- Mixed-Use Development
- Transferable Development Rights (TDRs)

Description of Implementation Measures

Below is a description of the implementation measures presented in the General Policies and Protection Measures. Each implementation measure is followed by a key to indicate the entity that could undertake the protection implementation.

LG- LOCAL GOVERNMENT; D- DEVELOPER; LO- LANDOWNER

Buffers

Buffers offer protection through the physical separation of development and the resource to be safeguarded. Water body buffers may surround rivers, lakes, ponds, and reservoirs. Buffers filter rainwater runoff from adjacent land uses, ensuring better water quality. Many communities set a minimum development buffer width for water bodies, especially those used as drinking water sources. This minimum width should depend on the type and permeability of the soil, the steepness of slopes, existing plant life, and the kinds of pollutants likely to be found in runoff from adjacent land uses. Because water bodies often cross jurisdictional boundaries, intergovernmental cooperation is necessary to improve water quality; of special importance is the coordination of strategies with upstream communities within which headwaters are situated. A natural or planted buffer may be constructed or maintained along the property line to separate incompatible development from Conservation or Heritage resources. **(LG, D, LO)**

Chemical Application Reduction

Before, during, and after development, utilize best management practices for fertilization and controlling pests and invasive vegetation. Where feasible, use environmentally benign products. **(D, LO)**

Connectivity Corridors

A connected system of green infrastructure presents a host of benefits. Preserving sensitive habitat in a linear nature, whether aligned with a stream or an upland passageway, will provide a transportation corridor for wildlife thus increasing the range for area wildlife. When located along riparian areas, these corridors can have important water quality benefits beyond those derived simply from development buffers (communities often choose to extend riparian conservation beyond the bounds of enforced buffers).

Apart from natural corridors such as rivers and ridgelines, some communities use existing easements or other utility corridors to plan and implement greenway systems and habitat corridors. Examples include transmission lines, pipelines, and, on a smaller scale, sewer easements. Greenways often provide significant benefits to community residents in areas such as transportation, recreation, education, and economic development, in addition to their inherent natural advantages. **(LG, D)**

Conservation Subdivision

Conservation subdivisions are a popular device for encouraging flexibility and strategically concentrating home construction on the development site in order to protect sensitive and valuable open space, habitat, and other environmental resources. Familiar examples of this principle as used by local governments include planned unit developments (PUDs) or planned developments (PDs). Benefits of these subdivisions include: protected water quality, wildlife habitat, reduced infrastructure construction costs, reduced demand for publically funded greenspace, and a means for expanding public trails and greenways. **(LG, D)**

Conservation Easements

To preserve natural attributes of their property, landowners may sometimes opt into conservation easements, agreements to forfeit development rights while retaining land ownership. This can be beneficial in situations where reducing the property's tax burden on the owner is necessary, or when an area has been identified as critical to conservation efforts. (D, LO)

Design Guidelines

Building design guidelines may be used to ensure new developments complement the nearby Resources, rather than compete with or detract from them. (LG)

Focused Growth Areas

One method for preventing low-density sprawl is to identify and implement focused growth areas within the community. Within these areas higher-density development would be encouraged through zoning tools; outside of these areas, restrictions would be placed on lot size and uses to preserve agricultural, forested, or designated open space lands. Tools to consider are infill development districts and adaptive-reuse ordinances. (LG)

Form-Based Zoning

Instead of regulating by land use, transect or form-based zoning codes regulate development by building type, location, transect, or a combination of these. These codes focus on the relationship between buildings and the street. Graphics are often used to depict building scale, proportion, location within the site, and location of parking. A similar approach, Performance Zoning, allows for flexibility in use as long as a project meets established criteria pertaining to intensity of development and impacts on the environment and adjacent areas. (LG)

Historic Preservation

Once historic resources have been identified and inventoried, communities have a variety of options available for protecting them in the future. A popular protection mechanism is the designation of an historic property or district. Designation may happen at the federal, state, or local level; local designations offer the most flexibility on the part of the local government, and often have a more direct impact on development. Another tool for protecting existing resources is a demolition delay ordinance, which prohibits the total or partial destruction of structures that meet certain criteria outlined by the community (age, architectural type, etc.) An historic preservation easement is a voluntary legal agreement, initiated by the landowner, to protect the historic or cultural resource through subsequent ownership.

To enhance existing historic resources, developers and landowners may take advantage of existing state and federal historic rehabilitation and restoration tax incentives. Some individual jurisdictions also develop local property tax credit programs to encourage this type of activity in designated historic districts. (LG, D, LO)

Increased Public Involvement

Increased public involvement during the development process will allow for concerns about impacts on nearby resources to be brought to the attention of local governments and developers before potentially detrimental actions are taken. (LG, D, LO)

Low-Impact Development (LID)

LID is the practice of mimicking pre-development site conditions to the greatest degree possible so as to prevent negative impacts to the surrounding environment. While LID is primarily associated with conscientious stormwater management, there are many additional benefits to be realized through the use of these and other related techniques. Prior to property acquisition, a recommended first step would be to conduct a land suitability analysis, utilizing a Geographic Information System (GIS) to determine whether the site would support its intended use. LID goals may be realized in part by passing a tree protection ordinance for mature trees, utilizing native species and natural landscapes, and encouraging the planting of green roofs, or vegetated roof covers.

Impervious surface usually refers to pavement such as roads and parking lots; soil compacted during construction is also somewhat impervious. These areas prevent rainwater from infiltrating the ground; instead, they produce runoff that may carry materials from fertilizers, gasoline and motor oil, metals, sediment, and waste to water resources. LID methods of reducing runoff, especially near Regionally Important Resources, may involve encouraging the use of porous or permeable paving materials and reducing impervious surfaces by establishing parking maximums, enabling shared parking for adjacent property owners, limiting street width and curbing, limiting pavement in turnarounds, and reclaiming pavement where possible. Additionally, stormwater regulations favoring vegetated swales over more conventional drainage systems can lessen runoff. These may be used as components of a local green streets or green infrastructure program.

Other water quality problems may be prevented through the development of a local erosion and sedimentation ordinance (per the Erosion and Sedimentation Act of 1975), grading restrictions, and

limiting and phasing clearing as part of project development. These tools are especially important in areas where growth, and therefore construction activity, is expected. (LG, D, LO)

Mitigation Banks

Mitigation banks help restore, establish, enhance, or preserve wetlands, streams, or other resources by offering compensation opportunities when development carries unavoidable impacts to these features. Establishing a system that positions mitigation bank sites at certain designated RIRs could provide permanent protection status while encouraging appropriate development elsewhere.

Mixed-Use Development

Mixed-use zoning in areas accessible by foot or bicycle is a tool used, in part, to reduce dependency on automobiles for transportation. Mixed-use development may refer to a mix of uses within one building, or a mixture of uses on a site. Residents and visitors are able to move between residential, commercial, and even light industrial areas with greater ease. This, in turn, reduces the need for increasing impervious surface within the community through the construction of new roads and parking areas. (LG, D)

Overlay Zoning

Overlay zoning is a technique in which additional restrictions are laid over existing zoning; the area covered by the additional restrictions is referred to as an overlay district, and its purpose is to supplement the underlying zoning regulations. Examples of overlay districts include those intended to protect historic areas, floodplains, watersheds, conservation areas, and downtowns. (LG)

Performance Zoning

Performance zoning regulates land uses based on their actual physical characteristics and functions as compared to specific standards identified by the community. (LG)

Restrictive Covenants

In areas where there is no qualified organization available to hold a property easement, a group of landowners with common goals may impose restrictive covenants to limit the future use of their land. An agreement of this sort would be binding on future titleholders. (LO)

Habitat Conservation Plan

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is available to work with individuals and local government to develop Habitat Conservation Plans, the primary tool for balancing development and nature preservation to manage endangered species on property. Potential benefits of Habitat Conservation Plans are: they shift the conservation focus from single-species management to multi-species and habitat management; engage private landowners and local governments in conservation planning; protect unlisted species, thereby reducing the likelihood that listing will be needed; and, promote long-term conservation of species and habitats through protection and management. (LG, D, LO)

Transferable Development Rights (TDRs)

TDR is a technique that restricts development on one property while compensating for said restrictions by allowing a greater intensity of development on another tract. Communities utilizing TDRs identify “sending zones,” or areas in which restrictions on development are desirable, and “receiving zones,” or areas in which development is encouraged. (LG, D)

Transportation and Recreation

Street connectivity regulations focus on creating a transportation system in which multiple routes serve the same origins and destinations for maximum efficiency. In a related way, non-motorized connectivity ensures that bike lanes, sidewalks, and multi-use paths allow people to get from place to place safely without driving. Appropriate recreation enhancements, such as the conversion of an unused rail corridor to a multi-use trail, also enable residents and visitors to experience and appreciate those Resources accessible to the public. (LG, D)

APPENDIX A: Regionally Important Resource Nominations Not Designated

Resource	Reason Not Designated
Auburn Ball Park	Local importance only, small site, does not provide significant water quality protection
Brick Store	Local importance only
Covington Historic Districts: Campground, Covington Mills & Mill Village, Covington Historic District, Floyd Street, North Covington	Local importance only, protected through local designation, not vulnerable
James Shackelford Memorial Park	Local importance only, small site, does not provide significant water quality protection
Mansfield	Local importance only
McGuirt's Bridge Road	Local importance only
Newborn Historic District	Local importance only, protected through local designation, not vulnerable
Oconee County Farmland	Local importance only, area not well defined
Old Social Circle Road	Local importance only
Porterdale Historic District	Local importance only, protected through local designation, not vulnerable

APPENDIX B: State Vital Areas

State Vital Areas include coastal marshes, salt marshes, tidal wetlands, water supply watershed for municipal drinking water, jurisdictional wetlands (wetlands connected to waters of the United States), groundwater recharge areas (high pollution susceptibility areas only), 100' buffer zone adjacent to protected rivers, state parks, wildlife management areas, conservation easements, and national forests. State Vital Areas within Northeast Georgia include:

Protected Rivers

- Broad River from Hudson River to confluence with Savannah River
- Middle Oconee River from Apalachee River to Lake Oconee
- North Oconee River from its confluence with East Fork Trail Creek to its confluence with the Middle Oconee River.
- Ocmulgee River
- South River
- Yellow River

National Wildlife Refuge (NWR)

- Piedmont NWR

State Parks/State Recreation Areas

- Ft. Yargo
- Hard Labor Creek
- Bobby Brown State Recreation Area
- Watson Mill Bridge
- Richard B. Russell
- National Forest
- Oconee National Forest
- Wildlife Management Areas and Heritage Sites
- Broad River Natural Area
- Elbert Co WMA
- Broad River WMA
- Rock & Shoals State Heritage Site
- Redlands WMA
- Oconee WMA
- Clybel WMA (includes the Charlie Elliot Wildlife Center)
- Walton Public Dover Field (includes Walton State Fish Hatchery)