

SOUTHERN FORESTS PROJECT

NORTH CAROLINA



This project is part of a larger joint effort between The Nature Conservancy, Conservation Fund and International Paper to protect nearly 220,000 acres of ecologically important forests, rivers and streams in 10 southern states. This once-in-a-lifetime opportunity will result in the largest private conservation project in the history of the southern U.S. Partners include state governments, federal agencies, the Department of Defense and timber investment entities.



Aerial view of International Paper property comprising mixed hardwoods and pine surrounded by state protected lands along the Chowan River
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Winter view of mixed hardwood forest along Swift Creek.
International Paper's Swift Creek Red Bird Road number 2 forest unit.
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THE PROJECT

Roughly the size of Raleigh, this project spans 12 counties and encompasses four distinct landscapes: the Roanoke, Upper Tar and Chowan Rivers in northeastern North Carolina, and Juniper Creek in the state's far southeastern tip. Lands protected through this monumental effort will largely be open to the citizens of North Carolina for recreational use. Nearly 80 percent of this project will be transferred to the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, adding tens of thousands of acres to the state's Game Land program and opening these lands and waters to hunting, fishing, hiking and boating.

total area 77,090 acres (includes TCF lands)

roanoke river 22,009

upper tar river 20,749

juniper creek 18,341

chowan river 15,464

fort bragg forest 527

river and stream miles protected 300

representative species

red-cockaded woodpecker

neotropical songbirds

bald cypress

black bear

freshwater mussels

project partners

The Nature Conservancy

International Paper

NC Wildlife Resources Commission

NC Division of Parks and Recreation

NC Department of Cultural Resources

Clean Water Management Trust Fund

Natural Heritage Trust Fund

Parks and Recreation Trust Fund

Tar River Land Conservancy

The Conservation Fund

U.S. Department of Defense

(Fort Bragg)

ROANOKE RIVER

22,009 acres

The lower Roanoke River stretches for 137 miles across the North Carolina Coastal Plain, supporting the largest and least disturbed bottomland hardwood forest ecosystem on the Atlantic Slope. The Conservancy has helped protect more than 65,000 acres along the Roanoke. The additional acres protected through this project will benefit hunters, hikers and birdwatchers, and will protect water quality that is essential for anglers and paddlers as well.

UPPER TAR RIVER

20,749 acres

The Upper Tar River watershed encompasses more than 2,200 square miles. The Upper Tar has exceptional biological richness in its aquatic communities, including a number of freshwater mussels, as well as more than 60 species of freshwater fish. The vast majority of the tracts protected in this project will eventually be added to Shocco Creek Game Land and to Medoc Mountain State Park, ensuring public access while at the same time preserving high water quality.

JUNIPER CREEK

18,341 acres

Juniper Creek drains the Green Swamp as it flows into the Waccamaw River. This region is at the heart of a rich assembly of plant life and also provides excellent wildlife habitat. Juniper Creek provides the most important natural corridor between the Conservancy's Green Swamp Preserve and the Waccamaw River. The entirety of the Juniper Creek lands protected in this project will be added to the state's Game Land program, providing a range of recreational opportunities.

CHOWAN RIVER

15,464 acres

The Chowan River is surrounded by one of the most extensive swamp forests in the state, and supports black bear and river otter, neotropical migrants such as the prothonotary warbler and raptors like the bald eagle. Protected lands will be added to the Chowan Swamp Game Land, making them available to the citizens of North Carolina for hunting, fishing, paddling and other recreational uses.

FORT BRAGG FOREST

527 acres

The Conservation Fund is working with Hoke County and other partners to establish North Carolina's first community forest on a 527-acre parcel located outside the county seat of Raeford. Elected officials, residents, local organizations and others will help state and federal agencies to develop a long-term plan to manage the forest, protect water quality in Rockfish Creek, and generate economic and recreational opportunities through ecotourism development and sustainable harvesting of forest products.

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