

Summary of Findings and Recommendations for the South Hominy Creek Local Watershed Plan

The South Hominy Creek watershed is a 38 square mile area in Buncombe County west of Asheville, and it consists of one hydrologic unit (06010105060020). All streams are classified as C Trout waters except for Ballard Creek, which is classified C. The watershed is characterized by wide floodplains and steep forested slopes. Land use is a mix of National Forest and private forest, pasture, hay, limited row crops, and increasing residential development. The South Hominy Creek Local Watershed Plan (LWP) was selected as a focus area primarily because South Hominy Creek was 303(d) listed at the time (it has since been delisted), and because EEP wished to work with a mountain watershed that is transitioning from an agricultural landscape to a more residential one.

The South Hominy Creek LWP effort began in 2003 and was completed in 2006. It was divided into three phases: (1) a preliminary watershed characterization, (2) detailed watershed assessment, and (3) development of prioritized management strategies to address stressors in the watershed. Field assessment activities were tailored to develop a functional rating for streams and subwatersheds in the LWP area, which was divided up into six functional assessment units. Stakeholder involvement consisted of three meetings with a technical advisory committee and two evening meetings with representatives of the South Hominy community. The technical advisory committee consisted of representatives of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Volunteer Water Information Network, Tennessee Valley Authority, Buncombe County Soil and Water Conservation District, Land of Sky Regional Council, Buncombe County Planning department, Wildlife Resources Commission, US Forest Service, RiverLink, Division of Water Quality, and local landowners.

Generally, streams and subwatersheds draining private and public forested lands are functioning at high levels. Subwatersheds draining lower gradient areas that have a mix of forest, agricultural, and residential uses are functioning at risk. The one subwatershed that is characterized by heavier residential land use and continued development was not functioning for the water quality function, and it is characterized by a degraded benthic community and high nutrient and fecal coliform bacteria levels.

Major stressors for streams in the watershed are channelization, excess sedimentation from unpaved roads and driveways, stream bank erosion, and eroding uplands, localized nutrient and fecal coliform bacteria pollution from livestock access, and lack of adequate riparian vegetation.

Key stressors for streams in the South Hominy Creek watershed and management strategies to address them are listed in the Table 1. Management strategies needed to restore and protect stream health include stream and wetland restoration, buffer planting, agriculture and stormwater best management practices (BMPs), land use controls (stormwater and density ordinances, promotion of low impact development), education, and preservation of high quality stream reaches and adjacent uplands and wetlands.

Table 1. Key watershed stressors and management strategies for the South Hominy Creek watershed

Stressors and Issues	Management Strategies
Stream channelization	Stream restoration
Sedimentation from unpaved roads and driveways, stream bank erosion, and eroding uplands	Stream restoration, riparian buffer restoration, various agricultural, forestry, and residential BMPs, land use controls, education
Lack of adequate forested buffer	Riparian buffer restoration
Nutrient and bacterial pollution	Livestock exclusion and BMPs