

Recap of Pilot Project for Hemlock Restoration on Trout Streams

On Saturday, October 15, 2016 Save Georgia's Hemlocks and Trout Unlimited kicked off a new partnership initiative for hemlock restoration on trout streams. Eighteen volunteers from the two organizations planted 60 large saplings along a 1,500' section of the Toccoa River where it runs through the common area of the Toccoa Bend subdivision in Suches.

As loss of hemlock canopy is of particular concern along our trout streams, the goal of this program is to create, enhance, or restore a healthy hemlock population along these waterways in support of watershed protection and water quality; the numbers, health, and diversity of the aquatic inhabitants (especially trout); the public's ability to access and enjoy these areas; and the economic impact of the related tourism and recreation. With the ultimate scope to apply to trout streams anywhere in north Georgia, whether on private or public land, the pilot project in Toccoa Bend was designed to validate protocols for site selection and preparation; estimation of funding, time, and manpower; and procedures for planting and ongoing maintenance.

Special thanks go to Carl Riggs, President of the Georgia Council of Trout Unlimited, for his leadership in selecting an excellent (and highly accessible) test site, obtaining the necessary permissions, providing valuable planning guidance, and arranging a delicious picnic lunch afterwards. To our delight, the teams were able to complete the project in only a few hours. And to no one's great surprise, everyone had a marvelous time and went away with the warm satisfaction of having done good work with long-lasting benefits.

To all the wonderful volunteers who helped make this project possible, the hemlocks lift their branches to you!