

Of Darters and Dollars: The Intersection of Science and Policy in the Etowah Watershed.

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<http://www.rivercenter.uga.edu/people/directors.htm>

The Etowah watershed in north Georgia is one of the most biologically diverse river systems in the world as well as one of the fastest-growing in the nation. It is home to several endemic fish species, including some protected pursuant to the federal Endangered Species Act. Students and faculty representing multiple disciplines at UGA worked with local governments in the Etowah to develop a regional habitat conservation plan (HCP) to protect these aquatic species. They determined that fragmentation of populations through road and utility crossings of streams and alteration of the hydrologic regime are among the largest threats to the fish and they helped the local governments develop policies to manage these threats-- such as an innovative stormwater runoff limit system. The HCP is currently under review by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; it has already won several awards yet some developers claim it is ill-founded and will bankrupt the region.