

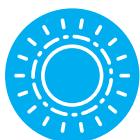
Community Forests: A path to prosperity and connection

HALL MOUNTAIN COMMUNITY FOREST

NOTABLE BENEFITS



EDUCATION



CULTURAL HERITAGE



FOREST-BASED PRODUCTS

ACRES: 108

YEAR ESTABLISHED: 2012

OWNERSHIP: The Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians

MANAGEMENT: The Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians

COMMUNITY SERVED: The Qualla Boundary of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, and Macon and Swain Counties, North Carolina

POPULATION: 14,000 enrolled tribal members of The Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians and 50,129 county residents

TOTAL ACQUISITION COST: \$604,770

FUNDING BREAKDOWN:



- Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program
- Cost Share

For a comprehensive review of the community and economic benefits provided by this forest and others, go to the full report at www.tpl.org/economic-benefits-community-forests

EASTERN BAND OF CHEROKEE INDIANS



Located over a bend in the Little Tennessee River in Macon County, North Carolina, **Hall Mountain** is owned by the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI). The Tribal Council committed to protecting the 108-acre property with an investment through EBCI’s General Fund that leveraged additional investment from U.S. Forest Service Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program (CFP) and a local land trust. Hall Mountain was purchased in large part due to its cultural significance. The site is next to the Cowee Mound and Cowee Town, the historic diplomatic center of the Middle Cherokee Nation, and sits within their viewsheds. After acquiring these sites in 2009, EBCI set its sights on purchasing their neighboring properties, including Hall Mountain. Since that time, Hall Mountain has proved to have great potential in its own right for its roles in supporting artisanal livelihoods, tourism, and education, and preserving culturally significant plants. Hall Mountain has been so successful that the project was awarded a 2020 CFP grant to fund a future expansion.

ISTOCKPHOTO





Generating artisan resources: Providing support for artisanal communities is one of EBCI's major goals at Hall Mountain. Basket making is one of EBCI's most cherished past times and in addition to its immense cultural value, recent economic literature supports the significance of basketry as an important economic contributor in native communities, with Cherokee baskets regularly priced between \$100 and \$1,200. Cherokee basket making depends on white oak trees, which are being promoted at Hall Mountain by EBCI and partners at Western Carolina University's Forest Stewards. In addition, EBCI carries out regular invasive species removal and has conducted prescribed burns in partnership with the North Carolina Forest Service.

Safeguarding cultural heritage: Hall Mountain is an important source of culturally significant plants. Hall Mountain supports EBCI's seed banking efforts. Banked seeds will be used in a variety of ways including for ecological restoration and preserved in perpetuity by the Museum of the Cherokee Indians. The tribe also has plans to build a botanical garden on Hall Mountain dedicated to plants important to the Cherokee.

Enhancing education: EBCI has established an educational camp at the site in partnership with Kituwah Academy, a Cherokee language immersion school located in the Town of Cherokee. Kituwah Academy's 32 students will take two overnight trips to the site annually. The camp will connect education, culture, science, and forest management, and will host tribal elders who will assist in the students' education. The site has already hosted some student trips, but a more regular integration into the academic year will likely be postponed until the fall due to COVID-19. EBCI is also in the process of planning an eagle aviary, where injured, no-fly or partial-fly eagles could receive care and necessary medical treatment. The aviary would also be a source of feathers for tribes throughout the southeast, making EBCI the first tribe on the east coast to take on such an endeavor. These feathers have cultural significance, and are used in certain forms of Cherokee dance, celebration, and the settling of disputes.

Bolstering tourism: In addition to the aviary's cultural and biological significance, it is also being considered as part of a larger eco-tourism effort along the Cherokee cultural corridor, which runs from Nikwasi Mound to Kituwah. A local group known as the Nikwasi Initiative has dedicated itself to preserving and enhancing this corridor. Together with the eagle enclosures (which will include areas for visitors to view the eagles), the site may also host trails, a small café, a residence and office for a full-time staff member, a visitor center, and an educational building. The possibility of including a river access point is also being discussed.



This project was completed in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service and would not have been possible without generous support from the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities and the U.S. Forest Service.

The Trust for Public Land creates parks and protects land for people, ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come.

www.tpl.org

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