

## Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

### Drought impedes river recovery

Greetings and welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature.

The Pigeon River flows across North Carolina's Haywood County and into Tennessee, where it joins the French Broad River. The river is infamous for the historical levels of pollution from the Champion Paper mill in Canton, North Carolina - pollution which eliminated a lot of life from the river.

Although not yet to a point many people would like, the effluent from the mill, now Blue Ridge Paper, is a lot cleaner than it used to be and for several years the University of Tennessee has led a project to help restore some of the aquatic diversity to the Pigeon River. Biologists have raised fish in captivity for release into the river; they've collected fish from healthy populations and moved them into the Pigeon, and they've monitored the reintroduced species to make sure the effort is working.

However, during 2008 recovery work was slowed because of the drought. Fish collections were limited in both Tennessee and North Carolina, and fall collections on the North Carolina side had to be cancelled altogether due to low flow. Biologists attempted to snorkel sites on the Tennessee side of the river to monitor previously-released fish, but that too had to be cancelled due to low water. All this serves as a reminder that despite the lack of headlines, we're still in a drought, affecting not only our ability to water lawns, but also our region's natural heritage.

For WNCW and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, this is Gary Peeples.