

Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

Economic Impact of the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program

Greetings and welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature.

We all stood on the bank of Mitchell County's North Toe River, watching as the track hoe chipped away at the old, decrepit Spruce-Pine dam. Removing the crumbling dam allowed fish to move upstream and take advantage of that habitat and removed a safety hazard for local paddlers. The dam's removal was paid for in part by Partners for Fish and Wildlife, a program of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service designed to help private landowners improve fish and wildlife habitat.

Though the impacts to fish and wildlife are easily seen at project sites, what is more elusive is the economic impact of the money these projects bring in. A recent report helps fill that knowledge gap, by taking a look at fiscal year 2011.

In that year, \$18.6 million were spent in the Partners for Fish and Wildlife program nationwide. That money was combined with private contributions, resulting in \$161 million spent on habitat restoration. When cycled through the economy, this money generated more than \$292 million for local economies, and created more than 3,500 jobs.

The Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program is quite active in the Southern Appalachians. In recent years, projects have brought in more than \$600,000 to improve streams in the Upper Nolichucky River Basin; another \$540,000 for the Little Tennessee River watershed; and \$100,000 spread across the French Broad, New, and Hiwassee River watersheds.

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