

**\*\*\* NEWS RELEASE \*\*\***

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## **3D VIRTUAL INTERNET TOURS SHOWCASE WATERSHED PROTECTION EFFORTS**

**Web site uses top-shelf panoramic photography and  
digital video to highlight wetland and habitat restoration**

CALHOUN, GEORGIA – Today, in the space of a just a few moments, citizens can view the mountainous headwaters of the Jacks River in Georgia, watch people snorkeling and studying fish species underwater, and witness the slow current of the lower Conasauga as it meanders past a flat valley. The Conasauga River Alliance has created a unique Interactive Watershed web site — [www.conasaugariver.net](http://www.conasaugariver.net) — that showcases watershed restoration efforts in this region. Using innovative 360-degree panoramic photography and digital video, the web site invites users to learn about ongoing watershed restoration activities in an engaging and interactive way.

Virtual 3D tours of many watershed areas are made possible with the use of 360-degree panoramas, which are accompanied by explanatory text outlining the restoration activities taking place there. In addition, digital terrain maps give users the choice of many sub-watershed areas, including views that span great distances or examine riverside microenvironments. Users can move the 360-degree panoramic views side to side and up and down to find additional active hyperlinks to descriptive text, photographs, and high quality audio-video sequences of people talking about watershed resource issues.

The primary watershed areas covered in the web site at this time are the Jacks and the upper Conasauga Rivers, the lower Conasauga, and the Sumac and Mill Creek drainages. Restoration activities include efforts to improve water quality, restore upland and riparian vegetation and wetlands, and rehabilitate fish and wildlife habitats. This Interactive Watershed web site also features a Watershed Community Center, in which watershed groups and interested individuals can engage in real-time interaction about ongoing restoration work.

The web site project is just part of a larger "Interactive Watersheds" project. Across the United States, four additional watersheds are also producing similar virtual tours of their watersheds. A portal web site for these other watershed efforts can be found at [www.interactivewatersheds.net](http://www.interactivewatersheds.net).

"I do not believe there is anything on the Internet that compares to the high quality content these community watershed groups are providing—with detailed interactive terrain maps, immersive 360-degree interactive panoramas, text, images, and audio-video hot spots—to tell stories about natural resource issues," says Gary Grimm with Mountain Visions, the Boise, Idaho-based multimedia production company that designed and produced the Interactive Watersheds web sites.

Beginning in the fall of 2000, funds for the Conasauga River Alliance's Interactive Watershed web site have been provided by The Nature Conservancy's Freshwater Initiative, the Lyndhurst Foundation, and the U.S.D.A. Forest Service, and a grant awarded to the National Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils, Inc., from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

The Conasauga River Alliance is a large-scale restoration and stewardship project dedicated to protecting and restoring the land and waters of the Conasauga River Basin. In addition to dozens of local, state, and federal entities and private citizens, the Alliance brings together the strengths of five primary organizations—the U.S.D.A. Forest Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Georgia Forestry Commission, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, and Dalton Utilities.