# Cumberland River

## WHY IS THIS WATERSHED SPECIAL?

The Cumberland River arises on the western flanks of the Appalachian Mountains, meanders 697 miles westward through Kentucky and Tennessee to the Ohio River, and drains a basin with a total area of 17,870 square miles. The basin has been recognized as a global hotspot for aquatic biodiversity, with over 200 species of native fish alone. The basin is home to over 100 species of threatened or endangered fish species. Natural, environmental, and socioeconomic conditions vary greatly along the river's course. Consequently, improving and maintaining water quality and quantity will require community driven and site-specific approaches.

## ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

The Targeted Watersheds Grant will focus on threats to water quality, drinking water, and biodiversity.

- Excessive sediment degrades water quality and threatens the high diversity of fish and aquatic life by destroying habitat and nursery and spawning grounds.
- Fertilizers and pesticides from agricultural runoff and widespread urban development threaten human health.
- Water shortages are a growing concern in some areas. Rapid stormwater runoff may be preventing the natural water recharge of soils and underground aquifers as well as escalating flooding.

## RESTORATION ACTIVITIES

The Cumberland River Compact partners are using EPA Targeted Watersheds Grant funds to carry out demonstration and restoration projects in each of three subwatersheds of the basin: one urban, one suburban and one rural, stretching across middle Tennessee and southern Kentucky. In each of these locations, the partners will:

- Measure and reduce sediments and streambank loss through demonstration of best management practices.
- Demonstrate innovative building techniques and low impact development principles through a new “Building Outside the Box” initiative. More than twenty cutting edge residences will be built using sustainable building practices.
- Create a user-friendly watershed information source to provide industries, organizations, citizens and agencies with easy access to data, tools, and expert resources.
- Develop an interactive website called the Southeast Watershed Assistance Network to transfer success stories and lessons learned.

“We’re excited to be working as partners with developers. The Cumberland Basin’s population is growing, and it falls to all of us to collaborate, plan for growth and use the most water and energy-friendly technologies possible”

– Margo Farnsworth
Executive Director of the Cumberland River Compact

Cumberland River sunset. (Photo credit: Penny Brooks)

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## A STRONG PARTNERSHIP FOR CHANGE

The Cumberland River Compact, which is comprised of the Building Outside the Box Committee and the Center for Living Watersheds Coalition, is improving water quality and teaching ways to protect and restore the southeast region. Other partners include:

- Local and regional watershed associations: Harpeth River Watershed Association, Red River Watershed Association, Mid-Cumberland Watershed Coalition, and Southeast Watershed Forum
- Numerous businesses and industries, including Home Builders Association of Middle Tennessee and Affordable Housing Resources, Inc.
- Non-governmental organizations, including National Association of Conservation Districts, Southface Energy Institute, and Nashville Cultural Arts Program
- Tennessee Valley Authority
- Regional chapters of the American Institute for Architects, American Society of Landscape Architects, and US Green Building Council
- Local utilities
- Three universities
- Several state and federal agencies
- Local officials and citizens

Mill Creek watershed, Nashville, TN – urban watershed project site for "Building Outside the Box" initiative.

Red River mainstem, Logan County, Kentucky – rural watershed project site for the "Building Outside the Box" initiative.

## EPA'S TARGETED WATERSHEDS GRANT PROGRAM

EPA's Targeted Watersheds Grant Program is a new, competitive grant program designed to encourage collaborative, community-driven approaches to meet clean water goals.

For more information about the selected watersheds, please visit: http://www.epa.gov/owow/watershed/initiative/

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Targeted Watersheds