

**Why the Appalachians?**  
A U.S. Geological Survey Integrated Science Effort  
By R. Brown Adams

Some of nature's most magnificent creations on Earth are the picturesque landscape and the terrestrial and aquatic inhabitants of the Appalachian Mountains of the eastern United States. The Appalachian Mountains and valleys have been home to a variety of human cultures, dating back approximately 12,000 years. A series of native American peoples, including most recently the Cherokee Nation, inhabited the region prior to European settlement which began in the 1600s. All of these have had the desire to reap the benefits of the land.

Current and historic use of the land ranges from mineral extraction to agricultural development to timber production to industrial and residential development, all of which have had impacts on the landscape. Many individuals and organizations have desired to save the area and many of the Appalachians for the generations to come, in a way that is environmentally and economically sustainable. There is a need to not only identify the issues resulting from anthropogenic pressures on the landscape, but also to collect the information and conduct the science that will allow land managers and policy makers to become better informed and better able to exercise their responsibilities.

The issues are many—at quality, sustainable development, threatened and endangered species, invasive species, landscape fragmentation, watershed modification, ground-water contamination, mineral extraction, cultural and economic aspects, the list goes on. But, an important awareness has developed in the past decade; individuals, businesses, government agencies, universities, and private groups are beginning to work together to preserve the landscape of the Appalachians for not only the economic future of human residents and the natural environment for endemic species, but also for the many millions of visitors who come to enjoy the majestic scenery.

Thus the U.S. Geological Survey, as the Nation's earth science data and information agency, has focused a multi-disciplinary effort to address the issues of the Appalachian area and to invite others with interests and responsibilities to participate in this effort. A USGS website is available for the Appalachian region at <http://www.AppalachianRegionScience.usgs.gov>. This website contains data and information on current and past USGS research in the Appalachian region. Also available are links to other supporting websites with information on Appalachian region resources.



- National Park Service lands
- Indian reservations
- National Forests
- Tennessee Valley Authority lands
- National wildlife refuges
- Department of Defense lands
- Other Federal lands
- USGS Appalachian Region
- Subregional hydrologic units
- Appalachian National Science Trail
- Interstate System
- State capital
- City

SCALE 1:2,500,000  
 Albers equal area projection, standard parallels 29° 17' N and 45° 17' N  
 Produced by the U.S. Geological Survey  
 2002