**Proposal for a Modification of Shared Boundary between Existing LCC Geographic Areas**

**Initiating LCC:** Appalachian

**Affected LCCs:** Appalachian, South Atlantic

**Affected States:** Georgia

**Description:** The Appalachian LCC is proposing one minor boundary modification that would result in the entirety of the Upper Chattahoochee watershed being shifted to the administrative geography to the South Atlantic LCC.

**Objective**: The Upper Chattahoochee drainage is currently divided between the Appalachian and South Atlantic LCCs. This division is based on the Appalachian Mountains Bird Conservation Region (28) boundary which follows Bailey’s Ecoregional Southern Blue Ridge Section classification. However, both Omernik Level III classification and The Nature Conservancy’s ecoregional approach classify much of this watershed as Piedmont; thus these areas demonstrate less characteristic topography of the southern Appalachians. Further, the existing boundary separates the [Apalachicola](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apalachicola_River)/[Chattahoochee](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chattahoochee_River)/[Flint](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flint_River_%28Georgia%29) [River](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/River) Basin (ACF) between 3 LCCs making administration of these hydrologic units more difficult. The solution is to unite this entire basin under two LCCs by administering the Upper Chattahoochee watershed under one LCC.

**Evaluation Questions:**

***Question #1****: How does the proposed boundary modification impact the homogeneity of the*

*aquatic systems in the affected Geographic Areas?*

The proposed boundary modifications improve the aquatic homogeneity in two primary ways: by including the entire Upper Chattahoochee watershed under the administration of one LCC; by uniting the ACF Basin under two LCCs.

***Question #2****: How does the proposed boundary modification impact the homogeneity of the*

*terrestrial systems in the affected Geographic Areas?*

**1) improves terrestrial homogeneity**

The Upper Chattahoochee watershed is likely split between Piedmont (66%) and Southern Blue Ridge ecosystems and thus allowing the South Atlantic LCC operational control over the southern part of this watershed will unite the northern reaches of the Piedmont ecosystems.

**2) decreases terrestrial homogeneity**

Based on the Omernik level III classification, approximately 34% of this watershed (a northern portion accounting for 363 sq. km) is part of the Southern Blue Ridge Mountains. This area contains typical Southern Blue Ridge topography and geology. Thus, this area will add a greater diversity of habitat types to the South Atlantic LCC. The benefits of the improvements in aquatic homogeneity, a larger fraction of terrestrial connectivity (Piedmont), as well as the jurisdictional issues described below outweigh this decrease.

***Question #3:*** *Is consolidation of species-specific traits (e.g. ranges, migration corridors, habitat patches)*

*the primary impetus for the proposed boundary change?*

The proposed modification is not based primarily on species-specific traits but more on landscape features including broad habitat patterns, contiguity, terrestrial and aquatic

connectivity, and operational efficiencies. The result of these modifications will improve the

consolidation of species-specific traits within the ACF basin.

***Question #4:*** *Describe how the modification will impact the operational efficiencies of the*

*established conservation partnerships existing in the region of the proposed boundary*

*modification.*

The proposed modification will greatly increase the operational efficiencies of established

conservation partnerships and partner agencies. The South Atlantic LCC and Gulf Coastal Plains and Ozarks LCC (which administer the entirety of the ACF basin) have recently undergone a structured decision making process (SDM) to determine a planning process that would be both effective and maximize partner satisfaction. The results of the SDM deliberations resulted in an agreement between the two steering committees that the South Atlantic LCC will take the lead for planning across the entire ACF basin, with appropriate consultation and coordination with the GCPO LCC science coordinator and the state of Alabama. This proposed modification help facilitate the outcome of this SDM process.





