

Signal Mountain Watersheds: To Which Do You Belong?

Walking in the woods along a stream, it is difficult to restrain most children, and even adults, from getting wet; wading, splashing, rock hopping and exploring come natural to most of us. However, many communities today are home to waterways that are no longer safe to touch.

There is a Chinese Proverb that says, "The beginning of wisdom is learning to call a thing by its right name." When it comes to streams on Signal Mountain, learning their names and locations might go a long way toward their care. However, doing so is a little tricky.

"Most of the streams up here are classified as watersheds because they are different branches and don't all have official names," says **Chuck Gearhiser**, building official and stormwater manager for the Town of

Signal Mountain. "For instance, once Short Creek crosses Timberlinks, it has numerous branches."

A watershed can be defined as the entire land area that ultimately drains into a particular watercourse or body of water. Everyone lives in a watershed. When addressing water quality issues, many communities find that focusing on a whole watershed can help efforts to control point source pollution and polluted runoff.

Watersheds are monitored on a variety of levels, from municipalities to the state. With thanks to local town officials, as well as the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation and Hamilton County Stormwater Program, the following outlines the various watersheds on Signal Mountain.

To which do you belong?

The main watersheds within the Town of Signal Mountain are:

The Short Creek watershed consists of the Hidden Brook subdivision and a section of the Birnam Wood subdivision, and the creek crosses Timberlinks Road and flows into Prentice Cooper State Forest.

The Bee Branch watershed consists of the Birnam Wood subdivision.

The Shoal Creek watershed consists of the Palisades area, Carriage Hill subdivision and part of Old Towne.

The Middle Creek watershed consists of a small portion of Hidden Brook (Middle Creek Road area), Dogwood Grove and Prentice Cooper State Forest.

Many residents are aware of the streams on Signal Mountain that have received attention for water quality problems. Short Creek, Bee Branch and Shoal Creek are designated as "impaired," meaning they are considered unsafe for recreational uses such as wading, swimming or eating fish from them due to E. coli contamination from sewers and septic tanks.

"We've already seen some improvements in Shoal Creek due to efforts with sewer line and septic tank repairs," says **Honna Rogers**, Town Manager for the Town of Signal Mountain. "The town is currently studying the feasibility of extending sewer capabilities in several areas."

Two other streams on the mountain, a tributary to Freudenburg Creek located off Timesville Road, and Standefer Creek, which runs through Grandview Estates in Sequatchie County, are also designated as "impaired" because they contain metals resulting from past mining activities.

The main watersheds within the town

of Walden are:

Little Falling Water Creek watershed, which includes the Fairmont area.

Falling Water Creek watershed, which includes the city limits of Walden and Corral Road.

Shoal Creek watershed, which includes the Brow Estates subdivision.

Middle Creek watershed.
The main watersheds on the back side of Signal Mountain in Sequatchie County are:

The Standifer Creek watershed, which includes the Grandview subdivision and Lone Oak community.

The Brimer Creek watershed, which leads to North Chickamauga Creek, includes the Grandview subdivision.

The North Chickamauga Creek watershed, which includes the Boston Branch subdivision.

"I whole heartedly believe that someday, through the efforts we are pursuing, the creeks will be restored," Rogers says.

Hopefully, someday, the laughter of children splashing and playing in the streams of Signal Mountain will rise up from the waters again. Acknowledging ways our households impact our watersheds is one step toward clean water for the future.

For more information, contact the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation Division of Water Pollution Control at 888-891-8332 or in Chattanooga at (423) 634-5745 to report problems or testing or for specific stream information.

The TDEC 303(d) List, a compilation of Tennessee streams and lakes that are water quality limited, can be found online at <http://tn.gov/environment/water.shtml>.

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