DID YOU KNOW?

- Most Charlotte sewer pipe overflows, which can send pollution into the creeks, come from grease clogs in the pipes. Don’t pour grease into the kitchen sink.
- A “branch” is the same as a tributary, or small creek.
- Who owns the water in the county’s creeks? We all do, as citizens of North Carolina. State law (Chapter 143 of the General Statutes, Article 21) says: “…the water and air resources of the State belong to the people.”
- Two-thirds of Mecklenburg County is in the Catawba River watershed, and the creeks flow into Lake Norman, Mountain Island Lake, Lake Wylie or other parts of the Catawba River.
- The eastern third of Mecklenburg County is in the Yadkin-Pee Dee watershed. Those creeks eventually flow into the Pee Dee River.
- Mecklenburg County has 126 named creeks. This includes creeks whose name is “tributary of.”
- The most widespread problems for streams across the U.S. are nitrogen and phosphorus (called “nutrients”), sediments in the streambed, and activities that disturb the stream’s banks such as construction, farming or removing vegetation.
- The excess nitrogen and phosphorus that pollute creeks can come from fertilizer on lawns and gardens, sewage treatment plants or leaking septic systems.
- One inch of rain onto one acre of pavement will produce an estimated 27,000 gallons of storm water runoff.
- An estimated 25 percent of all the land area in Mecklenburg County is impervious surface, meaning rooftops, streets, roads, and highways. So one inch of rain falling onto all of Mecklenburg produces about 2.4 billion gallons of storm water runoff.

LEARN MORE

Visit KeepingWatch.org and click on “Explore Creeks” for stories, videos, maps and other information about Mecklenburg County’s creeks.

The West Branch Rocky River watershed dips through the northeastern corner of Mecklenburg County. This creek, just a branch (tributary) of the Rocky River, doesn’t have a name of its own.

It is the only one of our significant creeksheds whose headwaters are not in Mecklenburg County. Its headwaters are in Iredell County, near downtown Mooresville. Some of its smaller tributaries start near downtown Davidson and on the Davidson College campus. West Branch Rocky River spends little time in Mecklenburg. It flows into the Rocky River at the Mecklenburg-Cabarrus County line, at West Branch Nature Preserve. The Rocky River itself forms the border between several counties – between Mecklenburg and Cabarrus, between Cabarrus and Union, between Union and Stanly, and between Stanly and Anson. It joins the Pee Dee River at the juncture of Anson, Stanly, Montgomery and Richmond counties. Back in the 1700s and early 1800s, when North Carolina counties were being formed, rivers often were the dividing line.

The West Branch Rocky River watershed in Mecklenburg County covers 15.42 square miles and has 26.375 miles of perennial streams.

There are 3.9 miles of greenway in the Mecklenburg part of the watershed. Greenways connect places across town and help conserve open green space and improve air quality. They also help preserve water quality. Native plants and trees along the greenway protect wildlife and slow runoff. Deer, snakes, frogs, and more than 100 types of birds can be found in the habitat around the greenway. The South Prong Rocky River Greenway connects downtown Davidson with neighborhoods along the South Prong of the Rocky River. The 2.8-mile trail on this greenway is called the Randall R. Kincaid Trail, named for a former Davidson mayor as a way to recognize his commitment to parks and recreation.

The second greenway is the West Branch Rocky River Greenway. It’s 1.1 miles long and ends at the West Branch Nature Preserve. If you walk on the greenway you’ll walk under sweetgum, tulip poplar, black walnut and bitternut hickory trees. Look carefully at the trees and you might see gnaw marks and chewed bark from the beavers that live nearby. You also might find an Eastern box turtle or one of many species of frogs, songbirds or dragonflies.

The nature preserve holds one of the most important wetlands in Mecklenburg County. Nearly every species of amphibian that has been
Fun facts

Location: Northeastern Mecklenburg County, including most of Davidson (Zip codes: 28031 & 28036)

Approximate land area in Mecklenburg: 15.42 square miles

Estimated population in 2010: 9,086

Creek and tributaries: West Branch Rocky River, West Branch Rocky River Tributary, South Prong West Branch Rocky River, South Prong West Branch Rocky River Tributary

Drains into: Rocky River in Cabarrus County, in the Yadkin-Pee Dee River watershed

Miles of perennial streams in Mecklenburg County: 26.375

Impaired streams: West Branch Rocky River is not impaired

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What’s in the Rock River West Branch watershed?

- Colleges: Davidson College
- Landmarks: River Run Country Club, Davidson Village Green
- Parks: Robert Caldwell Bradford Regional Park

Key vocabulary

Branch – A term, used more often in the South, for a creek or a tributary.

Greenway – A strip of undeveloped land set aside for recreation or environmental preservation. In Charlotte, greenways are usually along creeks and have paths for walking and bike riding.

Habitat – The natural home of an animal or plant.

Perennial streams – Have water year-round during years of normal rainfall.

Wetlands – A land area saturated with water, either all the time or during certain seasons. They help control floods, filter pollutants, trap sediment and gather nutrients, and are a nursery and home to many species of plants and animals.

What you can do to protect our creeks

Don’t dump hazardous chemicals down drains. Take them to a recycling center.

Don’t dump yard waste in drains or creeks. Bag, recycle or compost it.

Prevent soil erosion. Plant trees and bushes along creek banks and in bare areas of the yard.

Scoop the poop. Dog waste can pollute local creeks.

Use a car wash, not the driveway.

Use fewer fertilizers and chemicals in your yard. Don’t apply chemicals 48 hours before a heavy rain.

Don’t dump cooking grease and oil down the sink. Grease clogs are the most common cause of sewage spills into Mecklenburg County creeks.

Report pollution, including soil erosion. Call 311. To report online, or use the Water Watcher app, visit http://charmeck.org/stormwater/ReportPollution

Reduce how much runoff leaves your property. Plant trees, use rain barrels, limit the use of pavement and limit the use of pipes to send rainwater into storm drains.