

Swain County Fly Fishing Museum of the Southern Appalachians ^[1]

Swain County: Home of the Fly Fishing Museum of the Southern Appalachians

by N.C. Government & Heritage Library, 2019

See also: [North Carolina State Symbols and Official Adoptions main page](#) ^[2]

In 2018, the General Assembly designated Swain County as the Home of the Fly Fishing Museum of the Southern Appalachians ([Session Law 2018-11](#) ^[3]).



Trout Fishing in Little River, Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Postcard image ca. 1930s-1940s. From the Durwood Barbour Collection of North Carolina Postcards, UNC-Chapel Hill.

[4] Selection of Swain County as the Home of the Fly Fishing Museum of the Southern Appalachians

[House Bill 414](#) ^[5] was introduced in March 2017 by Representative Mike Clappitt to make Swain County the “official location for trout fishing in the State of North Carolina.” In April 2017, a revised Committee Substitute Favorable House Bill 414 was passed that designated Swain County as the “home of the Fly Fishing Museum of the Southern Appalachians, which is located in Bryson City in the heart of the Great Smoky Mountains.” The final version of the bill ratified and signed into law in June 2018 amended the bill to include a section naming the North Carolina Outdoor Festival held in Montgomery County as the official outdoor festival of the State of North Carolina.

About the Fly Fishing Museum of the Southern Appalachians

The [Fly Fishing Museum of the Southern Appalachians](#) ^[6] (FFMSA) is a non-profit, private and independently-owned museum located in Bryson City, North Carolina and is one of only a handful of fly fishing museums operating in the United States. Its exhibits profile legendary fly fishermen and influencers and document the history and evolution of fly fishing from 8,000 BC to the present day.

The experience is family-friendly, includes a “Kids Corner,” and it takes about 30-45 minutes to experience the collection. The museum is free, although it does accept donations. The Fly Fishing Museum also sponsors the [Appalachian Rivers Aquarium](#) ^[7]. The aquarium opened in 2019 and exhibits regional species of non-game and gamefish. There are plans for a “living wall” that will feature smaller creatures such as frogs, toads, turtles, salamanders, lizards, and small harmless snakes.



Fly fishing on lake (1972). Image from National Archives.

^[8] **North Carolina Session Law**

The 2018 legislation listed many qualities about Swain County that were considered in its designation as the Home to the Fly Fishing Museum of the Southern Appalachians.

These include:

- that the county is home to hundreds of miles of wild fish streams
- that it holds 52% of the entire acreage of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park
- that "for stream-bred fish the streams of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park provide a scenic and wild destination unmatched in the eastern United States"
- that "the tailwaters of the Nantahala River and the Nantahala Gorge are entirely in Swain County and were named in Trout Unlimited's list of America's 100 greatest trout streams"
- that "the tribal waters of the Cherokee Reservation's famed fishing are in Swain County and offer both catch-and-release trophy options as well as catch-and-keep fishing"
- that "Swain County has hosted two top fly fishing events, the 2011 U.S. National Fly Fishing Championship and the 2012 U.S. Youth National Fly Fishing Championship, and is hosting the upcoming 2017 U.S. Youth National Fly Fishing Championship"
- that the county holds two state records for trout catch; that the vast majority of streams and rivers in the county are accessible for fishing; that the county holds four rivers including the Nantahala, Tuckasegee, Little Tennessee, and Oconaluftee
- that the fishing industry brings a \$174 million economic benefit to Western North Carolina
- and that Swain County "is the home of the Fly Fishing Museum of the Southern Appalachians, which is devoted to the history and teaching of the art of fly fishing and nationally recognized as being the top museum of its type"

The legislation also designated the outdoor festival of Montgomery County as the Official North Carolina Outdoor Festival. Montgomery County is located in the south central area of the state's Piedmont region.

Resources:

[North Carolina Interactive Fishing Access Map](#) ^[9]. Use map's legend to locate Mountain Heritage Trout Cities.

Smoky Mountain News, June 06, 2019. "[Bryson City builds on fishing tourism with new aquarium](#)" ^[10]."

VISITNC. [Mountain Trout Fishing in North Carolina](#). ^[11]

Image Credits:

"Trout Fishing in Little River, Great Smoky Mountains National Park" North Carolina Postcard Collection (P052), North Carolina Collection Photographic Archives, Wilson Library, UNC-Chapel Hill. https://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/nc_post/id/1540/rec/2 ^[4] (accessed September 19, 2019)

Environmental Protection Agency. "Fly fishing on lake, 5/1972." *Documerica: the Environmental Protection Agency's program to photographically document subjects of environmental concern, 1972 - 1977*. National Archives. <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/543516> ^[8] (accessed July 23, 2019).

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From:

3 July 2019

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