

# Alumni Profile: Sharon Taylor (Class of 1996)

*Sharon Taylor is the Land Protection Specialist and Deputy Director for the Land Trust for the Little Tennessee. Sharon graduated in 1996 with a concentration in water resources.*

After graduating from WCU, Sharon went to work at Coweeta Hydrologic Laboratory as a research technician. Coweeta is a federal watershed research facility located in Macon County, North Carolina where Sharon worked as a co-op student and intern while attending WCU. In early 2001, she left Coweeta to become the third staff person of the Land Trust for the Little Tennessee (LTLT). LTLT's mission is to work with landowners on a voluntary basis to conserve the waters, forests, farms and heritage of the upper Little Tennessee and Hiwassee River valleys. The Land Trust now has seven fulltime people on staff and has either directly conserved or partnered to conserve over 19,000 acres in western North Carolina.

As Land Protection Director, Sharon spends most of her time coordinating land protection projects. A typical day might include sitting around a landowner's kitchen table explaining the options for permanent conservation of their family land, drafting language for a conservation easement, or writing a grant for project funding. Other activities include speaking to community groups or seeking support from an elected official for public funding for conservation, such as for NC's Clean Water Management Trust Fund. "It's a challenging job" Sharon says, "but my background in Natural Resource Management from WCU prepared me for not only the technical work at Coweeta but also for the broader work of natural resource conservation."



*Chief Michell Hicks of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (right) presents gift to LTLT's Sharon Taylor (left), Kate Parkerson, and Paul Carlson at an event celebrating the permanent conservation of the Cowee Mound, site the historic town of Cowee, the chief diplomatic and commercial hub of the mountain Cherokee in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries*