

### WCU: Where the Mountains Become Your Classroom

Western Carolina University is a great place to study Parks and Recreation Management—just look in its backyard! WCU offers access to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Nantahala National Forest, scenic rivers, lakes, trails, and more. This outdoor classroom creates an ideal environment to learn about leadership, conservation, and recreation. Choosing WCU’s PRM program means gaining valuable education while experiencing the beauty of Western North Carolina.



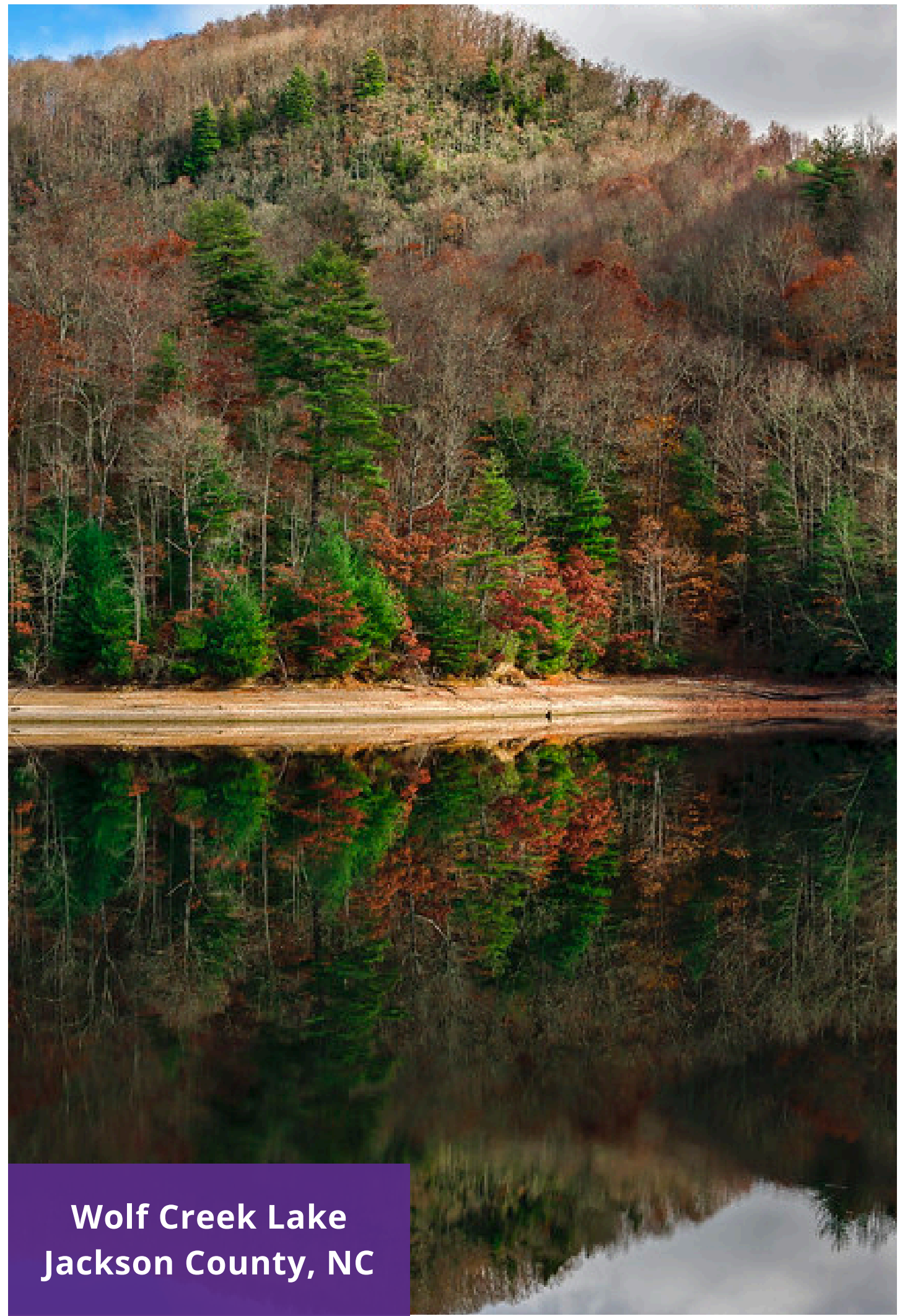
Catawba Falls  
Pisgah National Forest  
Old Fort, NC

### Forests

- ▶ **Pisgah National Forest:** Pisgah National Forest is a stunning expanse of rugged mountains, dense hardwood forests, and cascading waterfalls in Western North Carolina. Known for its scenic trails, rich biodiversity, and historic significance as the site of the first U.S. forestry school, it’s a paradise for outdoor enthusiasts and nature lovers alike.
- ▶ **Nantahala National Forest:** Nantahala National Forest, the largest in North Carolina, is a breathtaking landscape of misty mountains, rushing rivers, and dense woodlands. Home to the scenic Nantahala Gorge and parts of the Appalachian Trail, it’s a haven for hikers, paddlers, and nature lovers seeking adventure and solitude.
- ▶ **Cherokee National Forest:** Cherokee National Forest is a breathtaking expanse of mountains, rivers, and lush woodlands stretching along the Tennessee-North Carolina border. With scenic byways, rugged trails, and abundant wildlife, it’s a haven for outdoor adventure and nature exploration.

## Lakes

- ▶ Wolf Creek Lake: Located just 20 miles from campus, Wolf Creek Lake is a stunning 183-acre mountain gem offering opportunities for fishing, boating, and tranquil relaxation.
- ▶ Lake Glenville: Just a short 25 minute drive from campus lies Lake Glenville, the highest-elevation lake east of the Mississippi.
- ▶ Fontana Lake: Fontana Lake's vast shoreline, backcountry access, and year-round recreation make it an ideal setting for Parks and Rec students to gain real experience in outdoor programming, conservation, and visitor engagement.



Wolf Creek Lake  
Jackson County, NC



Nantahala River  
Bryson City, NC

## Rivers

- ▶ Chattooga River: Experience the thrill of the Wild and Scenic Chattooga River, where PRM students can learn whitewater leadership and wilderness skills in one of the Southeast's most iconic adventure destinations.
- ▶ Nantahala River: Discover the Nantahala River—just minutes from campus—where PRM students can dive into hands-on experience with paddling, guiding, and outdoor leadership in a world-class whitewater setting.
- ▶ Tuckasegee River: The Tuckasegee River is right near campus and offers many paddling opportunities.

## Mountain Biking

- ▶ Tsali Mountain Bike Trail: Tsali Trails, where PRM students can explore world-class mountain biking and trail management along the shores of Fontana Lake.
- ▶ Fire Mountain Bike Trails: Fire Mountain Trails offer a fast-flowing, purpose-built trail system where PRM students can explore.
- ▶ Cullowhee Campus Trails: The WCU Multi-Use Trail System, located right on campus, gives PRM students immediate access to experience in trail development, maintenance, and user-focused outdoor recreation.



Fire Mountain Trail  
Cherokee, NC



Max Patch  
Appalachian Trail  
Hot Springs, NC

## Hiking

- ▶ Foothills Trail: The Foothills Trail offers PRM students a 77-mile backcountry experience in a rugged Appalachian setting.
- ▶ Mountains to Sea Trail: The Mountains to Sea Trail is North Carolina's state trail, traversing some 1,177 miles. It starts, or ends, near WCU in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.
- ▶ Appalachian Trail: The Appalachian Trail winds through Western North Carolina, giving PRM students firsthand experience with this iconic long-distance hiking trail.

## Parks/Natural Areas

- ▶ Great Smoky Mountains National Park: The Great Smoky Mountains National Park offers PRM students unmatched opportunities to study conservation, visitor services, and recreation management in arguably the most biodiverse park in the National Park System.
- ▶ Panthertown: Panthertown Valley, often called the “Yosemite of the East,” provides PRM students with a unique setting to explore wilderness area, backcountry management, and maintain PRM’s adopted Blackrock Trail.



Great Smoky Mountains  
National Park  
TN & NC

## Beyond the Classroom

Beyond recreating in these remarkable landscapes, however, PRM students at WCU frequently work within them! Our program has well-established relationships with land management agencies that provide volunteer and paid internships available throughout the degree. For more information please see our main website [here](#).