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HWA presented the Partner of the Year award to an outstanding partner, the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency. Tony Able, from the EPA Office in Atlanta, accepted the award on behalf of the agency. HWA has enjoyed a very successful relationship with EPA since our first major grant for restoration work was received in 1999, an EPA 319 grant of \$255,055. In 2003, Tony invited HWA to the EPA Office in Atlanta to tell our story and present our Watershed Action Plan to their Engineers and Watershed Managers serving in the southern states. As a result, the HWA plan has been used as a model for other watershed groups in the country. We were also recognized in a nationally published EPA case study for our watershed planning and grass roots efforts! This year we will be receiving a \$500,000 EPA 319 grant to reduce non-point pollution in the Hyatt Creek Watershed. Our goal is to remove Hyatt Creek from the 303(d) list of impaired streams. Hyatt Creek is one of the last remaining creeks on this list and the only one with the entire stream length classified as impaired. We would not have been able to obtain the grant without Tony's help!

HWA presented the Volunteer of the Year award to member Richard T. Alexander. Dick has served on our Board of Directors since we began as a non-profit corporation in 1998 and currently serves on the Strategic Planning Committee. Dick has been a faithful VWIN volunteer for many years. He samples the site on the East Fork of the Pigeon River in Cruso and also picks up and delivers the samples from all 24 sites to the UNCA Environmental Quality Institute in Asheville. Every year, he helps man-

our booths at the Trout Festival and the Apple Festival and has helped with HWA stream clean-up events. Dick is also very active outside of HWA; he has worked with Dave Dudek on Haywood County's Project Pride, he has been President of the Cruso Community Development Club, and is an active volunteer for Meals on Wheels.

Tim Garrett, Executive Director of the Southwestern NC Resource Conservation & Development Council, received the Pigeon River Award. This award is given to the individual or organization for outstanding efforts to improve water quality, watershed planning and promoting stream restoration projects in Haywood County. Tim is the local resource expert on water quality issues, best management practices development and project development for the seven southwestern NC counties including Haywood County. He has been a long-time supporter of HWA and has been a key player in all the major grants received over the past 6 years, including securing \$1,000,000 for dredging Lake Junaluska to remove sediment. Tim is a member of the Technical Advisory Committee and a key advisor. To help Haywood County recover from the devastating hurricanes of 2004, he completed contracting with local contractors and assisted the HSWCD with acquiring grants and completing the work done under the Emergency Watershed Program.

He also nominated HWA for the Hugh Hammond Bennett award given by the NC Soil and Water Conservation Society.



Photos (from L to R): Gary Peeples from the US Fish and Wildlife Service shows students a few cool stream bugs; that is one large tangerine darter! I'll give you \$10 if you eat it! (Photos by Charles Shaefer)

Kids in the Creek

Kids in the Creek continues to be HWA's most entertaining and successful education program for students in Haywood County. We hosted two programs in 2005, one in May and the second in October. Approximately 675 students, teachers, and parent chaperones attended each event.

The program begins in the classroom where the students get an introduction to stream habitat, the riparian zone, aquatic animals, what makes a healthy stream, and what stream conditions indicate pollution. The biggest thrill, though, comes from the field trip! During the field trip, the students get hands-on learning as they rotate among four stations: water chemistry, fish, benthic

macroinvertebrates (creek bottom bugs), and a watershed model called the Enviroscope. Many thanks go to the instructors for an outstanding job of teaching and creating a fun learning environment! Skip Thompson from the NC Cooperative Extension Service and Glenn Rogers and Derric Brown from Blue Ridge Paper Products conducted the water chemistry station. The fish station was staffed by biologists from Fish & Wildlife Associates of Whittier, NC. The benthic macroinvertebrate station was staffed by multiple biologists: Steve Fraley from the NC Wildlife Resources Commission, Gary Peeples from US Fish & Wildlife Service, Susan Sachs and other biologists from the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Joyce Coombs and other biologists from the University of Tennessee, and Eric Romaniszyn from HWA. Gail Heathman