

StreamSweepers

Restoring people and nature,
one river at a time

Findings from Central Appalachia Cleanup Conference Breaks Interstate Park May 20, 2024 Conference Report

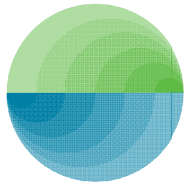
Background

This scoping level conference was convened as a second meeting with stakeholders from Appalachia to further explore a long term program to remove trash and junk from rivers and hollows in the Upper Big Sandy Watershed. The gathering was convened by StreamSweepers with support from the Thompson Charitable Foundation.

As StreamSweepers plans for completion of the Clinch River Cleanup (2017-2024), we were contacted by stakeholders in Dickenson and Buchanan Counties in 2023 about a next phase of work moving further west. An exploratory meeting held in the Fall galvanized support for an Interstate Cleanup Project in the Upper Big Sandy watershed including portions of Western Virginia, Eastern Kentucky, and Southeastern West Virginia (see Appendix 1). The attendees asked StreamSweepers to convene a Spring, 2024 conference inviting more stakeholders including those from Kentucky and West Virginia, to develop a high level scope of work (SOW) for a long term (10+ years) interstate cleanup project. This report provides the findings of that meeting.

Final Report – July 1, 2024

Contact Taylor Burgess, StreamSweepers Central Appalachia Project Manager for more information
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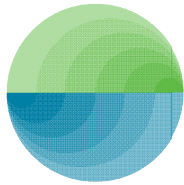
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Attendees

Taylor Burgess, Town of Grundy
Wilder Meade, StreamSweepers
Alex Ward, StreamSweepers
Jerry Ward, Big Sandy SWCD
Cap Smith, Buchanan County Poplar Gap Park
Ronnie Hylton, National Park Service – Breaks Interstate
Link Elmore, TNC
Nick Proctor, TNC
Austin Counts, Appalachian Voices
Rita Surratt, Dickenson County
Robert Rife, Boys and Girls Club Central Appalachia
Cory Bloyd, RES
Austin Looney, Buchanan Litter Control
Tim Hess, Buchanan County BOS
Bobby Looney, BSSWCD
Virginia Looney, BSSWCC
Robert Helvey, Pike County Health Dept.
Bertha Street, Grundy Women’s Club
Sandy Stiltner, Grundy Women’s Club
Pete Runyon, Friends of Tug Fork
John Burchett, Friends of Tug Fork
Christy Bailey, National Coal Heritage Area
Nathan Alexander, Kentucky Division of Water
Don Bates (Presenter), Osprey Initiative
Andrea Leslie (Presenter), NC Wildlife Resources Commission
Michael Collins, StreamSweepers

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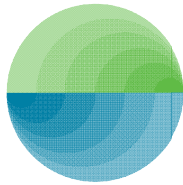
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Agenda

- 9:00-9:15 Welcome
- 20 year Vision for Upper Big Sandy Communities Renaissance
 - Purpose of Cleanup Project
 - Purpose of Today's Meeting
- 9:15-9:30 Attendee Introductions
- 9:30-10:30 Identify and Review of Hot Spots Needing Major Remediation (3 River Basin Teams Working Separately – Russell Fork, Levisa, and Tug Fork)
- Rivers and Tributaries Solid Waste (red dots)
 - Hollows Solid Waste (green dots)
 - Invasive Species (blue dots)
- 10:30-11: 00 Each Team Presents Findings to Larger Group for Additional Discussion
- 11:00-12:00 Develop 5 year Scope of Work (3 River Basin Teams Working Separately – Russell Fork, Levisa, and Tug Fork)
- 12:00-12:45 Lunch
- Speakers:
- Andrea Leslie – (Invited) Eco-Economic Development: The North Carolina Snorkel Trail, The North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission
- Don Bates – Eco-Economic Development: The Upper Big Sandy Recycling Center, The Osprey Initiative

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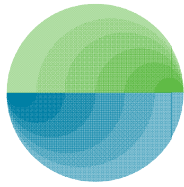
12:45-1:00	Break
1:00-2:00	Putting it all together: Upper Big Sandy Remediation Plan Scope of Work 2025-2030 Facilitated Group Discussion Three River Basins Working Together
2:00-3:00	Infrastructure and Equipment and Dollars Needed for 2025- 2030 Scope of Work Facilitated Group Discussion Three River Basins Working Together
3:00-3:15	Next Steps
3:15	Adjourn

Findings

To facilitate development of an interstate cleanup plan, nearly 70 1:24,000 scale USGS quadrangle paper maps were attached to the walls of the conference room. Participants were asked to use colored dots to indicate dumping hot spots, whether in a river or a hollow. The rivers currently included in this cleanup plan are the Russell Fork, Levisa, Tug Fork, McClure, Cranes Neck, Pound, and Dismal Creek. Hollows slated for cleanup, along with rivers info. were identified on the quadrangle maps, and delivered to StreamSweepers headquarters in Rapidan, VA. The proposed cleanup concept and scale generated lively interest. This in turn facilitated participant energy and then capacity to develop a common sense cleanup strategy. From this information, over the course of a day, a short-term 5 year clean-up plan was developed.

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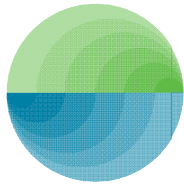
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Rivers General Condition

Tug Fork

Lower Tug Fork unknown trash status, lower middle is the most affected area, upper middle and top is also unknown status.

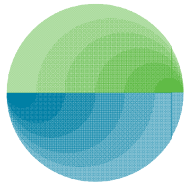
Lower middle is the tire concentrated area. 18-20 miles of nothing on river. McDowell Co. has trash constantly going in river. 200-300k estimate of tires.

High biodiversity near uninhabited section, beginning Buchanan Co. to KY.

From Locke to Ohio, only one established put in.

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Russell Fork

Not as polluted as others, no concentration of people, fewer trash. Some solid waste. Elkhorn Creek is a concentration of trash.

12 miles of river until Levisa, shallow and hard to work, downstream is the worst. The river slope is 14ft/mi to 2ft/mi.

Access is hard, especially near park. No major dump sites known.

Section off 605 Council is minor dump site, not deep, 1-2 ft. (Birchleaf).

Rebar, sheet metal, and structural waste in river. Possible equipment needed for removal.

Levisa River

20 sites of known major trash deposits. Main problem is trash and debris. Solid waste near end of hollers. Flood zones are Whitewood, flood trash is concentrated on banks.

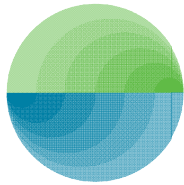
Trees are waterflow down, along with trash and debris deposits.

Pilgrims Knob, Hurley, and Essex fork to 638 Knotts Creek also flood zones. Coal truck tires from shops concentrated right before it hits the Tugg. Peoples trash is left in backyards for the river to rise and take it rather than taking to a dump.

Dumping in hollers, approach is different. Voting districts need to be set in place to handle communication with residents. Access to private property is necessary. Possible prosecution and education needs to be implemented.

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Economic Development Ideas Related to Cleanup

Snorkel Trail (Tourism)

- Andrea Leslie, Mountain Habitat Conservation Coordinator,
NC Wildlife Resources Commission

- Concept is to create dedicated trail on parts of Big Sandy rivers for high quality snorkeling – similar to river (canoe) trail.
- Recreational snorkeling only requires snorkel, mask, and water.
- Education can be implemented through the trails, commercial opportunity.
- In North Carolina - Bryson City Island Park, Stone Mountain State Park, Cheoah River, all snorkel trails.

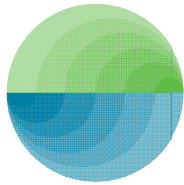
Recycling Center (Industrial Development)

- Don Bates, President, Osprey Initiative

- Concept is to build value added recycling facility that uses solid waste and trash from Big Sandy rivers.
- Possible to put together public-private venture with processed materials going to Atlanta & Charlotte Processing Centers.
 - Enough to be recycled.
 - Do an audit of trash, recycling contests with schools.
 - Do the data.
 - Costs associated with recycling.
 - Education is key, start with kids, can't change the way parents think.

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Appalachia Weed Eaters

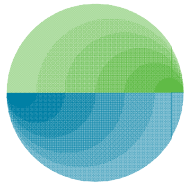
- Concept is for StreamSweepers to run a business temporarily putting goats with fencing in areas where there is need to manage invasive species to restore biodiversity.

Appalachia Biomass Facility

- Concept is a consortium of Partners, including StreamSweepers, to harvest invasive species biomass, combine with wood waste, to create compost, biochar, etc. The harvesting of invasive species would occur in areas where there is focus on restoration of biodiversity and where goats cannot be used.

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Central Appalachia Cleanup 5 Year Plan ('24-'28)

2024

StreamSweepers + Partners work in the Upper Big Sandy has begun with the Breaks Interstate conference meeting. Implementation plans, including strategies for funding, will begin to be developed and executed in the second half of the year to get moving on the plan below. In addition, working with Friends of Tug Fork, a proposal for 1x pilot project cleanup was approved by WVDEP for StreamSweepers to complete 1-2 months of cleanup in Mingo County.

2025

Levisa

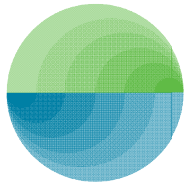
1. Form a Friends of Levisa NGO.
2. Post game cameras in dumping areas.
3. Start buy back appliance program.
4. Develop cleanup plan for Pilgrims Knob, Knox Creek, and Looney Creek.
5. Develop cleanup plan for hollows.
6. Develop education program for schools and mining companies.
7. Revisit efficacy of litter ordinances and ability to prosecute dumping.
8. Establish regional recycling center, MXI (recyclers).
9. Find an end user for tires.
10. Begin county water testing program.
11. Plan for straight pipe removals.

Russell Fork

1. Detailed reconnaissance, trash locations, access points, sensitive environmental assets requiring surgical trash extraction.
2. Develop community messaging.
3. Find funding partners.
4. Engage county waste control.

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Tug Fork

1. Remove 4000 tires by StreamSweepers and volunteers.
2. Begin water testing program.
3. Get more river access points.
4. Improve communication with McDowell County and stakeholders in lower basin.
5. Dumping ordinance.
6. FTF kids activities.
7. Plan for straight pipe removals.
8. Plan for removal 20k tires per year.

2026

Levisa

1. Begin rivers cleanup Pilgrims Knob, Knox Creek, and Looney Creek.
2. Begin hollows and rivers cleanup(s) in Western Virginia.
3. Begin rivers cleanup Pike County.
4. Begin straight pipe removals Pike County.

Russell Fork

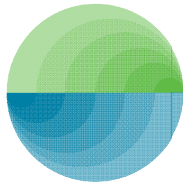
1. Begin river cleanups in portions of river with greatest community support, aim for 2 communities per year.

Tug Fork

1. Remove 20,000 tires
2. Begin straight pipe removals (see Downstream Solutions data).

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2027

Levisa

1. Continue rivers cleanup Pilgrims Knob, Knox Creek, and Looney Creek.
2. Continue rivers and hollows cleanup(s) in Western Virginia.
3. Continue rivers cleanup Pike County.
4. Continue straight pipe removals Pike County.

Russell Fork

1. Complete cleanup Buchanan and Dickenson Counties.

Tug Fork

1. Continue removal 20,000 tires
2. Conduce reconnaissance in unknown portions of river.

2028

Levisa

1. Complete removal of straight pipes.
2. Continue rivers and hollows cleanup(s) Western Virginia.
3. Continue rivers cleanup Pike County.

Russell Fork

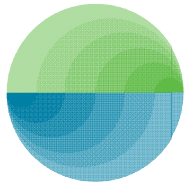
1. Complete cleanup Kentucky portion of river.
2. Implement Snorkel Trail somewhere Upper Russell Fork, potentially at Bee.

Tug Fork

1. Continue removal 20,000 tires.

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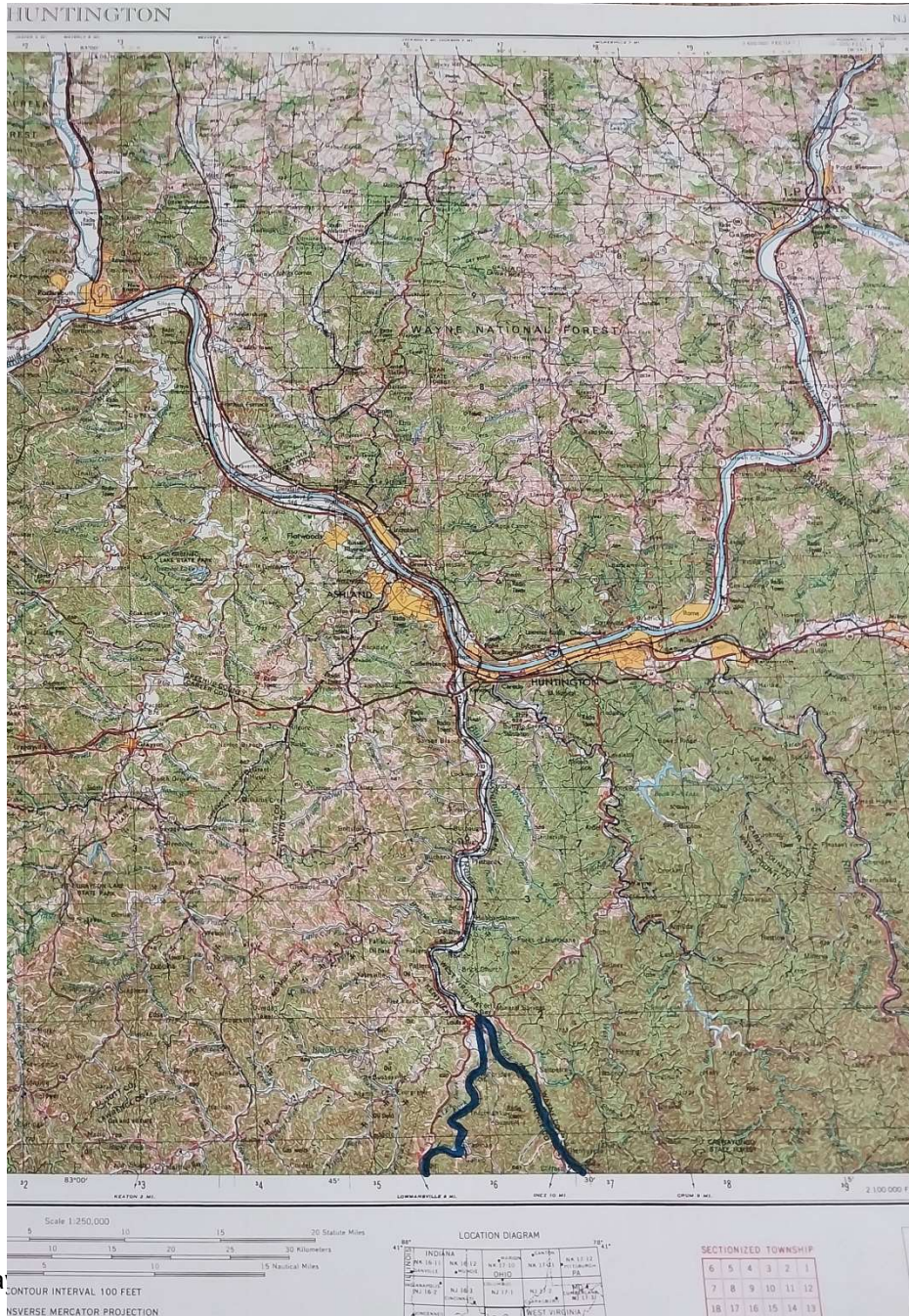


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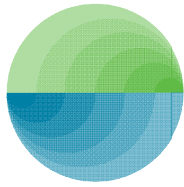
Appendix I

Lower Upper Big Sandy Watershed (confluence of Levisa and Tug Fork)



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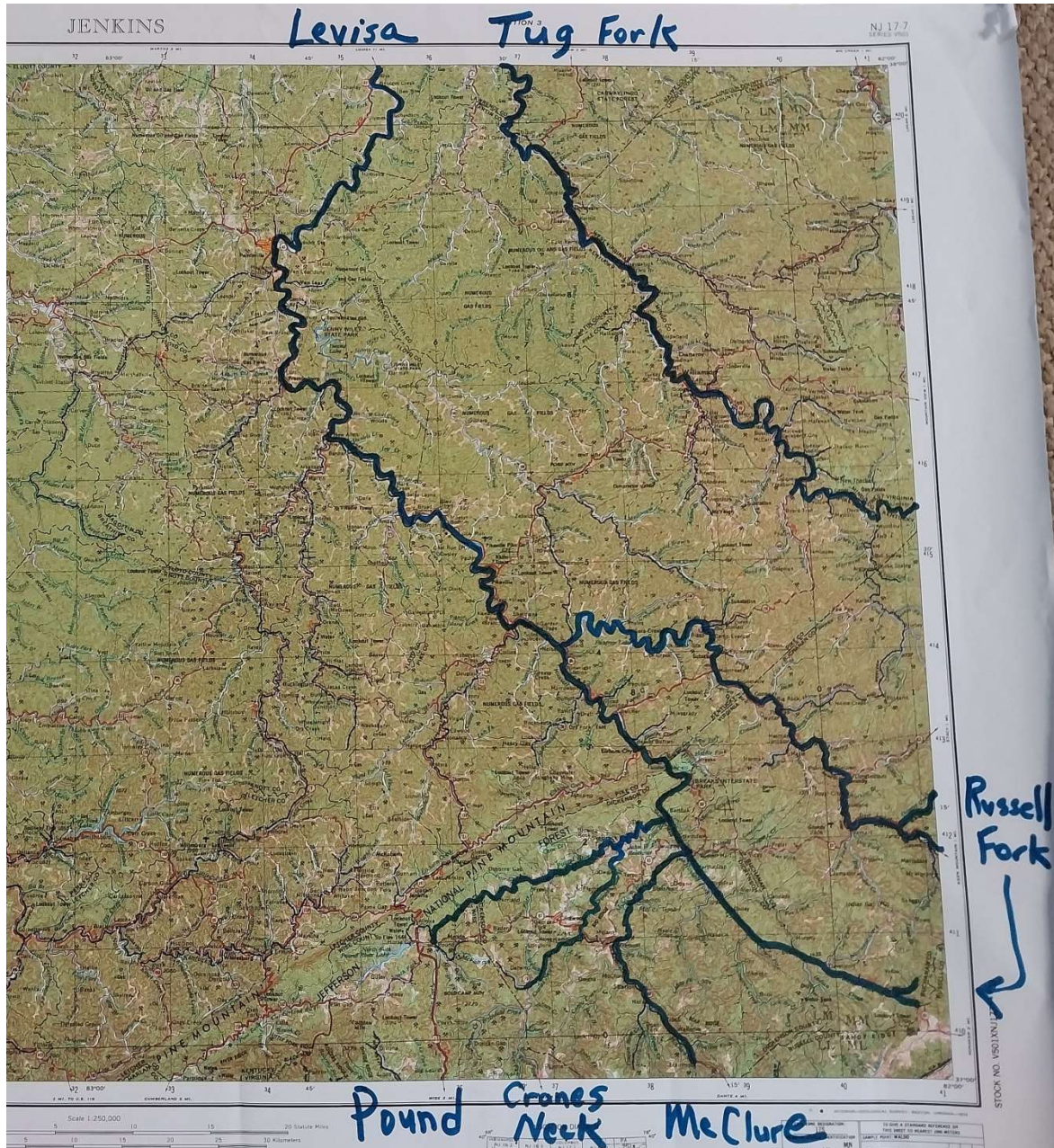
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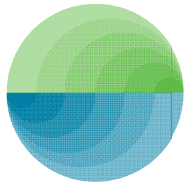
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Middle Upper Big Sandy Watershed



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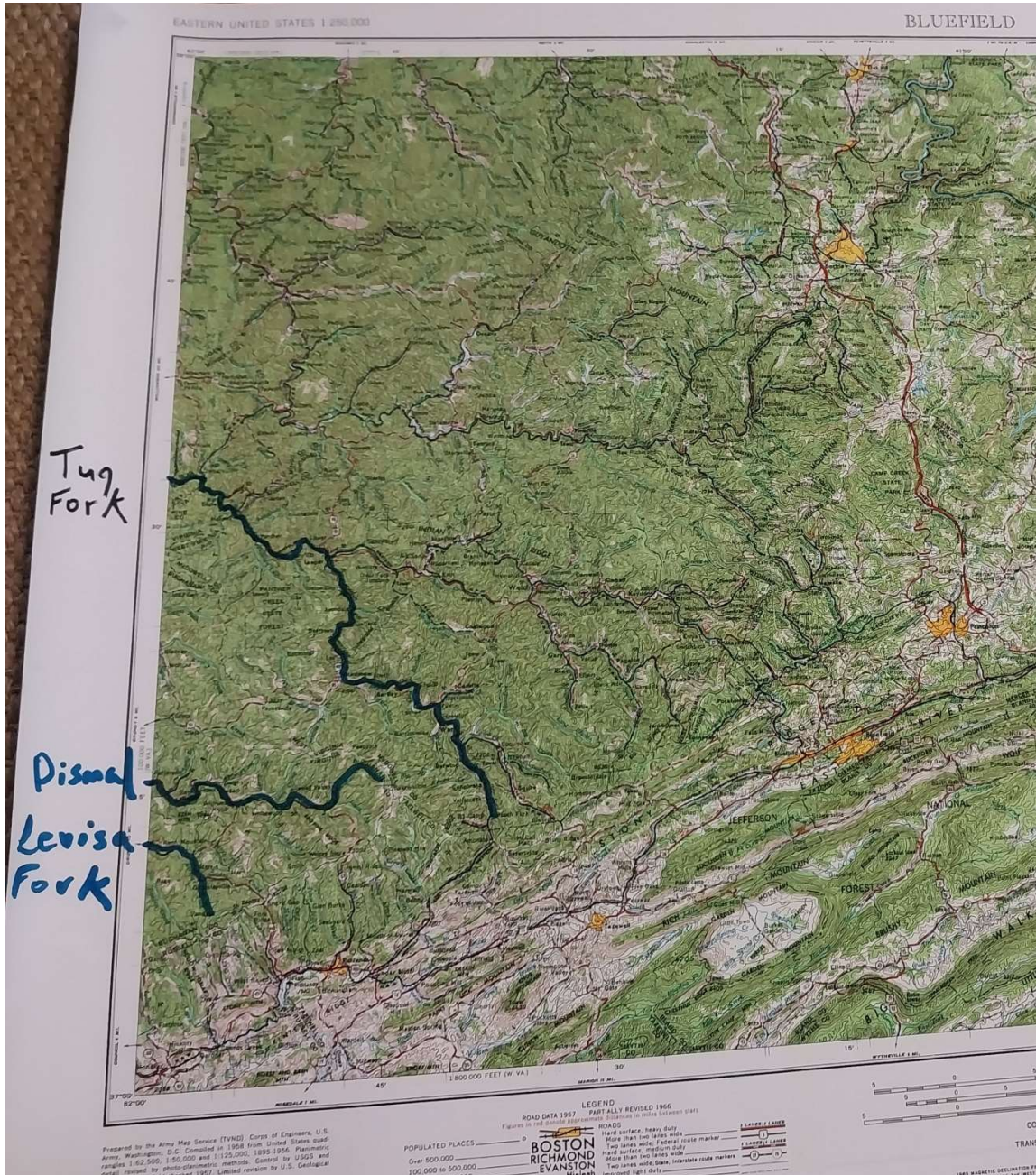
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Upper Upper Big Sandy Watershed



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