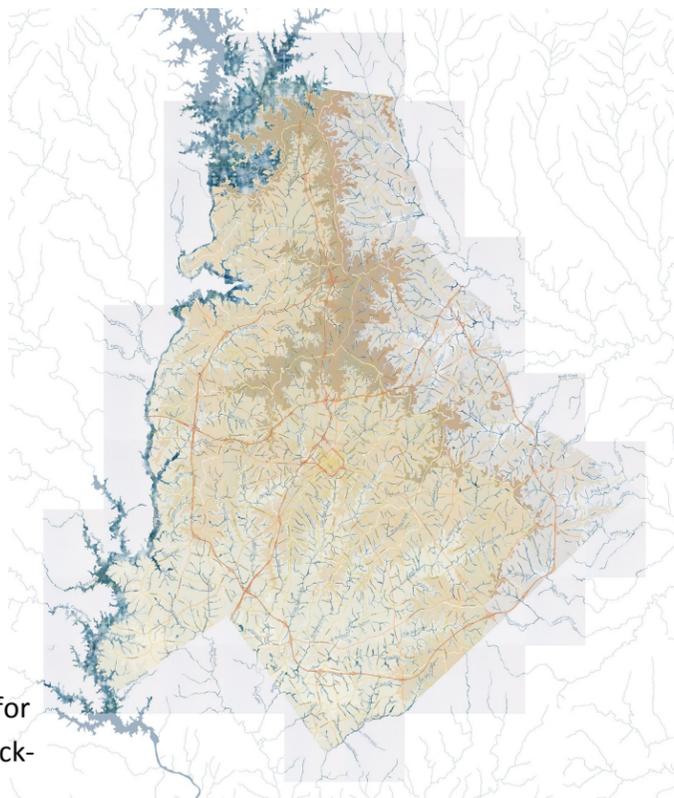


# DID YOU KNOW?

- Two-thirds of Mecklenburg County is in the Catawba River watershed, and the creeks eventually flow into Lake Norman, Mountain Island Lake, Lake Wylie or other parts of the Catawba River.
- The eastern third of Mecklenburg County is in the Yadkin-Pee Dee watershed. Those creeks flow eventually into the Pee Dee River.
- Unlike older cities, Charlotte does not combine its storm drain pipes with its sanitary sewer system pipes. In those older cities a heavy rainfall can make water in the sanitary sewers back up into houses. (Yuck.)
- A nationwide survey of the condition of small streams throughout the U.S. in 2004-05 found 42 percent of the stream miles were in poor biological condition and 28 percent in good condition. In the Eastern region that includes Charlotte, only 18 percent of the stream miles were in good biological condition, and 52 percent were in poor condition.
- The most widespread problems for streams across the U.S. are nitrogen and phosphorus (called “nutrients”), sediments in the streambed, and activities that disturb the stream’s banks such as construction, farming or removing vegetation.
- Nature uses floodplains to deal with heavy rains. A floodplain is the level land near a creek, river or lake that may be submerged by floodwaters.
- The study of creeks/streams is called surface hydrology. It is a core element of environmental geography.
- An estimated 50 percent of the water in small streams comes from groundwater.
- Many of Mecklenburg’s creeks begin as small springs.
- Water from springs is cleaner than water in creeks and colder in the summertime. In Charlotte it’s a constant 54 degrees Fahrenheit.



## LEARN MORE

Visit [KeepingWatch.org](http://KeepingWatch.org) and click on “Explore Creeks” for stories, videos, maps and other information about Mecklenburg County’s creeks.



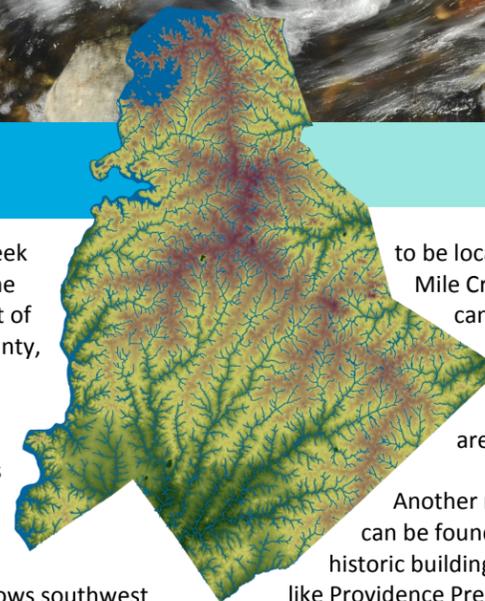
The Autobell® Creek Challenge is funded by Autobell® Car Wash.

# FOUR MILE CREEK



The Four Mile Creek watershed is in the southeastern part of Mecklenburg County, including the southern part of Matthews. The watershed begins about 1.5 miles east of downtown Matthews, and flows southwest toward the Ballantyne area. Four Mile Creek empties into McAlpine Creek, which flows into the Catawba River.

During the early 1800s, Mecklenburg County and surrounding counties were a hot spot for gold-mining. This was the first gold rush in the United States, and it lasted about 50 years. Approximately 22 different mines were located throughout the region, like Reed Gold Mine in Cabarrus County. Gold mine tunnels are still lurking beneath the surface in parts of uptown Charlotte. Although none of the mines was known



to be located within the Four Mile Creek watershed, you can occasionally see gold flakes in the creek, as another reminder of the area’s history.

Another reminder of the past can be found in some of the historic buildings in this watershed, like Providence Presbyterian Church. This church was organized in 1767 and is one of the oldest churches in the county. The church’s name became the name for the community that grew up around it—Providence—which in turn gave its name to one of Charlotte’s most important roads, Providence Road.

According to the church’s history, its first “pulpit” was a rock, known as Preaching Rock. A nearby **spring** was what first drew worshipers to the spot, and it provided water for baptisms and drinking water for people and their horses. Providence Spring Elementary

School recalls that spring, in its name. A **tributary** of Four Mile Creek, Rocky Branch, runs through the school property.

Several of the church’s members had significant roles in the community and during the Revolutionary War in the late 1700s. At least seven known veterans of the Revolutionary War are buried at the church cemetery. And three members—Neill Morrison, John Flennekin and Henry Downs—are believed to have signed the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence, also known as the “**Meck Dec**.” Historians don’t agree on whether the Meck Dec really existed, but if it did it was the first declaration of independence by any of the Thirteen Colonies before the Revolutionary War. During the war, John Flennekin is reported to have served as a private under Francis Marion, the famed “Swamp Fox” of South Carolina.

Unlike the Revolutionary War era, today most of the Four Mile Creek watershed

is covered with **residential development**, with a population of 38,176. Some notable landmarks are the Stonecrest Shopping Center, the Arboretum Shopping Center, Calvary Church and parts of downtown Matthews.

William R. Davie Park is also in this watershed. It was named for William Richardson Davie, who fought at the Battle of Charlotte during the Revolutionary War and was North Carolina's 10<sup>th</sup> governor in the late 1700s. The park has 107 acres of green space, including walking trails and recreational fields. There are almost 2 miles of greenways along Four Mile Creek, extending from Piper Glen Golf Course to the end of Four Mile Creek, where it connects to the McAlpine Creek Greenway.

Within the 15.6 square miles of the Four Mile Creek watershed are approximately

### Key vocabulary

**Impaired** – Weakened or damaged. Relating to water quality, it means the water is not suitable for the uses assigned to it.

**Meck Dec** – The nickname for the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence. Historians don't agree on whether the Meck Dec really existed, but if so it was the first Declaration of Independence of any of the Thirteen Colonies before the Revolutionary War. It was reportedly signed on May 20, 1775, and that date is on the North Carolina State Flag.

**Perennial stream** – Has water in it year-round.

**Residential development** – An area with places where people live, like houses and apartments.

**Spring** – A natural situation where groundwater flows to the earth's surface. Spring water is a steadier and purer water source than a creek. In Charlotte spring water is a relatively constant 54 degrees Fahrenheit.

**Tributary** – A river or stream flowing into a larger river or lake.

31 miles of **perennial streams**. The only other named creek in this watershed is Rocky Branch. Although most of the county's watersheds contain **impaired**

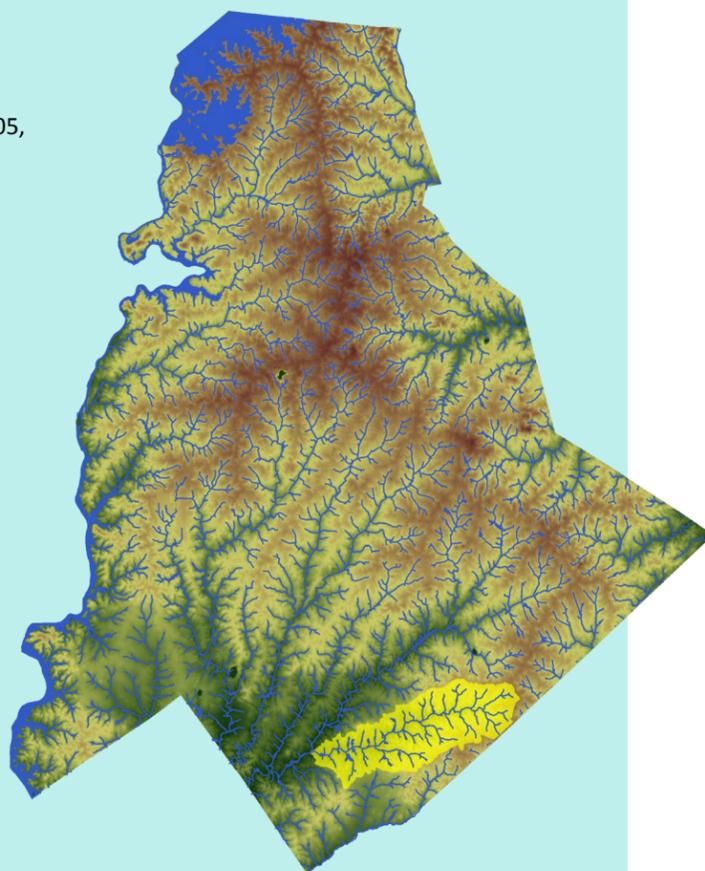
streams, there are no impaired streams within the Four Mile Creek watershed, making it unusual for a creek in Mecklenburg County.

### Profile

- **Location:** Southern edge of Mecklenburg County (zip codes: 28105, 28270, 28277)
- **Approximate land area in Mecklenburg:** 18.56 square miles
- **Estimated population in 2010:** 38,176
- **Creeks and tributaries:** Four Mile Creek and Rocky Branch
- **Drains into:** McAlpine Creek / Catawba River watershed
- **Miles of perennial streams:** 31.145
- **Impaired streams:** None

### Fun facts

- Gold flakes are occasionally seen in the creek, tiny reminders of this region's 50-year gold rush that began in 1799.
- Rocky Branch, a tributary of Four Mile Creek, is sometimes confused with the Rocky River, which flows through northeast Mecklenburg County on its way to the Pee Dee River.



### What's in the Four Mile Creek watershed?

- **Colleges:** Central Piedmont Community College-Levine Campus
- **Landmarks:** Village Green of Matthews, Matthews Town Hall, Piper Glen Country Club, Matthews Library, South County Regional Library, Stonecrest Shopping Center, Arboretum Shopping Center, Providence Presbyterian Church and its historic cemetery
- **Parks:** Mecklenburg County Regional Sports Complex & William R. Davie Regional Park



This land along McAlpine Creek has been preserved. It's downstream from where Four Mile Creek joins McAlpine north of Ballantyne. Photo: Nancy Pierce



Providence Presbyterian Church. The church building was built in 1858 and is on the National Register of Historic Places. Photo: Alexius Horatius - Wikipedia CC BY-SA



Stonecrest shopping center. Photo: Google Streetview



Matthews Town Hall and Library. Photo: Public Library Charlotte Mecklenburg County

### What you can do to protect our creeks

- **Don't dump hazardous chemicals down drains.** Take them to a recycling center.
- **Don't dump yard waste in drains or creeks.** Bag, recycle or compost it.
- **Prevent soil erosion.** Plant trees and bushes along creek banks and in bare areas of the yard.
- **Scoop the poop.** Dog waste can pollute local creeks.
- **Use a car wash, not the driveway.**
- **Use fewer fertilizers and chemicals** in your yard. Don't apply chemicals 48 hours before a heavy rain.

- **Don't dump cooking grease and oil down the sink.** Grease clogs are the most common cause of sewage spills into Mecklenburg County creeks.
- **Report pollution, including soil erosion.** Call 311. To report online, or use the Water Watcher app visit <http://charmec.org/stormwater/ReportPollution>
- **Reduce how much runoff leaves your property.** Plant trees, use rain barrels, limit the use of pavement and limit the use of pipes to send rainwater into storm drains.