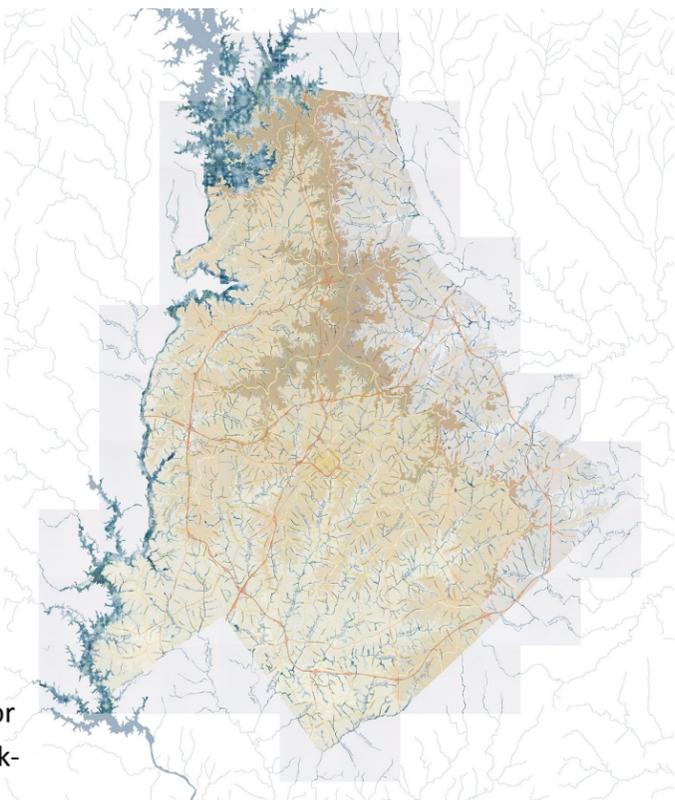


DID YOU KNOW?

- 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 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 sewer water back up into houses. (Yuck.)
- A nationwide survey of the small streams in 2004-05 found 42 percent of the stream miles were in poor biological condition and 28 percent in good condition.
- Nature uses floodplains to deal with heavy rains.
- 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 summer. In Charlotte it's a constant 54 degrees Fahrenheit.
- By the 1900s, raw sewage was routinely dumped into Charlotte creeks.
- In 1701, explorer John Lawson walked through what is now Charlotte. He said the land around him was "... abounding in many pleasant and delightful Rivulets." He meant there were many small streams that he found delightful.
- Who owns the water in the creeks? We all do, as citizens of North Carolina. State law says: "... the water and air resources of the State belong to the people."
- The study of creeks/streams is called surface hydrology. It is a core element of environmental geography.



LEARN MORE

Visit 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.

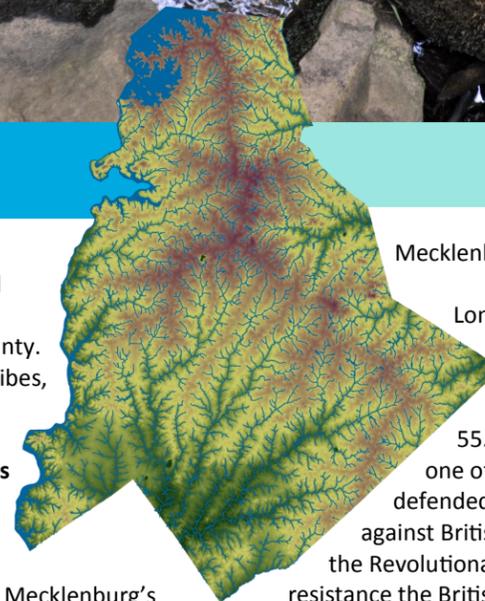
LONG CREEK



Long Creek flows through west and northwest Mecklenburg County. As its name describes, it's a long creek, with 55 miles of **perennial streams** in its creekshed. Long Creek begins near the ridge that divides Mecklenburg's two river watersheds: the Catawba River watershed in the west and the Yadkin-Pee Dee River watershed in the east.

One of the creek's big tributaries flows past Northlake Mall. Long Creek crosses I-485 more than six times and flows through several parks and landmarks, including Hornet's Nest Regional Park, before it flows into the Catawba River just north of the U.S. National Whitewater Center.

Places in the Long Creek watershed played important roles in early



Mecklenburg County history.

Long Creek is named after Captain John Long, who died July 4, 1799, at age 55. Captain Long was one of the patriots who defended the Charlotte area against British invaders during the Revolutionary War. Due to the resistance the British Army encountered in Charlotte, Lord Cornwallis—the commander of the British forces in the Revolution—later referred to Charlotte as "a hornet's nest of rebellion." Ever since then, the nickname, "Hornet's Nest" has stuck with the city, including giving a name to today's NBA team, the Charlotte Hornets, as well as Hornets Nest Elementary School, which is in the Long Creek watershed.

One of the Long Creek tributaries is McIntyre Creek. It's named for John McIntyre, who built a log cabin at what is now the McIntyre Historic site in

about 1769. The spot on Beatties Ford Road was the site of a 1780 skirmish between 14 local Patriot militiamen and some 300 British troops who were occupying the nearby hamlet of Charlotte. It's the only undisturbed Revolutionary War battle site in the county. In the mid-1800s, a gold mine, the Hipp Gold Mine, occupied the site.

Also in the Long Creek watershed is the Alexandriana Historic Site. Alexandriana was the homesite of John McKnitt Alexander, secretary of the committee that drew up the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence, known as the Meck Dec, and the Mecklenburg Resolves in 1775. Historians can'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. There is no question about the Mecklenburg Resolves, signed May 31, 1775. The date the Meck Dec was reportedly signed, May 20, 1775, is on the North Carolina State Flag. There is a

monument at Alexandria to the Meck Dec signers.

In the 1700s and 1800s, Long Creek was home to several water-powered mills, the first of which was built by Captain Long before the Revolutionary War. In 1820, about 20 years after his death, the Long Creek Mill was built. In those early days in the backwoods, far from any towns, a **grist mill** like this one was the center of many community activities. Long Creek mill was the scene of militia drills, and it was where taxes were collected and where people voted and politicians campaigned. Politicians would speak to voters while standing on stumps, and campaigns at Long Creek Mill often involved fighting. According to a history written in 1907, during those events people would also pass out “whiskey, cider, watermelons, and ginger cakes.”

Key vocabulary

- Grist mill** – A mill that grinds grain, such as corn or wheat, into cornmeal or flour.
- Impaired** – Weakened or damaged. Relating to water quality, it means the water is not suitable for the uses assigned to it.
- Perennial streams** – Creeks or streams with water in them year-round.
- Turbidity** – cloudiness or haziness due to a lot of small particles in the water, typically mud or sediment.

Today, the mills along Long Creek are in ruins, and the creek is surrounded by subdivision neighborhoods.

The state environmental office lists the creek as “**impaired**” due to high levels of **turbidity** and copper. Materials that can cause water to be turbid include clay, silt, algae, organic compounds, plankton and other microscopic organisms.

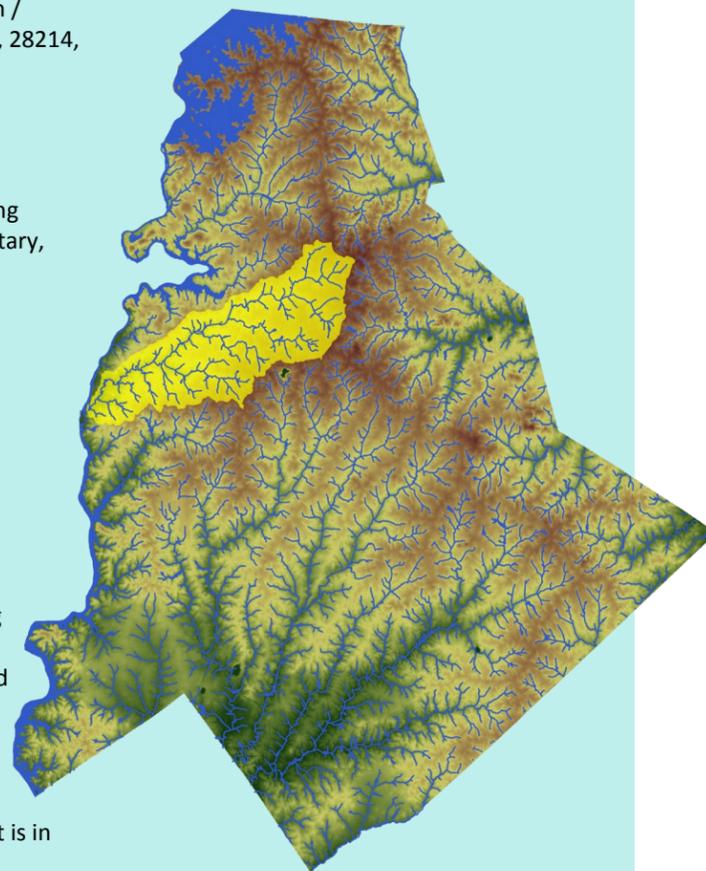
The Long Creek watershed covers 36.3 square miles. In 2010 it was home to a population of 44,019.

Profile

- Location:** Northwestern Mecklenburg County including southern / western Huntersville and northwest Charlotte (zip codes: 28078, 28214, 28216, 28269)
- Approximate size of the watershed:** 36.33 square miles
- Estimated population in 2010:** 44,019
- Creeks and tributaries:** Long Creek, Long Creek Tributary #1, Long Creek Tributary #2, Long Creek Tributary #3, Dixon Branch Tributary, Gum Branch, Gutter Branch, McIntyre Creek
- Drains into:** Mountain Island Lake / Catawba River
- Miles of perennial (year-round) streams:** 55.052
- Impaired streams:** All of Long Creek is listed as impaired.
- Reason for impairment:** Turbidity (cloudiness) and copper

Fun facts

- I-485 crosses Long Creek and its tributaries more than six times.
- Long Creek is named after Captain John Long. He is listed among the early public officials of Mecklenburg County, as well as among the bands of patriots of the “Hornet’s Nest” who repelled a regiment of British invaders at Charlotte in 1780.
- Long Creek Elementary School in Huntersville is named for Long Creek but in fact is in the Gar Creek watershed.
- Paw Creek Elementary School is named for Paw Creek but in fact is in the Long Creek watershed.



What's in the Long Creek watershed?

- Landmarks:** Northlake Mall, Alexandria Historic Site, Carolina Rehabilitation Center, U.S. National Whitewater Center.
- Schools:** North Mecklenburg High School, Paw Creek Elementary School (but not Long Creek Elementary School).
- Parks:** Shuffletown Community Park, Coulwood Community Park, Hornet’s Nest Regional Park, McIntyre Historic Site



Long Creek Elementary School is near Long Creek, but actually is in the Gar Creek watershed. Photo: Mary Newsom



The North Carolina state flag carries the date the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence was reportedly signed: May 20, 1775. Historians don’t agree on whether the Meck Dec was real, or is a legend. A monument to the signers of the Meck Dec is in the Long Creek watershed at the Alexandria Historic Site.



Many local creeks are piped under roads. Photo: Nancy Pierce



Speeding storm water erodes creek banks. Photo: Nancy Pierce



Long Creek Mill, circa 1910. Photo: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission



Long Creek Mill today. Photo: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission