**Cherokee fishing tournament offers $20,000 in prizes**

CHEROKEE, N.C. - Anglers will be flocking to Cherokee this weekend to compete for $20,000 in cash prizes, to be awarded during the annual “Cast Into Spring” fishing tournament, taking place March 27-29. The event is co-sponsored by the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and the Cherokee Chamber of Commerce.

Participants can win prizes ranging from $25 to $5,000 when they land specially tagged fish in the rivers on the Qualla Boundary (excluding the 2.2 miles of catch-and-release waters). The tournament requires an $11 entry fee and a tribal fishing permit. It is open to all ages and all legal fishing methods. Register to redeem cash prizes anywhere fishing licenses are sold.

Prizes can be redeemed at the Cherokee Chamber of Commerce on U.S. 441 (4-6 p.m. Friday and Saturday and 12-2 p.m. Sunday).

More than 250,000 rainbow, brown and brook trout are released annually into 30 miles of freestone streams and three ponds on the Qualla Boundary. Local waters are stocked twice each week and include many trophy sizes. The river system comprises the longest privately owned and stocked waters east of the Mississippi.

For information contact: Michael LaVoie, EBCI Fisheries and Wildlife Management, michlavo@nc-cherokee.com, 828-554-6113.

The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians is a sovereign nation with more than 15,000 enrolled members and is the only federally recognized Native American tribe in North Carolina. The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians makes its home on the 56,600-acre Qualla Boundary in five Western North Carolina counties about an hour west of Asheville and at the entrance to Great Smoky Mountains National Park.