

FOREST NEWS

Georgia ForestWatch Quarterly Newsletter Summer 2006



Who's watching
your forest?

Scenic/Wilderness bill introduced

By Wayne Jenkins : Executive Director

Two Republican Congressmen from north Georgia introduced legislation June 15 to provide special protection for nearly 22,000 acres of the Chattahoochee National Forest. H. R. 5612 is sponsored by Reps. Nathan Deal (R-10) and Charles Norwood (R-9). The bill, if enacted, will provide increased protective measures for the 13,382-acre Mountaintown, the state's largest inventoried roadless area, and add 8,448 acres to existing wilderness areas.

Rep. Deal spearheaded the legislative effort in response to local citizens, business owners and political leadership in Gilmer County. By establishing the Mountaintown Creek Scenic Area, the bill will protect more than 13,000 acres of beautiful, wild and remote national forest lands in the Cohutta Mountains northwest of Ellijay, Georgia.

"The bill's provisions are more stringent than those outlined in current U.S. Forest Service management plans and are deemed vital to safeguarding this pristine area for generations to come," said Beth Pigott, a member of Friends of Mountaintown, the local, grassroots community organization in Gilmer County that has been working on the Mountaintown protection measures for the past two years.

"This bill represents the culmination of many hours of hard work and

negotiation with Rep. Deal and the Forest Service," Pigott said. "It will provide long-term protection for this area from additional road-building and unnecessary logging, and will prove economically beneficial to Gilmer and the entire north Georgia region."

"We applaud Rep. Deal's dedication to protecting downstream water supplies with this bill," says David Govus, a local hunter and fisherman. The headwaters of one of Georgia's premier trout streams, Mountaintown Creek, originate in the proposed scenic area.

Pigott also credited Georgia ForestWatch with providing expert support to Friends of Mountaintown in connection with technical aspects of the Deal-Norwood proposal. "ForestWatch is pleased to assist local communities with their efforts to protect our last large forested areas," said Wayne Jenkins, executive director of Georgia ForestWatch.

"Many of us have moved to these beautiful mountains in order to be near and use these special places for traditional activities such as hunting, fishing and hiking. As the floodtide of development sweeps over our region, having protected places like Mountaintown for providing for the recreational needs of our people, protecting the headwater streams supplying our drinking water and maintaining special natural areas

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

Collaborative Forest Management?

Recently, the leadership of the Chattahoochee National Forest initiated a public process for “collaboratively” engaging the public in planning the next five years of forest vegetation management. ForestWatch has been requesting such a process since shortly after the implementation of the new Land & Resource Management Plan in 2004, and we are pleased to see this bold leap by the agency into the potentially difficult and complex arena of collaborative decision making. The process covers two districts on both the western and eastern portions of the forest; the Armuchee/Cohutta districts on the west and the Tallulah/Chattooga districts on the east. Two initial public meetings were held to explain the reasons for various management needs in these zones of the national forest. The informational meetings were followed by several field trips to review and discuss various vegetation management “opportunities” being proposed by the U.S. Forest Service. ForestWatch staff, members and district leaders have participated in all meetings and field visits and appreciate the opportunity to be involved.

This “collaborative process” has been touted by the agency as similar to one conducted on the Bankhead National Forest in Alabama. We would point out that the process in Alabama took two years to flesh out, with many concerned partners, and produced a Restoration Environmental Impact Statement for guiding the management on the Bankhead for the 10-15 year life of that forest plan. Two professional Forest Service facilitators assisted in this process after five years of extremely contentious wrangling amongst various interest groups and the

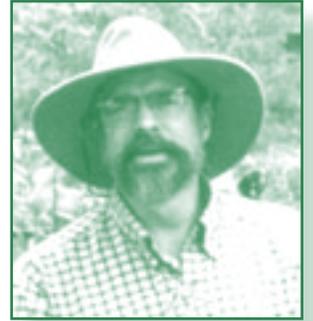
agency. We suggest that the leadership on the Chattahoochee follow this lead.

Though encouraged that the Forest Service is engaged in a public process, we have grave concerns about several aspects of the ongoing, fast-track effort in Georgia. A “collaborative” process as defined by Webster entails “working together” and/or “to cooperate in an undertaking.”

Despite an upfront commitment to a “collaborative process” things appear to be moving along at a rapid pace set only by the agency. We understand the government’s desire to get to work to implement the not-so-new management plan (two years old in January of this year,) but know that the many proposals

put forth for vegetation management in the two zones are complex and potentially controversial. It simply will take time for the various groups and the public to grasp what exactly the agency wants to achieve on the people’s forests. Another obvious problem is the depth of representation at these meetings. For whatever reason, very few people are attending the meetings or field trips. Lastly and perhaps most importantly, it will take time to account for the history of past Forest Service actions, the

lack of communication, the acrimony engendered by specific projects, the lawsuits and appeals and a forest management legacy that left thousands of acres of cut-over forest stands hammered by the SouthernPine Beetle. It will take time, patience and much talking and listening on all sides to create a truly successful “collaborative” outcome for the sake of our forests.



Wayne Jenkins

Photo by Honor Woodard



Forest Service field outing and interested forestwatchers

The vegetation management proposals brought forward by the Forest Service run the gamut from thinning of over stocked loblolly pine stands, prone to Southern Pine Beetle damage, to the creation of high elevation, early successional habitat (that is, clear cuts,) for species that some say are dependent on that type of environment to the logging of thousands of acres of mature trees to create canopy gaps. One of the obvious common threads connecting much of these management proposals is the widespread, repeated use of prescribed fire. It appears that our forest managers have come 180 degrees from the days of Smokey the Bear and suppression of fire, around to a new vision of "let it burn" or more accurately, "let us burn it." Understand we are not talking about forest replacement fires here but mostly ground fire used to select out certain unwanted tree species, to burn off "fuels" accumulated in the under-story and to thin and suppress unwanted vegetation. We have stated in the past, our analysis and opposition to indiscriminate burning of our southern Appalachian forests, but the desire to burn has swept across our managers plans and there is money in Washington to fuel it. We are not convinced that most of our forest communities require fire to be healthy and believe that the forest types, soils and climatic conditions indicate that natural fire has a minor role to play across our predominantly wet region. We, of course, support the use of fire for those forest community types that require fire and have been pushing for burns in specific areas such as the restoration burns for smooth coneflower on the Chattooga district, covered on page 8. The maintenance of table mountain and pitch pine and perhaps long leaf pine in a few sites on the southern Armuchee Ridges present as possible opportunities for the appropriate use of fire but to allow available tax dollars to be used on forest acres where fire is not needed is bad management and policy.

This is but one example of our concern about new management direction and as we learn more about the details and specific locations for these various projects we will be taking a hard look and commenting on the process, proposals, scope and goals and bringing you the story. We will strive to make these complex issues understandable and hope you will let us and the forest service know how you feel concerning this "new" management of your forests. Go to www.fs.fed.us/conf/planning/collab/ for more about this process, maps and information. E-mail or call the Forest Service and ask to be put on the mailing list for future outings and meetings. ♦



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Whitewater boaters try end-run around Upper Chattooga analysis

By Joe Gatins : District Leader

American Whitewater and several other whitewater enthusiasts have filed suit in U.S. District court in Gainesville to try to force immediate opening of the upper 21 miles of the Wild and Scenic Chattooga River to so-called "primitive floaters."

The suit, filed May 18 by two top-drawer law firms in Atlanta and Washington, define such floaters as "hand-powered canoes, kayaks and rafts," and appears to signal an opening of a major second front in the current Chattooga boating controversy.

Until filing suit, the lobby organization for kayakers running extreme and dangerous rapids had appeared willing to cooperate with the U.S. Forest Service, which is conducting a detailed analysis of the river's headwaters, largely at the behest of American Whitewater.

The lobby group had appealed the Forest Service decision in 2004 to continue the zoning of the Upper Chattooga that prevents all manner of travel along those 21 miles of river except for foot traffic. That prohibition against horses, bikes, ATVs, other 4-wheelers and all boats had been in effect for better than 30 years, and was largely instituted to reduce user conflicts between flotillas of kayaks and anglers and hunters and the many local families who also used that wild part of the river for recreation.

Forest Service officials say that they intend to continue with the multi-year analysis sparked by American Whitewater's appeal, while also vigorously defending against the legal guerilla attack in Gainesville. (Government lawyers filed papers June 12 asking for dismissal on both substantive and procedural grounds – in the latter case, because the kayakers' lawyers apparently had not properly served government officials with their suit.)

It is difficult to understand the exact rationale for the boaters' tactics from the court filing, but two assumptions appear plausible: That the boaters hope to prove that some, limited boater use of the headwaters occurred before the river was designated a Wild and Scenic river by Congress, thus perhaps negating the reason for the current zoning; and that American

Whitewater is hoping for a favorable court ruling to bolster its efforts to go after the big whitewater prize – the hundreds of miles of creeks and rivers in Yellowstone National Park. The National Park Service currently bans whitewater boating there.

As noted in the winter edition of Forest News, Georgia ForestWatch sees no current reason for changing the no-boating zone on the Upper Chattooga (roughly from the Grimshawes Bridge in Cashiers, N.C., to the Route 28 bridge in Rabun County.) Georgia ForestWatch will continue to engage the Forest Service in its analysis and study of visitor use on that part of the river, and encourages the public to do so.

Georgia ForestWatch also is engaged in formation of the Friends of the Upper Chattooga, the informal organization

Photo by Doug Adams



Hemlock across the Chattooga River. This and perhaps hundreds of woolly adelgid-killed hemlocks may be slated for cutting and removal if boating is allowed above the GA Highway 28 bridge.

that has banded together to affect the Forest Service process, and give voice to the many individuals and organizations in the three-state area covered by the federal agency's user analysis. The group includes hunters, hikers, anglers, swimmers, nature photographers, bird watchers, naturalists, amateur archeologists, private landowners, conservationists and local people who have enjoyed the freedom to visit this wild area of Southern Appalachia for decades, often in pristine solitude,

as well as various conservation and recreation groups. The Friends also filed a “friend of the court” brief in the latest round of litigation on July 5, urging the U.S. District Court in Gainesville to reject the American Whitewater demands.

The Friends believe the American Whitewater court maneuver is unreasonable and without merit.

“The Forest Service was right in the middle of doing exactly what AWA had asked them to do when they filed the lawsuit against the agency. AWA wants access with no restrictions, and they want it without due process. Our definition of conservation is based on a willingness to accept restrictions to protect the resource. The Forest Service clearly has the authority to protect the wilderness values of the Upper Chattooga. If AWA isn’t willing to play by the rules, then we are going to fight them,” said Buzz Williams, executive director of the Chattooga Conservancy and a spokesman for the Friends.

“The Upper Chattooga is one of the only rivers on the East Coast that is still remote enough to provide a ‘wilderness experience’ where a person can still find solitude in a primitive setting. We can’t take a chance with a resource that rare. We need to get away from frivolous lawsuits and get back to the table to determine how we can balance use to protect the outstandingly remarkable resource values of the upper Chattooga,” he added.

Butch Clay, of Mountain Rest, S.C., an advisor to the Georgia ForestWatch board, and real “poet of the Chattooga,” perhaps best defined what is at stake here: “... the headwater reach has remained to a large extent unsung, surviving as an improbably intact and almost unbelievably wild vestige of primitive America, a last resort of peace and quiet for humans, and a small but blessedly untrammelled haven for flora and fauna widely (and increasingly) supplanted in this region by the sprawling expanse of un-abating urban growth.”

The question for the Forest Service and all Americans is whether it is better to maintain this virtually unique treasure, or open it up to increasing pressures, including the commercial rafting and kayaking companies that inevitably would seek access to the Upper Chattooga if the whitewater industry managed to crack the headwaters’ door open. ♦

For more information, see:

<http://www.chattoogariver.org/>

An excellent précis detailing reasons for resisting the opening of this stretch of river.

http://www.smokymountainnews.com/internal_pages/outdoors.html

The most comprehensive media coverage of the issue to date.

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/fms/forest/projects/chattdata.shtml>

The latest from the Forest Service concerning the visitor capacity use analysis.

Plan on attending this meeting: The next public meeting on the Forest Service analysis of this issue is scheduled for 6-8 p.m. at the Highlands Civic Center, 600 North 4th Street (U.S. 64 East,) Highlands, N.C., on Thursday, July 27.

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Scenic/Wilderness bill introduced *(continued from page 1)*

that improve in scenic splendor over time will be understood as good business for local economies and all citizens,” he continued.

The legislation also designates 8,000-plus acres of smaller additions to existing wilderness in the Chattahoochee National Forest, as recommended by the National Forest Service and the Bush administration in September of 2004.

Friends of Mountaintown looks forward to the bill’s movement through the House Agriculture and Resources committees and hope a companion bill will be introduced soon in U.S. Sen. Saxby Chambliss’ Agriculture committee with full support by our senior senator and Senator Johnny Isakson. ♦

Save the Dates: Friday, September 29 – Sunday, October 1 Georgia ForestWatch 2006 Fall Retreat

Can you believe it! The year 2006 marks the 20th anniversary of the formation of Georgia ForestWatch. It seems like only a short time ago that our initial team of District Leaders joined together to address the rising concerns for the conservation and preservation of our beautiful north Georgia forests.

Here we are twenty years later with a growing ForestWatch membership of over 580 active members and a support system of over twenty-five volunteers. Our programs have expanded to include Forest Monitoring, Appealing the Forest Management Plan, reducing ORV impacts, battling the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, preserving ancient forests, and obtaining permanent protection for special areas of our National Forest.

Our 2006 Fall Retreat will be held at the Cohutta Lodge and Restaurant located atop Fort Mountain in Chatsworth, GA beginning Friday, September 29th and concluding on Sunday, October 1st. We have reserved the Cohutta Valley View Building for our guests (offering spectacular views of the mountains), we will dine in a private dining room, we will conduct our educational sessions featuring keynote speakers in the private conference center, enjoy day hikes on the property and bluegrass music by an evening bonfire. Both a Children's Program and Child Day Care will be available free of charge.

The Retreat will be organized entirely through ForestWatch. Information and invitations are forthcoming. Join us for this special 20th Anniversary celebration of our past work and future focus for protecting the forests we all hold dear! Save the dates today!

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Forest land sales idea stopped ... or not?

WASHINGTON – Lawmakers recently declared two Bush administration proposals to sell off hundreds of thousands of acres of federal land all but dead after a Senate committee passed a key spending bill that excluded the provisions, as the U.S. House had done earlier in this session.

President Bush's proposed 2007 budget would have sold Forest Service lands to fund a rural schools and counties program and Bureau of Land Management acres to fund government operations and reduce the national debt.

But the Senate Appropriations Committee approved a bill funding the Interior Department and the Forest Service for next year that does not contain the land sale measures, according to a recent news article appearing in the *Casper Star-Tribune* late last month.

A spokesman for Sen. Conrad Burns, R-Montana, who chairs the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee, said he did not expect any attempts to revive the measures.

"Chairman Burns has said the land sale proposal is dead in the water and it is not in the Interior appropriations bill which was reported out of committee today," said spokesman Matt Mackowiak. "We have no indication these two proposals will show up down the road."

In May, the House passed its version of the spending bill, also without the land sale proposals.

Western lawmakers, and several in the Georgia delegation, had fought for months against the proposal to sell off the

forest lands and use the \$800 million in revenue to fund the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act.

The proposal would have sold off more than 4,500 acres of national forestland in Georgia, including many high-elevation tracts containing some of the largest and oldest and most majestic trees in the state. Of this acreage, two tracts totaling 109.3 acres were deemed to be old growth forest, more than 120 years old.

Other problems, according to Georgia ForestWatch's analysis of the proposed sales, was that 11 of the Georgia tracts were above 2,000 feet, three rose above 3,000 feet and 25 of the 30 parcels protect vital headwater streams.

"We are pleased to see that Congress has listened to the people and backed away from this ill-conceived proposal," said Wayne Jenkins, Georgia ForestWatch's executive director. "But we must now remain vigilant to ensure this idea stays dead."

Jenkins's last admonition appears particularly apt, given that some in the Forest Service and elsewhere in Washington seem bent on reviving the ill-conceived sales proposal.

Dan Jiron, Washington spokesman for the U.S. Forest Service, contends the obituary on the land sale proposal is premature. "What you have heard isn't an indication of anything at this point," he said, according to an Associated Press article from early July.

Under-assistant agriculture secretary Mark Rey, a former timber industry lobbyist, said if the plan failed this year, he would be back next year with an alternative. Meanwhile, Jiron told the AP that the administration will press its case this year in Congress before committees with direct oversight of the rural schools program. ♦

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Restoration projects in the Lake Russell WMA

By Dudley Sisk and Wally Warren : District Leaders
and Jim Sullivan : Board Member

A few of us gathered late last fall at the game-checking station in the Lake Russell Wildlife Management Area. This is the very southeastern corner of the Chattahoochee National Forest, stretching between Cornelia and Toccoa. Unlike most of our forest, this area lies in the Piedmont, not the Blue Ridge. Still, as a segment of the Gainesville Ridges, which cross Georgia from northeast to southwest, the area is surprisingly remote and rugged. The Forest Service had recently begun several projects here, and we wanted to see them.

In its revised Land and Management Plan of last year, the USFS included this area in its 9H prescription. The Forest Service describes 9H as “Management, Maintenance, and Restoration of Plant Associations for their Ecological Potential.” You can call 9H the national management prescription of the Chattooga Ranger District; it covers more acreage than any other prescription. It covers other large parts of the forest, as well. The Forest Service can log, thin, plant, and otherwise alter these areas to restore them to some “natural” state. For these reasons, how our forest looks in a few decades depends partly on how the Forest Service carries out 9H today.

We left the checking station in our cars. The day was brisk: twenty-eight degrees that morning in Clarkesville, though by afternoon the temperature had climbed to the sixties. The leaves were near the height of their fall color, but the roads were dusty, given a recent dearth of rain. Eight of us were along: Elmer Butler, Joe Gatins, John and Karen Leary and their children James and Mary Kate, James Sullivan, and Wally Warren. Our ages ranged from ten to eighty-nine, and we walked three rugged miles that day.

At Browns Bottom we got out of our cars and looked at the hillside behind us. It was covered in a pure stand of loblolly pines, planted after a clear-cut some twenty years ago. Loblolly pines are not native to our part of Georgia, but the Forest Service planted them widely in the 1970s and 1980s. Most hikers in the

Chattahoochee, on the Appalachian Trail, for example, never see them; instead they walk through lush, diverse stands of hardwood trees, but the whole forest is not like that. Starting in the 1960s, scientific forestry called for clearing large areas and planting them in one species, which would maximize timber production. Less glamorous parts of the National Forest, like Lake Russell, were managed that way. Thus, on that hillside we saw one uninspiring chapter of forest history. Also apparent was the need for a future, healthier chapter: restoration to a more diverse forest, if done right.

We climbed back in our cars, drove a couple of miles farther, and parked to start our hike. The road here cut between a hill and a draw, covered with a rich, century-old, mixed pine-hardwood forest. We hope more of the forest looks like this in fifty years. More to the point, in its restoration projects now, the Forest Service can use this stand as a model for what it wants to encourage. The trees are old, straight, and tall, with a mixture of chestnut oaks and white oaks, mockernut hickories, shortleaf pines, and other species. The Forest Service has burned repeatedly here, and there is not much of an understory. The use of fire is not new; Native Americans and Euro-Americans have burned here for centuries. (On many parts of the National Forest, fire is an inappropriate alien. Not here.) These old trees are fruitful, both for timber sometime in the future, and for mast for wildlife today, and yet humans have partly shaped it. This stand shows the promise of restoration.

We turned and walked up the hill, finally starting our hike. There was no trail, but the going was easy, since our way was so clear. We rounded the hill and took an old road to the northwest. At the top of a gap, on both sides of the road, we came upon an unusually large clump of horse sugar. We crossed the gap and veered briefly off to our left to look at a long row of rock outcrops lining the brow of the ridge above us. A spring bubbled from the rocks and dropped noisily a dozen feet or so to our feet.

These rocks looked natural enough, but they were not. Unlike many of the Blue Ridge portions of the Chattahoochee National Forest, this area has been inhabited by humans for

centuries. The Cherokees and their ancestors lived and roamed in this area. In 1785, the first Euro-American, Colonel William Wofford, a Revolutionary War veteran, led a small band of family and friends to settle less than five miles from here. Wofford, followed by his descendants, girdled the trees, planted the openings, and grazed the hills intensively for the next half century. The rock outcrops were quarried for chimneys and building foundations.

We circled the rocks and climbed the hill. Our road, sunk and eroded between its shoulders, confirmed the long human presence nearby. The slope now faced south, becoming dryer and rockier; here the forest is smaller and dominated by pine and blackjack oak. Grasses became more abundant. Fire would be useful in this area, too. In fact, before the era of fire suppression, it was a frequent visitor. Burning these woods would encourage purple-headed coneflower and other rare prairie plants that were once common here. We climbed and entered a young pine stand that had been laid waste by the southern pine beetle. Dead trees lay scattered across the road and made walking difficult.

This devastation was the result partly of actions the Forest Service took in the 1980s. Loggers took out a mixed stand and planted, once again, loblolly pines. The pines, believed to be of a genetically superior variety, were supposed to grow into tall, vigorous trees that could be turned into lots of two-by-fours. The two-by-fours never came, but the southern pine beetle did, and, after it was done, nothing but snags and the understory were left: an unkempt miscellany of young cherries and maples, evidence that the area had not burned for years.

We reached the top and stepped into sunlight. Here was a stand the Forest Service had cut this past summer—its most recent 9H restoration project. The goal was to create a mixed stand similar to the pretty one where we started that morning. They had little to work with, though. All of the trees in the canopy were, once again, loblolly pines; there were no older hardwoods to save. Before the cut, the stand was an impassible thicket. The Forest Service opened it up to a twenty-foot spacing between trees. A healthy variety of sprouts, coming up from the forest floor, promised a lovely, diverse future: chestnut, white, and northern red oaks, mockernut hickory. The Forest Service intends to burn this site, but we want to urge them to leave it alone for now and give those young hardwoods a chance.

Good as the stand looked, it could have been done better. We did not like the size of the landing area, where the contractor loaded his thinned-out logs. It covered at least a half-acre. Also, many of the trees left standing were injured. On the other hand, they are loblollies, so we will not miss them. This area may not be perfect in our eyes, but it shows promise for future restoration projects.

We ate lunch in the opening, then started down a wash. Once again we entered an old, varied stand. At the bottom we were finding trees we had yet to see: beech, black tupelo, and others. Going into a larger, deeper ravine, we came upon an abandoned still. The old rock fire pit was there, ringed by rusted, stove-in barrels. By the 1930s, moonshine probably provided most of the little cash this area's inhabitants could earn.

All that moonshine likely gave this area an undeserved reputation for lawlessness. That and the rugged, rocky ridges we were climbing and descending probably were the reasons for the federal Farm Security Administration buying the land and setting it aside as a game preserve during the New Deal. Many descendants in Habersham and Stephens counties mourn the loss of their land here and visit it monthly. Before it became national forest but after it was farmed, the land went through another series of human uses. During the Depression, the Works Progress Administration set up a camp there, planted trees, stopped the worst erosion, and created Lake Russell. After Pearl Harbor, the War Department established Camp Toccoa, a training facility for paratroopers who later jumped at D-Day. In 1951, the state of Georgia received the land and converted the camp into the Georgia Boys Industrial Institute. Among its more illustrious inmates was eighteen-year-old James Brown, the future Godfather of Soul. Brown earned early release and got his first job breaking up concrete in the old camp, helping transform it into the Lake Russell Wildlife Management Area. Fred Hay, an anthropologist and native of Toccoa, has researched and told this part of Lake Russell's and Brown's history.

The bottom broadened as we walked, but the trees became younger and thicker. We turned onto an old road and entered a stark, treeless area. In the summer of 2004, the Forest Service contracted out one of its first restoration projects here. Unfortunately, they failed to consult their management plan and their own standards. Supposedly

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Storms did not deter successful plant sale

Georgia ForestWatch and its many friends will not soon forget the 2006 Native Plant Sale and Wild & Woolly Wine Tasting.

About mid-way through the event, two brief but rather spectacular, back-to-back hailstorms blew through the Tiger area, drenching tables and signs, mashing two tents and forcing the crowd inside the Tiger Mountain Vineyards buildings.

But the event was brief enough (and the hail small enough) that neither the vines nor the native plants suffered undue damage. And the nice thing was that the crowd of supporters and visitors kept on coming to the event after the sun came back out.

“This was a fun plant sale,” said Helen Meadors, the local volunteer who helped find the plants and organize the myriad details necessary to having a successful event. “We are going to remember this one for a long time to come.”

Martha Ezzard, co-owner of Tiger Mountain Vineyards, and a key volunteer also praised the event: “We really appreciate Georgia ForestWatch and its efforts protecting the national forests, and we are pleased to help like this.”

The event brings together hundreds of ForestWatch members and supporters for an annual social event – for both a good time and a good cause. This affordable fundraiser has become a key event for ForestWatch, which helps the organization to operate year-to-year. And friends get to pick up a few native plants and learn more about their beauty, listen to music (Thea and the GreenMan), eat a little bread and cheese (from Habersham Bakers and Manna-To-Go), socialize in a very special spot of north Georgia and enjoy locally grown wines.

A very special thank you

Tiger Mountain Vineyards, Tiger, Georgia, deserves special acknowledgement and thanks for (again) sponsoring the annual Georgia ForestWatch Native Plant Sale and Wild and Woolly Wine Tasting, and for pouring all that wine *gratis*.

Vintage and other information about this award-winning farm winery, and hours of operation for their barrel-tasting room can be found at www.tigerwine.com.



The vines at Tiger Mountain vineyards

Photo by Joe Gatins

All in all, a most memorable gathering. ♦

2006 Georgia ForestWatch Native Plant Sale & Wild and Woolly Wine Tasting Supporters

The 2006 Georgia ForestWatch Native Plant Sale and Wild & Woolly Wine Tasting would not have been a success without the special help of dozens of sponsors, supporters, vendors and volunteers. Thank you, all.

Lucy and Harry Bartlett
 Jean & David Bergmark
 Frances & Warren Blye
 Robert & Lucinda Bunnen
 Marshall Burke & Pete Williams
 Rebecca & Tom Callahan
 Roberta Crittenden
 Rennie Davant
 Melinda & Andy Edwards
 Martha & John Ezzard
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 Thea and the GreenMan
 Lorie & Anthony Thompson
 Carol Turner
 Kim Waters & Sallie Duhling
 Nancy Waldrop
 Ruth West & Bob Wells
 Elaine & Jim Whitehurst
 York Hill Farm

Photo by Joe Gatins



ForestWatch friends enjoying the plant sale at our Wild & Woolly Wine Tasting and Native Plant Sale

Thank you all!

The Chinese connection

By Bob Kibler : Georgia ForestWatch Advisor

One year ago, my wife and I were in China and had the opportunity to see the extraordinary population growth that is taking place there. Beijing, which will host the 2008 Olympics, is a “city of construction cranes.” The Chinese are in the process of building the seventh ring highway around the city, a distance of 230 kilometers (138 miles.) Mopeds have been eliminated to reduce the notorious air pollution. And Shanghai (with a population of 16 million, making it the largest city in China) is developing even more rapidly. Across the Huangpu River, in an area that 12 years ago was countryside, looms an urban landscape equal in size to the business section of Chicago. It contains one of the highest skyscrapers in the world. The Three Gorges Dam on the Yangtze River, which we reached by boat, will be the largest dam in the world when completed in 2009. Four times the size of the Hoover Dam on the Colorado, it will have consumed 11 million tons of cement. Although rich in natural resources, China must look beyond its borders to fuel its economic boom. Little wonder that the price of oil and cement have undergone such dramatic increases.

And now, despite an active reforestation program, China is looking elsewhere for timber to provide the needs of its burgeoning middle class. An instructive example of this issue is the subject of an article by Jane Perlig in the New York Times of April 29, 2006. China and the Indonesian governments have agreed on a plan to level most of the remaining ancient forest in Northeast Borneo, site of majestic trees and critical watersheds and home to a primitive tribe. The plan calls for road construction and creation of large plantations for palm oil, a product popular in the Chinese cosmetic industry. Unfortunately, the leaders of the primitive tribe, living deep in the forest, favor the proposal. The roads will allow them ready access to the outside world, which now requires days of arduous travel. Of course, there are those in the Indonesian government who oppose the plan, but powerful forces are aligned against them.

Although China’s plans are not likely to have a direct effect on our local concerns, this story should serve as a cautionary tale. Does anyone really think that the Bush Administration’s plan to sell our public lands reflects a concern for county school systems (see Jenkins’ article in the Spring Newsletter.) Is it not obvious that this plan is a poorly disguised concession to developers? We must continue to emphasize that preserving our forests is sound long-term economics. ♦

Progress continues in battle to protect our hemlocks

The potentially devastating Hemlock Woolly Adelgid continues to spread across the range of native hemlocks in north Georgia, but efforts to find a way to save this beautiful northern evergreen are well underway. The Save Georgia’s Hemlocks taskforce continues planning and coordination for the predator beetle laboratory at the University of Georgia

Maintenance crews at U.Ga. have emptied and prepped the facility over the summer in preparation for rearing predatory beetles for the 2006-2007, winter-spring release season. Fundraising to date for the facility totals \$255,000 of the \$287,500 necessary to complete the renovation and provide for the first year of operation. ForestWatch and the Lumpkin Coalition, working together, have raised \$60,000 in their efforts to support the HWA Bio-Control Program. Wayne Berisford, professor of entomology at U.Ga, and Rusty Rhea, entomologist for Region 8 of the U.S. Forest Service, have mounted the search to hire the laboratory manager and have developed a five year budget that defines fundraising goals as the project moves forward. The second phase of the fundraising efforts will commence again in earnest towards summer’s end.

A remarkably diverse group of partners have come together to design and support the HWA Bio-Control Program. . The USDA Forest Service and Animal & Plant Health Inspection Services along with Georgia Department of Natural Resources and the Georgia Forestry Commission are fulfilling the federal and state government roles. Cooperating with the agencies are the University of Georgia’s Agricultural Extension, Entomology and Development Departments along with generous support from the private sector and a growing mix of conservation groups, businesses and concerned individuals. “Georgia ForestWatch continues to play a key role in organizing, planning and fundraising,” said Joe Gatins, ForestWatch President. “We are gratified that Georgians are coming together to address one of the great forest health issues of our time. Our hope is that collaboration, science and funding can coalesce to save our beautiful hemlocks for future generations.” ♦

What is open woodland?

By Jim Walker : District Leader

In the last issue of *Forest News*, we talked about the choices to be made by the Forest Service in balancing the uncertain prospects for expanding the population of golden-winged warblers in the Brawley Mountain project area against the very real and present existence of mature, highly productive oak forest that would have to be removed to enhance the birds' habitat. The Brawley Mountain project is particularly fascinating because it involves several issues that will play a key role in how the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests' new Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) will be implemented. One of these is "woodland restoration."

What do you think of when you hear the term "woodland"? Most people think of trees and would have a hard time explaining the difference between woodland and forest. The difference is that forest has a mostly closed canopy, while woodland has a mostly open canopy. The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the LRMP defines woodland as "A plant community in which trees are often small, characteristically with a greater proportion of their total height being crown than clear bole, and having trees spaced far enough apart that the canopies of adjacent trees usually do not touch, and with the ground vegetation being mostly herbaceous, commonly grass."

Naturally occurring woodland is usually due to insufficient moisture to support forest, or it may be caused by unusual soil conditions, such as those in the Buck Creek Barrens of North Carolina. Obviously, lack of moisture is not an obstacle to forest growth in the Chattahoochee National Forest, and neither are soil conditions, except for occasional spots of thin soils on rock outcrops. So any large area of woodland that may have existed in the forest in the past was not natural, but artificially created. And not only artificially created, but also artificially maintained, since left to its own devices the land wants to grow forest.

It is a fact that something resembling woodland existed in the North Georgia mountains at the end of the nineteenth – beginning of the twentieth century, when the area was relatively densely inhabited, heavily grazed and thoroughly logged. But it was precisely the degraded condition of the forest at that time that the National Forest was created to remedy, not to maintain. As to the existence of woodland in these mountains in pre-settlement times, the evidence is rather flimsy and the arguments become analogous to and dependent on the debate about regular and widespread burning of the landscape by Native Americans.

The star witness in the historical case for widespread woodland in the Southern Appalachians prior to European settlement is William Bartram. In his account of his visit to the Jore (Nantahala) Mountains of North Carolina in 1776, in two sentences he mentions "a grassy plain, scatteringly planted with large trees" and "grassy open forests for the distance of two or three miles." The exact meaning of these statements and the few other early references to what

...but it was precisely the degraded condition of the forest at that time that the National Forest was created to remedy, not to maintain...

may have been woodland in the mountains is debatable on linguistic, geographic, demographic and cultural grounds, but, as with cultural burning, it hardly seems likely that the prevalence of woodland in the Southern Appalachians

in pre-settlement times can be definitively proven by the historical record.

Nevertheless, Objective 3.4 of the Chattahoochee-Oconee LRMP says "Within the first 10 years of Plan implementation restore 10,000 acres of open woodlands, savannas, and grasslands on the Chattahoochee and 1,000 acres on the Oconee. Once created, maintain woodlands, savannas, and grasslands on a five-year burning cycle or less." Note that we are no longer talking about "woodland," but "open woodlands, savannas, and grasslands." "Open woodland" is not defined in the FEIS, but addition of the adjective "open" to "woodland" generally means less than 30% canopy cover. "Savanna" is defined in the FEIS as "A vegetation community characterized by few and scattered trees and a predominantly herbaceous ground cover"; outside of the LRMP, definitions of savanna often mention that it is a tropical or subtropical

What is open woodland?

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landscape. “Grassland” simply means that grasses are the predominant vegetation. Grassland may or may not include a few trees; if it does have scattered trees, it is the same thing as savanna.

So, any debate about the historical presence of woodland in what is now the Chattahoochee National Forest is moot; the question has been settled by the LRMP. You can’t “restore” what never existed, therefore there must have been at least 10,000 acres of woodland here at some time in the past, however improbable that may seem now in view of the landscape’s current vegetation and productivity.

Unlike prescribed burning, which is seldom very destructive, especially to canopy trees, “restoration” (creation) of woodland requires removal of timber. Depending on your point of view, this can be an advantage or disadvantage. In the Brawley Mountain project, the commercial timber sale, which includes oak and other hardwoods over two feet in diameter and 100 feet tall, will pay for the very laborious and expensive effort to prevent the land from returning to forest by applying herbicides and frequent fire.

Woodland is not an unattractive landscape. It is obviously different from forest and therefore, by definition, creates diversity. It probably benefits certain species of wildlife. It occurs naturally in many areas, if not in the North Georgia mountains. If the LRMP mandates creation of 10,000 acres of “open woodlands, savannas, and grasslands” on the Chattahoochee NE, it is Georgia ForestWatch’s task to make sure that this is done in the most appropriate (least inappropriate) areas, at the least expense of overcoming the land’s natural productivity, and with the least destruction of healthy forests. ♦

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CORRECTION: In the last issue of *Forest News*, in the article on the Brawley Mountain project, it was incorrectly stated that “On approximately 200 acres of the upper slopes and tops of the three ridges in the project area the canopy would be reduced by less than 80 percent.” The scoping notice states that the canopy reduction on these 200 acres would be greater than 80 percent.

Restoration projects

(continued from page 9)

to encourage the growth of hardwoods, they clear-cut the stand, swept it into windrows, and left it. A healthy growth of dog fennel has come up to take the trees’ place, and, hard as it is to imagine, it improves the area’s appearance. At least the fennel covers the mineral soil and the gullies washed out by this past summer’s rains. The Forest Service itself regrets this project and seems to want to learn from it.

Footing in the cleared area was tricky. We moved to the edge and found our way back to the road where we were parked. We had a half-mile to go, but the main part of our trip was done.

The Lake Russell Wildlife Management Area is healing slowly. It is probably the largest patch of Georgia Piedmont that is wild and in government hands. It still needs restoration, though, so the Forest Service’s goals and plans for it appear proper. We hope they keep their eye on those older forests as models for a future, diverse, productive forest. ♦

Georgia ForestWatch photo



Clear cut and burned, a 30 acre stand of pure sassafras and blackberry near Lake Conasauga in the Cobutta mountains of the Chattahoochee National Forest. This “habitat” type may be a part of the new forest management style as proposed by the Forest Service over the next 5 years. The Forest Service claims this type of forestry, maintaining forest stands in a 0-15 year old age class, is necessary for certain species with declining populations on our forests.

Editor's Note: The following is a paper by Mark Donham. Mark is one of the founders of Heartwood and currently its program director. Mark lives in Southern Illinois near the Shawnee National Forest. Heartwood is a forest activist group based in the Midwest that has won a number of significant legal victories over the Forest Service. These court challenges have preserved the rights of citizens to remain informed and comment on major Forest Service activities. The issues that Mark discusses are based on Forest Service activities in the Midwest over the past several decades but closely mirror what has happened on the Chattahoochee National Forest in Georgia. The decades of the 70s and 80s and into the 90s saw massive clearcutting in North Georgia and the construction of hundreds of miles of environmentally damaging roads. Here, as in the Midwest, most neutral observers feel that these clearcuts did not regenerate Oaks and Hickories to the proportion they were present prior to the cutting. Unfortunately the Forest Service has not commissioned a study similar to the 'Fisher Study' to determine the effects of clearcutting on Oak Hickory regeneration on this forest. A lawsuit in which Georgia Forest Watch was an appellant ended the clearcutting on the Chattahoochee in the mid 90s. Today Georgia Forest Watch is analyzing new projects that the Forest Service is proposing that are styled as 'Forest Health' or 'Woodland Restoration' and so far we remain as skeptical as Donham is. One interesting point that Donham raises is that of money. A fact that many citizens don't appreciate is that a portion of the proceeds from timber sales flow directly back to the agency. This makes the Forest Service somewhat unique among federal bureaucracies in that decisions they make can directly add to their funding. All bureaucracies, despite the best intentions of many of its employees, have an over riding interest in self preservation and funding increases.

Forest Service activities in the midwest

By Mark Donham : Program Director, Heartwood

In 2004, Mark Donham wrote concerning the recently released Forest Plan for the Land between the Lakes Forest in Kentucky:

... The same kind of rhetoric is being used on the recently released draft Land Between the Lakes forest plan. While we all know that this idea, that a forest has to be managed (and make no mistake about it – “managed” primarily means cutting and roading, but also including burning, spraying, girdling, etc.) to be healthy is a myth, no doubt the Forest Service has gotten more clever in their public relations campaign to try and justify the exploitation of our public lands for short term economic gains for a few. Many people in the general public that do not have a detailed education about the forest, but nonetheless have an instinctual and natural attraction and enjoyment of forests are being swayed by these so-called “professionals” that “you need to cut the forest” to keep it “healthy.” This is an argument that we should and can be winning, but we are on the verge of losing it. I'm going to set out some ideas about how we can begin to tear apart this myth and educate the public about how much more valuable and healthy natural, undisturbed forests are than those liquidated by logging.

I think it is important to review some history of the forest planning process for the national forests, at least in our region, of which I am familiar. The first forest plans under the National Forest Management Act (the law which demanded forest plans and legalized clear-cutting on national forests) were issued on or about 1986.

The primary silvicultural system on virtually all of the national forests in the central hardwood region was clear-cutting. The FS's main justification for clear-cutting our forests was that it was necessary to do that to maintain a substantial “oak-hickory” component. This was necessary for wildlife management. “wildlife management” was a code word for game species management. The reason that clear-cutting was necessary to sustain the oak/hickory community, went the FS's line, was because oak is “shade intolerant” and needs vast expanses of no canopy in order to flourish as young trees. This oversimplification of the very complex shifts that our forests go through to respond to environmental changes has little consensus in a variety of scientific disciplines. Nonetheless, virtually every original forest plan in the central hardwood region relied on clear-cutting, at substantial levels.

This clear-cutting was very unpopular with the public. The FS was coming under increasing pressure from the birth and growth of local and regional organizations, like Heartwood, which were representing general feelings across the community, to stop this practice. At the same time, activists were becoming more educated on the details of ecological issues, and were just beginning to form networks to share relevant information about forests. It was in 1987 when the “Fisher study” was released. The Fisher study changed things. Burrell Fisher, a forestry professor

(continued)

Forest Service Activities in the Midwest

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at Purdue University, did a study on 76 clearcuts on the Hoosier national forest to see if in fact they were regenerating to oak-hickory. What he found was just the opposite. What was happening was that the clearcuts were so thickly regenerating that the slower growing oak sprouts were being out competed by faster growing trees and shrubs and the herbaceous layer, and that, absent significant manipulation of the areas through “Timber Stand Improvement”, or TSI (basically “weeding out” around the oak seedlings), few oaks would make it. This would up the cost of logging significantly, and the FS was already starting to get a lot of public criticism and scrutiny for losing money selling timber to private timber companies. This scrutiny came from a review by local and national press of the Forest Service’s own Timber Sales Program Information Reporting System, or TSPIRS reports. In these reports the FS admitted to losing 10s of millions of dollars a year logging just on the central hardwood forests, and over a 100 million dollars a year nationally. (Many watchdog groups said the loss was much greater). This outraged the public.

This combination of events put the Forest Service and their logging program on the defensive. Logging levels declined. Ending logging on national forests was no longer an inconceivable concept. The agency themselves admitted in their “Central Hardwood Strategic Issue” papers that they were “losing conservation leadership” to groups like Heartwood. They were trying to put together a strategy to change this. And, they have, and it has worked to an extent.

Something had to give. Something had to change. However, expecting that the Forest Service was going to abandon what it was - fundamentally an agency that oversaw the logging of the land they were managing - would have been unrealistic. The system was set up to siphon money from a regular logging program on the national forests. Things do tend to take the path of least resistance. As far as the FS goes, that path wasn’t the path of saying no to the timber companies and congress. That path was to try to redefine and recast their logging program as something that would be acceptable to a larger number of the public.

One of the first things the FS had to do was to stop handing the environmental community and the press their head on a silver platter by releasing the TSPIRS report. There is no law requiring them to do it, and so they just stopped doing it. And that has been pretty darn effective. Many years have now passed since I have seen an article in the national or local news

about the Forest Service losing millions of dollars on their timber sales program. But nothing has changed. They have not found some magic bullet to all of a sudden fix the problem. It is likely worse than ever, but with the annual TSPIRS reports no longer being published; we have lost the convenient unavoidably obvious issue that the agency gave us every year. And yet we have not been successful at getting the press to question why the FS quit this public accounting, or what the economics of the program are currently.

This doesn’t mean that the information isn’t there. What it does mean is that FOIA requests are now necessary to get the information, and we all know about FOIAing the FS. They can drag things out for many months, and even force you to go to court. A year and half or more ago, on a national conference call of forest protection groups, I brought up the need to be FOIAing this information and getting it out. I was told by Michael Francis, program director of the Wilderness Society, that they were doing it, and was asked to let them follow through on these FOIAs. However, I have not heard or seen any information distributed by the WS about this, so I do not know what the status of their FOIAs are. It remains a need for us to FOIA this information and get it to the public.

The second thing that the FS did is to subordinate justifications for logging like “maintaining oak-hickory” which are academic and cold, and replace it with broad, warm fuzzy terms, predominantly “forest health.” They also have opportunistically identified non forest or forest fringe natural communities that are, for a variety of reasons, not associated with logging, rare, and are associating their logging program with these communities and species. At the same time, the FS is attempting to disconnect the idea that they are just logging for money. Instead, they now are logging out of the necessity to create these rare non tree or forest fringe natural communities, and as long as they have to cut down trees to do it, why it would be a cryin’ shame not to sell them, right? Who is going to argue with that? A good example is the new scientific fad of “creating savannahs.” Why, all of a sudden we are on the verge of losing all our “savannahs” and we need the FS to log us out a few to save them! We have to save the quail, the prairie warbler, etc and the FS is just the agency to do it, even if it means cutting down our national forests.

Another opportunistic effort on the part of the FS has been to inaccurately tie the images of homes burning out west in massive forest fires to the failure to properly “manage” our forests, again, “manage” meaning cutting down trees. And, even more low-down is that they are doing this in areas that do not have a high fire risk.

So now we have an agency that, while it still funds its timber sales program virtually as always, still passes down timber targets from Washington DC, still carry out the program in the same way with the same old foresters, still contracts to the same companies with the same contracts, and the companies log with heavy machinery just like they always have, the FS is trying to pass this off as something completely different and new, and that is where we need to nail them. This is not anything new - it is the perfect example of “the more things change, the more they stay the same.”

So how do we respond to this set of changing but not changing circumstances? How do we convince someone from the public that forests can do well not “managed” by professionals? First, we have to point out the serious credibility gap of the Forest Service. These are the same people that are responsible for the clear-cutting of thousands of acres on false scientific premises in the 1980s and 90s and they lost taxpayers money doing it. We need to point out that they are now hiding their public financial statements on their logging program to cover up the losses, and that this is all about money, and how the agency still gets a significant amount of its operating expenses from receipts from the timber sales. We need to point out the unfair competition with private landowners, and how the FS subsidizing their logging drives down the value of private landowner’s timber.

Let’s challenge the FS to take the financial incentive out of the logging. If, as they state, their motives are so pure, then, they shouldn’t care about any financial incentives. If money is generated, then send it back to the treasury where the appropriations to cover the costs came from. That’s not unreasonable. Of course they won’t agree to this because this is all about money. We cannot and must not let the public believe the myth that the FS is not logging for money anymore but for some other mysterious, loftier goals that just happen to require logging to obtain. This program is about money. Period.

The second thing we have to do is hold the agency accountable for defining “forest health.” We need to be asking “what is forest health?” “Where is it defined?” And perhaps we don’t need to try to define what it is,

but point out what it isn’t. We should simply say that its common sense that a forest with its trees cut down is not healthy. Let’s point to the Smoky Mts. National Park. That forest is widely recognized as one of the most diverse, most beautiful, and most loved of all forests, and yet, there has been no logging in the park since it was formed, and much of the park has never been logged. So, if you have to log to keep your forests healthy, then how do you explain the wonderful forests of the Smokies, or other similar uncut forest wonders, like much of the Porcupine Mts.

We need to point out that we need our public forests for clean air, clean water, climate stability, rare wildlife habitat, scenic beauty and recreation, and that those values are not consistent with logging.

We need to make these points in plain, direct statements that an average person can understand with their common sense. With a combination of reminding the public of the lack of credibility of the FS and their history of relying on false science to justify their logging, the historical money loss of the program and how they are hiding the financial statements. We need to point out that the best forests are those that don’t get logged, and point out that healthy forests are not those with their trees cut down.

But we have to get those messages out to the public and we need to do it now. If we do not counter this attempt by the FS to avoid changing their modus operandi by changing their public relations to repackage what they have been doing all along and are still doing, then we could very well lose important segments of the court of public opinion that may very well be critical in our ability to influence management plans and decisions on the national forests that we love so much. ♦



Photo by Peter Macintosh

Bear Den Creek

Roadless Area Update: *Time for Sonny to Act!*

By Wayne Jenkins : Executive Director

Take out a standard road map of the state of Georgia. Look for any blank spaces not bisected by roads. The first thing that jumps out is that there just aren't many large, open areas left. We have tamed and settled most of Georgia, the largest state east of the Mississippi. The most obvious un-roaded areas are in three separate parts of our state. Way down south, on the Florida border lies the 438,000-acre Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge and Wilderness Area which itself is surrounded by swamplands with few roads or development. This is our largest and wildest place. Drifting north and a little to the east, we see Fort Stewart, lying in Georgia's coastal plain just west of Savannah. With 280,000 acres, it is the largest military installation east of the Mississippi river and, though developed for those purposes, still contains large tracts of open land. Scanning our map more closely now, it becomes more difficult to find large areas with few roads but as we drift northward we eventually come to the Chattahoochee National Forest settling across Georgia's Blue Ridge mountains. Lo and behold, we spy the Cohutta Wilderness Area at 38,000 acres on the west side of the forest and several smaller chunks, draped like pearls on a necklace, across extreme northern Georgia. These are our state's last large tracts of wild mountain land with few-to-no-roads. These are Georgia's federal inventoried roadless areas.

Though little known by many Georgians, these beautiful, remote areas of lush forested mountains and coves, bisected by cool clear streams, lie at the center of a long battle between those that would extend fairly strict protection to them and those professional managers who wish to keep their options open for further management. It is that management and past history of the managers that lies at the heart of concern for our few roadless areas. Management, or at least the type historically practiced by the U.S. Forest Service and the Georgia Department of Natural resources, requires roads. Roads for hauling out timber. Roads for accessing food plots for game species, what are now referred to as wildlife openings. Roads to contain the increasingly frequent prescribed fires that the managers claim are necessary for "Healthy Forests." Roads, roads, roads.

It was this predilection for building roads by the managers that alarmed the American public

back in the late 1970s, pushing Congress to ask the Forest Service to identify what roadless areas still remained in the public domain. The controversial gross under-estimate of these areas by the Forest Service lead to heated debates across the country, continued road building by the agency and an eventual "Roadless Rule" in 2001, finally halting road building and timber harvests in our country's last un-roaded wildlands.

Enter the Bush administration, an apparent great lover of roads or what the roads can get to and haul out. After six years of maneuvering, the issue has now been placed squarely in the laps of our state Governors by the president, under the false premise that the states did not have an adequate opportunity to comment on the original roadless rule. Surprising when one considers the three year public process for defining the rule and the 2.5 million comments supporting it. Not so surprising when one considers a majority of republican Governors in states that contain roadless areas and the aggressive, extractive nature of the present administration. But the issue of protecting these last unique places should not be the partisan football they have become, especially here in Georgia. Our special areas lose the very qualities that define them as unique if we road and intensively manage them.

Though relatively small when compared to the very few large open landscapes in Georgia, our roadless areas are distinctive and unique in their wild and remote qualities. Mountaintown and Lance Creek, Three Forks and Kelly Ridge, Sarah's Creek and Patterson Gap, Rock Gorge and Joe Gap, even the names have the ring of clear mountain air and roiling, flowing waters. Their steep, rough topography makes them unsuitable for economic timber harvest or the building of roads to get the timber out. Their remote qualities create that rare opportunity to experience solitude and a sense of separateness from our ever-growing cities, towns and teeming masses. Hunters and fishermen have historically used these coves for decades and the new hunters, citizens seeking inspiration and insight, beauty and calmness, now find these blessings only in big natural areas. Can anyone honestly claim that we need the timber in these areas so badly or that the creation of wildlife openings in these areas are so critical that we must sully the wild face of our last roadless opportunities and cast away the special attributes of quiet and natural peace? Cannot our timber

harvests and experimentation with wildlife habitat creation be practiced on the hundreds of thousands of roaded forests? Of course they can and should!

Well, it's all in Governor Sonny Perdue's hands now, 65,000 acres of some of Georgia's finest green-space lay waiting for his petition of protection. The managers lie waiting to manage. In fact timber harvests in Mountaintown, our largest roadless area, have already been proposed. The Governor has recently said he would not petition for these areas, supporting the Georgia Department of Natural Resources in their claim that the current National Forest Plan adequately protects these areas. IT DOES NOT! The "Plan" allows roading, both temporary and permanent, and timber harvests and prescribed fire within almost all of these areas. Protection to the managers means they can manage. Protection to most citizens means, it can manage itself. So, you're a citizen. You vote. Perhaps you believe these last few special areas should be protected. Well, now's the time to let Sonny know you want him to protect these places. The Forest Service and the Georgia DNR can find plenty of other places to ply their craft. Let's see if Sonny will side with the people rather than government on this one.

The Governor has only until mid-November to petition for our Roadless Areas. Three other southern Governors already have. ♦

To contact Georgia's Governor, the Honorable Sonny Perdue, you can go to his website contact page at www.gov.state.ga.us/contact_dom.shtml or write or call:

Office of the Governor
 Georgia State Capitol
 Atlanta, GA 30334
 Office Phone: 404-656-1776

Let him know how you feel about this crucial issue!

For more information on this issue, go to www.safc.org/campaigns/roadless/roadless_rule.php.

To join or make a donation, go to www.gafw.org and click on "Ways to Give" or use this form and mail to the address below.

Georgia ForestWatch Membership Form

Name: _____
 (please print)

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City, State, Zip: _____

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

<i>(Please circle one)</i>	Individual
Sugar Maples	\$25
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ForestWatch Directors enjoy training

Georgia ForestWatch board directors and staff enjoyed a full day of training at the Georgia Center for Non-profits in Atlanta recently. Eight board members and two staff participated in a workshop devoted to strengthening and focusing the work of the board lead by professional trainers from the Institute of Conservation Leadership, Baird Straughan and Elaine Chaney. “We were effectively lead through a process for assessing our board, matching our work with the needs of ForestWatch, exploring practices for making our work together more efficient, effective and enjoyable and drafting plans for implementing the changes needed”, said ForestWatch director Wayne Jenkins. “This was a great opportunity to get our directors and staff together for some real nuts and bolts work and a chance to get to know one another better in a relaxed learning environment”, added ForestWatch president Joe Gatins. “I would recommend this program to any and all non-profits working toward greater fulfillment of their missions”.

Photo by Sara Linn



All smiles at ForestWatch board training

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