Georgia ForestWatch was presented with The Wilderness Society’s prestigious Environmental Heroes Award at a January 29 ceremony held at Fernbank Natural History Museum in Atlanta.

In presenting the award, Bill Meadows, President of The Wilderness Society, cited our success in coalition building last fall when we organized twenty-one environmental and outdoor organizations to sign on to our proposal to the Forest Service for protection of the areas listed in Georgia’s Mountain Treasures. He also cited our success in the letter writing campaign for the first round of public comments on the new forest plan in 1996. This campaign helped generate over 3,000 letters to the Forest Service, more than all of the other southern national forests combined.

Brent Martin, recipient for the award on behalf of Georgia ForestWatch, was also commended for his work on Georgia’s Last Great Places, the brochure which highlighted several mountain treasure areas and resulted in a variety of community support campaigns for their protection.

Awards were also given for excellence in environmental journalism to Martha Ezzard and Jay Bookman of the Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

The ceremony was attended by The Wilderness Society’s Governing Council, representatives of a wide spectrum of environmental organizations, and lots of “significant others.”

**FAREWELL TO RENE VOSS**

René Voss, campaign director for Georgia ForestWatch for the past three years, has left to begin a new job with the John Muir Project/Earth Island Institute.

He writes, “As a farewell, let me thank Georgia ForestWatch for the privilege to work at what I truly love. I greatly appreciate the support from ForestWatch over the past two years and I want to thank its leaders and members. Although I am leaving physically, my thoughts and heart remain with the Chattahoochee/Oconee National Forests. I will continue to work to protect them as much as I can with special emphasis on the wild places we all care so deeply about.”

René accomplished an incredible amount for Georgia ForestWatch and we all wish him well in his new position. He will be working to foster legislation to end all logging in our national forests. His new address is: 1025 Vermont Ave., NW, Suite 300, Washington, DC, 20005; phone: (202) 879-3183; e-mail: rene.voss@mindspring.com.

**Georgia ForestWatch**
1447 Peachtree St., NE, Suite 812
Atlanta, GA 30309-3029

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PRESIDENT’S LETTER

By Bob Kibler, President of GA ForestWatch

We are looking forward to a new and exciting year. René’s departure leaves a significant void but we are attempting to continue his good works and plan to recruit a replacement before summer. If any of you know someone who would like to apply for the position, let us know.

We should all congratulate one another on our success and that of other organizations in pressuring the administration to initiate the moratorium on ending road building in roadless areas. This and our successes at the local level—a virtual halt in green wood sales resulting from appeals and lawsuits, albeit probably temporary, increases in the roadless area and wild & scenic river inventories, and other items—add up to an impressive list of accomplishments over the past year. (See article on this page.)

Your board and the ForestWatch district leaders held an all day retreat on Saturday, January 10th to plan the coming year. It was decided that our major focus will remain the forest plan revision. We created several committees including one called “outreach” to be chaired by Kathryn Kolb, and discussed a number of programs. Of course, protection of Georgia’s Mountain Treasures continues as our top priority but other programs will include old growth and rare communities inventories and wild and scenic rivers.

All of this will require time and effort. Elsewhere in this newsletter you are given the opportunity of indicating your willingness to participate in these efforts. And everyone can help by renewing their membership now. But I hope many of you will be able to make a contribution beyond this amount. The Turner Foundation has expressed its confidence in Georgia ForestWatch by extending our grant for another two years, through 1999. This is a challenge grant—it funds only a part of our budget. The remainder depends on you and other funding sources which we are currently pursuing. Please help in what I am sure will prove to be a very significant two years. Let us together build on the momentum of the last two years.

Georgia ForestWatch board member Julia Sennette and friends take a break from hiking on Postelle Creek trail.

GFW BOARD MEMBER PROFILE

In this first of our series of profiles of Georgia ForestWatch board members, we are spotlighting Julia Sennette who lives in the Toccoa district above Blue Ridge just east of the Cohuttas. She has worked with Georgia ForestWatch over the last three years.

An artist and writer, she says she is “delighted to live in this beautiful valley,” and spends many hours in the woods and with her books pursuing a longtime interest in edible and medicinal wild plants.

She teaches classes on this subject once or twice a year at John Campbell Folk School in Brasstown, N.C. She is also editor of Wild Georgia E-zine.

“I meet so many people every day who love and enjoy our national forests,” she says. “I’m pleased to be a part of ForestWatch’s efforts to assist the overwhelming numbers of Georgians who care about our forests and want to protect our heritage.”

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF FORESTWATCH IN 1996 - 1997

1. Interim Protection: On Sept. 17, 1996, we received an injunction by Judge Frank Hull until further order from the court. This injunction directly stopped activities in 2 roadless areas, 7 timber sales and has resulted in a temporary suspension of the entire Timber Sales Program on the forests. (However, see lawsuit letter on page 4.)

2. Public Outreach and Comments on Forest Plan Revision: As a result of our public outreach activities during the “scoping” period, we helped generate over 2,500 letters during the official comment period and another 1,000 afterwards, more than all of the other southern Appalachian national forests combined. This phenom- enal response to our alerts and direct outreach has resulted in a list of significant issues which address nearly all of our concerns and are a mandate to the Forest Service to implement needed changes in the Forest Plan to increase protection.

3. Consensus Proposal for Protect- ing “Georgia’s Mountain Treas- ures”: Over a period of 18 months and many meetings, Georgia ForestWatch brokered a consensus proposal which was signed by 22 conservation organizations in support of protection and restoration of all 44 of Georgia’s Mountain Treasures areas as wilderness, national scenic or recreation, old growth, primitive, or ecological restoration areas. This includes all conservation groups in Georgia working to protect forests.

4. Roadless Areas and Wild & Scenic Rivers Candidates: Georgia ForestWatch has been instrumental in the roadless and wild & scenic rivers inventories. We now have 21 roadless areas and 25 wild & scenic river candidates that will be studied for formal, permanent and legis- lative protection. All will receive some sort of protection in the Forest Plan revision.
DEADLINE EXTENDED FOR COMMENTS ON ROAD BUILDING MORATORIUM

Good news! You should have received recently our action alert on a proposed Forest Service moratorium on road building in roadless areas. The deadline for comments has now been extended from February 27 to March 30. Those of you who have not yet responded please do so before the new deadline.

The action alert pointed out that the moratorium was to be for only 18 months during which time the Forest Service would revise the regulations concerning the long term management of the national forest transportation system.

What the action alert did not tell you (for sake of simplicity) was that public comments are also requested on this long-term roadless area protection policy with a deadline of March 30.

Space does not permit a full discussion of the issues involved but your letter should include:

- The interim road building moratorium should become a permanent ban on road building in all roadless areas.
- Funding for road maintenance and removal should be significantly increased but not from funds related to the timber program.
- For those of you who have already sent in your comments, a separate letter covering these items will be necessary. For those who have not yet responded to the action alert, these items can be included in a single letter together with those on the temporary moratorium included in the action alert.

All letters should go to:
Director, Ecosystem Management Coordination Staff, Mail Stop 1104, Forest Service USDA, P.O. Box 96090, Washington, DC 20090-6090.

Finally, the Forest Service will be holding “focus group” sessions on these issues. The one in Georgia will be held Thursday, March 26, 1998 from 5 - 9 pm at the Four Points Sheraton off I-285 at Exit 22, Chamblee-Dunwoody Road.

HELP PROTECT THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT

Georgia rates No. 3 in the nation as having the most endangered natural ecosystems. The Endangered Species Act (ESA) is an obvious success as we still have such earthly inhabitants as the bald eagle and the grey wolf to name a few.

As early as the middle of March, the U.S. Senate will vote on the ESA-weakening Kempthorn bill, S. 1180. This bill encourages taxpayer subsidized habitat destruction and limitswatchdog agency review of federal projects that may harm endangered species.

Alternatively, Representative George Miller’s (D-CA) good bill entitled the Endangered Species Recovery Act (H.R. 2351) strengthens the ESA. This bill encourages regional planning for habitat protection and helping land owners by providing financial incentives for those who conserve species, giving assurances without ignoring scientific reality.

ACTION ALERT

TODAY: Contact Senator Max Cleland and urge him to oppose S.1180 and support H.R. 2351.

E-mail: senator_max_cleland@cleland senate.gov
Ph: 404-331-4811, district; 202-224-3521, DC;
Fax: 202-224-0072. Address: 461 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg., Washington DC, 20510.

Key Contacts
George Martin, Forest Supervisor
USFS
1755 Cleveland Highway
Gainesville, GA 30501

Dan Glickman
Sec. of Agriculture
James L. Whitten Bldg.
1400 Independence Ave.
Washington, DC 20250

Sen. Max Cleland
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510
202-224-3521
Atlanta office: 404-331-4811

Sen. Paul Coverdell
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510
202-224-3643
Dalton office: 706-226-1925

Rep. Nathan Deal
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
202-255-5211
Local address: 311 Green St.
Gainesville, GA 30501
770-535-2593

Rep. Bob Barr
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
202-225-2931
Local address: 1001 Whitlock Ave.
Marietta, GA 30064
404-429-1776
LAWSUIT UPDATE

February 3, 1998

Forest Friends,

I have bad news to report. On 1/30/98, Judge Thomas Thrash issued a 54 page order and opinion overturning our injunction and siding with the Forest Service and the Timber Intervenors on all remaining counts in the case. These include our NFMA, NEPA and Forest Plan counts on sensitive species, giving complete discretion to the Forest Service.

Both Eric Huber and I are shocked and disappointed. We have been discussing our next steps and will coordinate with you all when we have any recommendations. Eric will be contacting plaintiffs via mail shortly. In the meantime, we would like to make sure that we have a consistent message in response to any press inquiries, so...

Please refer any press inquiries to Eric Huber, our attorney, who can be reached at (504) 522-1394.

René Voss

FOREST PLANNING UPDATE

In our last forest planning update we published a list of “significant issues” which were drawn from more than 2,500 letters to the Forest Service written during the public comment period last fall. Significant issues are those which the public thinks should be addressed in the forest plan revision. The Forest Service is now in Phase II of the plan revision process, which involves using the list of significant issues to develop overall themes or alternatives which will address the issues. Several themes will be developed by each forest. Next the different forests in the southern Appalachian region will get together to decide on common themes which will be used. Later on in the process, themes or alternatives will merge which will be unique to each forest. For example, since the Chattahoochee National Forest is an urban forest, an alternative should be developed which stresses recreation.

Also, the Forest Service has identified approximately 25 or 30 watersheds within the Chattahoochee/Oconee National Forests which will be considered management areas. The boundaries of these management areas are fixed and will stay the same for each alternative. These management areas may extend across the state line into adjacent national forests. For example, the Chattooga watershed in Rabun County will extend into the Sumter National Forest in South Carolina. Other management areas in the Chattahoochee N.F. include Broad River, Panther Creek, Soque, Chattooga, Tallulah, Hiwassee, Etowah, Cartecay, Notley and Mountaintown.

Within each management area there will be a number of smaller prescription areas. Each prescription area will be managed differently. Some examples of prescription areas are riparian habitats, rare communities, high quality sawtimber, old growth forest communities, migration corridors and military use areas. At this point, the Forest Service has identified 47 management prescriptions. The management prescriptions have to be consistent with the overall theme or alternative. If the overall theme is one of minimal management there would be more prescriptions for old growth areas than for developed areas.

During phases three and four of the process, which is scheduled to run from May until October, the public will have a chance to comment on the plan revision. The Forest Service is not yet sure how they will involve the public but are considering holding working meetings. It is very important for all users of the national forests to have input into the next management plan, which will determine the use of the forests for the next fifteen years. Georgia ForestWatch will keep you informed of any public meetings being planned by the Forest Service.

Wild Georgia

"Fighting to Save the last Wild Places..."

Visit our Web Site.
Keep Updated with WILD WATCH.

Amuse Yourself with Our Features and SENSATIONAL TABLOID SECTION.

Email-Wildgeorgia@Mindspring.com http://Wildgeorgia.home.Mindspring.com
Georgia ForestWatch Needs Your Help!

As we have emphasized elsewhere in this newsletter, we are entering a critical phase in our efforts to protect Georgia’s wildlands and, accordingly, are expanding our efforts—particularly at the grassroots level, which means all of you.

Following are two ways you can help us protect Georgia’s wildlands:

1. Become a Georgia ForestWatch volunteer.

OLD GROWTH INVENTORIES

We need volunteers to help us with old growth inventories of some of the special wildlands. Workshops will instruct volunteers and they will work in the field with an experienced person, probably a retired forest ranger. Time commitment is flexible.

RIVERKEEPERS

We also need volunteers to serve as “riverkeepers” for some of the 25 rivers and streams now in the wild & scenic river inventories. Training and field work will also be included.

OUTREACH

We are looking for volunteers to help us in our outreach to local hiking and biking clubs, church groups, the media, county commissioners and other elected officials.

ADMINISTRATIVE

As always, we need volunteers to help with publications, fundraising and other administrative tasks. Also, if any of you have special skills, such as GIS capability, we would appreciate your help.

How to become a Georgia ForestWatch volunteer:

Fill out the form on the back of this page, cut it out and mail it to:

Georgia ForestWatch,
1447 Peachtree St., NE,
Suite 812,
Atlanta, GA 30309-3029,
Attention: Volunteer

For more information on volunteer opportunities, contact Shirl Parsons at 404-872-9453.

2. Make a donation to Georgia ForestWatch.

While we do receive some grant funding from such groups as the Turner Foundation, a large part of our budget is made up of donations from people like you who are concerned with the dangers facing our national forests.

Your donation really will make a difference.

Please give what you can.

Thank you.

DONATIONS TO GEORGIA FORESTWATCH ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE.

How to make a donation to Georgia ForestWatch.

Make your check payable to: Georgia ForestWatch.
Remember that your donation is tax-deductible.

Fill out the form on the back of this page, cut it out and mail it to:

Georgia ForestWatch,
1447 Peachtree St., NE,
Suite 812,
Atlanta, GA 30309-3029,
Attention: Donation
Thanks for helping Georgia ForestWatch!

Yes, I want to be a Georgia ForestWatch volunteer!

Name: ____________________________
Address: __________________________
City: ___________________ State: ______ Zip: ________
Phone (home): ___________ Phone (work): __________________________
E-mail: __________________________

Check which volunteer opportunities you are interested in (see descriptions on page 5).

☐ OLD GROWTH INVENTORIES ☐ OUTREACH
☐ RIVERKEEPERS ☐ ADMINISTRATIVE
☐ OTHER (describe): __________________________

Yes, I'd like to make a donation to Georgia ForestWatch!

Check one: ☐ $25 ☐ $50 ☐ $100 ☐ $200 ☐ $300 ☐ Other: $__________

Name: ____________________________
Address: __________________________
City: _______________ State: ______ Zip: ________
Phone (home): ___________ Phone (work): __________________________

Mail this form to: Georgia ForestWatch, 1447 Peachtree St., NE, Suite 812, Atlanta, GA 30309-3029, Attention: Volunteer
Toccoa District Report

Three project areas bordering the Ed Jenkins National Recreation Area have been proposed for logging. Known as the Hightower, Nimblewill and Alec Branch projects, the Forest Service plans to construct approximately 4 miles of temporary roads to log 951 acres in order to produce an estimated 2,682 million board feet of timber. This is an enormous even age timber cut in areas that have high recreation values and important wildlife habitat.

The January “Quarterly Schedule of Proposed Actions” continues to list the infamous Army Drop Zone for decision/review and implementation in Fannin County in 1998.

All of these projects need your input and comments. Contact your elected officials and the U.S. Forest Service as soon as possible.


In the northwest part of the Toccoa District, GFW recently held a walk along the South Fork Trail of the Jack’s River. It was well attended in spite of the cold damp weather, with people coming from west and middle Georgia as well as Tennessee. The South Fork flows into the proposed Conasauga Watershed National Recreation Area of Tennessee and Georgia, is featured in Georgia’s Mountain Treasures (404-872-9453 for a copy) and since it is adjacent to the Cohutta Wilderness Area, would make an excellent addition to it.

In the nearby areas of Postelle Creek and Flattop Mountain, some timber cuts were proposed by the Forest Service last year, but mostly found to be unsuitable. We are awaiting further notice from the Forest Service.

Brasstown District Report

There continues to be relatively little green logging activity in the Brasstown District as salvage sales are still the primary source of timber.

The Forest Service has proposed an interesting and somewhat unusual project which could have beneficial as well as detrimental effects. An environmental analysis is being conducted for a white oak progeny test site in the Steady Mountain area not far from Brasstown Bald. The benefit of the testing would be the evaluation of tree selection through genetics while providing seeds for oak seed orchards. The drawback is that the site, and a surrounding fire break, would be cleared and maintained by heavy equipment.

We look forward to hosting the annual wildflower walk in April, and promise typical Brasstown weather.
**EVENTS CALENDAR**

March 22
Great Places Outing - Rich Mountain Wilderness Extension
Important addition to the Rich Mountain Wilderness, part of the original Rich Mountain roadless area. Features: high ridges, scenic. Call Brent Martin, (706) 624-0010.

April 4
Great Places Outing - Monticello Glades
One of the Oconee National Forest's special places being proposed as an ecological restoration area. Features: rare plants and habitats. Call Brent Martin, (706) 624-0010.

April 25
Annual GA ForestWatch Botanical Field Trip
10 am. Experienced botanists will lead trip up Slaughter Creek Trail, along the Appalachian Trail and back down Jarrard Gap Trail. Meet at the trailhead in the parking lot of Lake Winfield Scott. Bring a lunch, water and rain gear. Call (404) 872-9453.

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**GEARED TO GO:**

**New Atlanta Shop To Rent Equipment & Guide Trips**

We'd like to introduce our new business: Geared To Go. We started this business to share our love and respect for the outdoors with people from all walks of life—those who are very comfortable in the woods and those who have never walked mountain trails or slept in a tent. Geared To Go both rents outdoor equipment and provides the support services to make camping, hiking and backpacking trips fun, safe and a learning experience. Geared To Go offers a wide variety of rental equipment for individuals and large groups. For example, we rent lightweight portable gear for backpacking as well as large tents, group cookware, hammocks, lanterns and tables and chairs for base camping. We will explain how to use the gear and teach safety and outdoor etiquette. Geared To Go also offers trip planning and guiding services. We can help select and plan routes, set up base camp and plan activities, and guide backpack or hiking trips. And if you can not make it into the shop, Geared To Go will deliver to you the rental equipment and additional accessories you might need.

Geared To Go opens April 1st in Atlanta and we are excited to serve the community. We invite you to call us with your suggestions and recommendations. In addition, we are looking for experienced individuals to join us in this endeavor by serving as advisors or guides on trips. Please call us! (404) 875-8828.

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**GEORGIA FORESTWATCH MEMBERSHIP FORM**

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E-mail Address:

**MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES**

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1447 Peachtree St., NE
Suite 812,
Atlanta, GA 30309-3029

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**ANNUAL**

**GA FORESTWATCH**

**BOTANICAL FIELD TRIP**

April 25, 1998

During the spring the hills of north Georgia are carpeted in colorful wildflowers, including trillium, lady slippers, bloodroot, and many others. Georgia ForestWatch will have its annual botanical field trip on Saturday, April 25th at 10:00. Come join our group of experienced botanists who will lead the trip up Slaughter Creek Trail, along the Appalachian Trail and back down Jarrard Gap Trail.

We will meet at the trailhead in the parking lot of Lake Winfield Scott. Bring a lunch, water and rain gear. Call (404) 872-9453 for directions or more details.

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**Georgia ForestWatch Leaders**

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404-872-9453
Treasurer: Shirl Parsons
404-872-9453
Outreach Coord. Kathyrn Kolb
404-373-9036

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Brasstown District: Howard Markel
770-781-5418
Chattooga District: James Sullivan
706-886-8265
Cherokee District: Kathryn Kolb
404-373-9036
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Toccoa District: Dennis Stansell
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