Georgia Forestwatch

FOREST NEWS

PROTECTING AND RESTORING OUR NATIVE FORESTS

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Old Growth Buckeye, Kelly Ridge Roadless Area - pages 7&8

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED
GFW Editorial

Over the course of my life, I have loved and known three forests. One, my childhood forest, was razed to the ground in the late seventies for an industrial park. It was the forest that I knew the best, the forest that molded me into a human being. In many, many, ways, and the forest that led me to the work I do today as a conservationist. I don’t think I’ve ever recovered from its destruction. The second forest is the one that I live in. It’s a forest that has seen some hard years. Clearcut over seventy years ago, probably for the second time, it has a long way to go before it returns to the majestic place that it most likely once was. It is surrounded by thousands of acres of forest in a somewhat similar condition that are owned by Georgia Marble. This surrounding forest is one that I have got to know fairly well over the last decade. I’ve found a few secret waterfalls in seemingly impenetrable ravines, remnant old growth beech trees, and watched a black bear come out of it once to scrounge around my back porch. And it is being clearcut to the bone as I write.

The third forest is the Chattahoochee/Oconee National Forest. I can’t say that I’ve covered every acre, but I’ve walked a lot of it, and will continue to explore even more. This is the one forest that I hold hope we can save, and the forest that I work for. I believe that if we work hard enough, we can keep it from being clearcut, sold to developers, or strip mined. It’s our forest, and our descendent’s forest. It’s the one that we as members of society have a stake in. It’s our last water in north Georgia, and future old growth, developed land. This is in line with the Forest Service management plan for Oconee. In this plan, we wilderness and protection, and watershed protection, and the upcoming public be working to gain maximum support and attendance. We will also add to this list our work to protect the forest from destructive timber sales, off road vehicle damage, road building, powerlines, Title V air discharge permits, and more. It’s a lot to keep up with, but it’s what we have to do if this last great forest is going to remain healthy and intact. And we have recently adopted an ambitious five-year strategic plan to insure that this happens. My hope is that you will continue to work at the work required to protect it. Our District Leaders are always looking for volunteers to help us in protecting our forests, our office needs volunteers, we have lots of events you can help out on, and we always need help fundraising. So make a commitment to save Georgia’s last great forest. It doesn’t have to go the way of the first and second.

by Brent Martin, Executive Director
Georgia Forestwatch 2001 Annual Report

Georgia Forestwatch in 2001 experienced its best organizational growth to date. Due to the generous contributions of members and foundations, and despite the economic downturn of this past fall, our financial situation remained solid and we ended the year with a net income. We take this as a solid endorsement of our mission and look forward to another successful year of working to gain lasting protection for Georgia’s last wild places.

2001 Highlights

- State Leadership in the National Forest plan revision process
- Adoption and Creation of an ambitious Five Year Strategic Plan
- Monitoring and Appeals of Title V Permits for Air Discharges
- New and Expanded Office
- Coosaawatee Watershed Stream Survey
- Year One Old Growth Survey for Chattahoochee National Forest
- ORV Impact Survey for Chattahoochee National Forest
- Aquatic Science workshops for GFW Volunteers
- Hiring of a full time staff ecologist
- Successful LWCF Lobbying for Acquisitions on the C/O NF
- Increase in endorsements of GFW Conservation Alternative
- Annual Membership Retreat

2001 Financial Overview

Income:

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Expenses:

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<td><strong>Total Expenses</strong></td>
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Net Income: $3,730.77

Total Assets: $93,300.00

Sources of Income (alphabetical):
- EMSA Fund
- Environmental Support Center
- Georgia Forestwatch Members
- Katherine John Murphy Foundation
- Lyndhurst Foundation
- Merck Family Fund
- Montgomery Foundation
- Natural Trails and Waters Coalition
- Pacific Rivers Council
- Richards Foundation
- Sapelo Foundation
- Southern Appalachian Forest Coalition
- Town Creek Foundation
- Turner Foundation
A warm GFW welcome goes to two new additions to the board of directors. Both are proven allies and longtime friends whose dedication to land protection is an asset to our mission.

Mary Maclean Asbell is a North Carolina native. She graduated from the University of North Carolina in 1989 with a degree in English, and obtained her law degree from the University of Georgia. Mary Maclean has been practicing environmental law since 1993. She has worked at the law firm of Smith, Gambrell & Russell as well as for the Southern Environmental Law Center. She lives in Atlanta with her husband, son, and two dogs, all of whom enjoy hiking and camping in the North Georgia mountains.

After graduating from Tulane University in 1992, Jon Schwartz lived in Telluride, Colorado for one year where he wrote a nature column for the local newspaper and participated on the steering committee of Sheep Mountain Alliance, an organization dedicated to protecting the area’s natural resources.

Jon then moved to Atlanta, Georgia, where he worked for the National Wildlife Federation on issues involving protection of the Everglades and Florida Bay. Jon then enrolled at Emory Law School. While attending law school, he continued to work with the National Wildlife Federation, and also spent internships with the Georgia Center for Law in the Public Interest, the Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper Fund, and the Environmental Protection Agency.

Jon has worked at Stack & Associates, P.C. since graduating from law school in 1997. All of his work involves representing organizations and individuals that have been harmed or potentially harmed by environmental and land use issues. His case load includes Clean Water Act suits, challenges to zoning decisions, cases against developers for failing to follow the applicable land use laws, and cases against the U.S. Forest Service for failing to protect wildlife.

GFW ORV (Off Road Vehicle) Survey Complete

ATV’s RULE, but only on weekends, or so it seems to me after spending Mondays through Fridays for nearly three months in pick-up on bike and on foot tracking down these elusive prey. Their tracks were found in all kinds of habitat from deep wilderness areas, crossing trout streams, on famous hiking trails, in botanically rich coves, you name it, ATV’s had been there. Their versatility and agility were evident by the numerous rutted scars left on the land. Able to leap banked clay berms in a single bound. Able to ford clear mountain streams as if they were not there. Able to climb straight up steep slopes. Able to chew through forest leaf litter to the topsoil below and expose it to the elemental powers of rain and gravity, bleeding soil into nearby springs and branches. These powerful creatures, leaving most obvious evidence of their passing, were not to be found.

Allow me to explain. In response to the ever growing horror of GFW members and other concerned citizens, and the Chattahoochee/Oconee FSs recent decision to review its policy on ATV use on FS lands, GFW applied for and received a grant to document the illegal use of these destructive machines. I was fortunate to be hired by GFW to hunt down ATV’s wherever they may illegally roam within our public forests. After many days of tracking these elusive devices and much assistance from GFW staff, district leaders, members, hikers, hunters, fisher folk etc., the final report is complete and it’s not a pretty picture. From the evidence gathered you would think that some terrible scourge had been unleashed upon the land leaving it broken and bleeding. And you would be correct! Over the last decade the use of ATV’s on and off the legal use areas of our National Forests has grown at an unprecedented rate and the FS seems unable to contain or control this activity. By their own estimates, the FS believes there are over 500 miles of illegal ATV trails on the CONF with a repair bill of close to $1 million.

Though this report covers only a portion of the CONF I believe it strongly indicates a runaway problem that will only grow worse if strong measures are not implemented by the FS soon. Some suggestions and recommendations based on my field observations offer a three-pronged approach to this situation.

ATV Survey on page 9
A lot is happening with the plan revision and Forest Service policy these days. Here are a few issues that we thought you ought to know about.

First, the Forest Service recently proposed to change the wording of its documents regarding Categorical Exclusions (CE). A CE is a project that does not have to be scoped, and is not open to public comment. They are projects that the Forest Service considers small and insignificant. However, at present up to one mile of road and the sale of 200,000 board feet of green timber can be categorically excluded. We believe that the bar for a CE is set way too high. Unfortunately, that is not up for debate or scoping at this time, and even with our comments regarding the limits, they will probably not be changed. There were two changes proposed to the process. The first proposed change dealt with the issuance of special use permits. Here they only clarified the language that will allow them to reissue a permit if nothing about the permit has changed. However, the second proposed change dealt with Extraordinary Circumstances. This has been a problem with the Forest Service in the past, and even the courts have interpreted the language differently from one another. The language lead one court (Seventh circuit) to conclude that the “mere presence” of an extraordinary circumstance precluded the use of a Categorical Exclusion. While another court (Ninth Circuit) ruled that the Forest Service could use a Categorical Exclusion even when an endangered species (which is an extraordinary circumstance) was present. Clearly, the language needed to be clarified. However, the proposed solution is to leave this decision up to the local official. We believe that this is a recipe for disaster and will foster abuse by some officials. We have suggested the use of a decision tree to guide the local officials in determining what can be categorically excluded when an extraordinary circumstance is present. This would provide some consistency across the board and hopefully prevent abuse of the system.

Second, the FWRBE team met on Dec. 10-12 in Asheville NC. The team discussed and produced recommendations for some strict standards for the rare community management prescription. They will recommend to the planning committee that this prescription be an overlay of all other assigned prescriptions. This was some really good work on the part of the Forest Service Biologists. They also discussed how to provide direction to the local ID teams for prescriptions that are not specific about habitat conditions. This proved difficult to do across the region. It was determined that habitat conditions such as forest age class distribution and permanent openings could be addressed by assigning 3-5 discrete levels of management. Though offered in the spirit of good conservation, this has the potential to be seriously abused by local officials. So, look for more on this in the future. It was also determined that habitat condition issues such as forest restoration, and fire maintained communities should be addressed on a management area or forest-wide scale, which will be discussed later. It has been promised that the next meeting, which is set for Jan. 29 through February 2, will have riparian recommendations and old growth considerations on the agenda!!

Third, the Roads Policy was implemented on Jan. 12, 2002. This policy requires that project level decisions must be “informed by” a roads analysis immediately, and that a forest-wide roads analysis be completed by January of 2003. This analysis will hopefully designate unnecessary roads, and roads that are creating erosion problems, which we can then push to be closed. This December the Forest Service issued two interim directives that were designed to “clarify” this policy and the Roadless Rule. In doing this, temporary roads were taken out of the policy. This means that all of the roads out there that the Forest Service claims that it doesn’t have the money to obliterate will not be taken into account in the forest wide analysis. This is a large blow to the policy.

Interim directives usually last eighteen months and can be reissued once for a total of 36 months. However, this directive states that it will be effective until the adoption of a forest plan that has considered the management of roads and roadless areas. Public comments on this issue are due by February 19th and will be considered before a final directive, which will be placed in the plan, is made. This is our chance to ask that the forest wide roads analysis be comprehensive, that temporary roads be put back in the analysis, and that the analysis be done on a watershed scale which will allow for the most protection. Comments can be sent to USFS CAT Attention: Road Policy P.O. Box 221150 Salt Lake City, UT 84122 or via e-mail at roads_id@fs.fed.us

Lastly, the riparian prescription that we were fairly pleased with went to the planners and is now only a shadow of its former self. The new draft has 100-foot zones on all streams regardless of the slope of the surrounding area. This is far too small for most streams in the Blue Ridge ecosystem, and may be too large for some in

*Update cont'd page 7*
The Rabun County powerline controversy proceeded along two fronts in early 2002 both geared to keeping construction of a 115 KV transmission line on a very fast track.

1.) Georgia Transmission Corp. filed suit in Rabun County Superior Court in efforts to overturn the local ordinance that placed a three-year moratorium on construction of such lines.

2.) The US Forest Service, at least for now, apparently will reject calls to conduct an Environmental Impact Study of the proposed 7-mile line, most of which crosses national forest. A less-detailed Environmental Assessment should do, according to a forest service spokesman.

3.) The court suit, meanwhile, underscores the power of electric utilities in Georgia. Not only is there no requirement for state or local approval of transmission line corridors like GTC's, but utilities apparently have the state constitution on their side when it comes to condemning private property for the lines.

That's the key point GTC lawyers made in the court suit. The state constitution, the lawyers asserted, "specifically precludes enactment of any ordinance that will affect the exercise of the power of eminent domain." The transmission utility's proposed line would cut across about 10 private properties (and at least two of those landowners have refused GTC access to their holdings.)

Several legal footnotes:

♦ The two superior court judges who regularly hear cases in Rabun have recused themselves from handling the case. Both, it turns out, are members of Habersham EMC, the rural electricity cooperative whose retail network in the rapidly developing, mountain resort areas of Rabun County would be served by the GTC line. The local potato is to be assigned to another judge.

♦ As for local reaction, public utterance by various Rabun officials suggests the county will mount a less-than-vigorous defense of its own moratorium ordinance — even though it says nothing about limiting utilities' right of eminent domain. But the county has contacted outside counsel, who previously had offered to defend the ordinance pro bono.

As for the forest service review, about 75 interested individuals and advocacy groups filed comments relating to the case, including Georgia Forestwatch; Citizens for Rabun's Heritage, a local coalition monitoring the powerline controversy; The Nature Conservancy; the Chattooga Conservancy; the Sierra Club, and the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club.

♦ It is still conceivable, though, Boydstun subsequently clarified, that the analysis might suggest need for an EIS versus an EA primarily comes down to whether a proposal is considered a 'major Federal action' that may significantly affect the quality of the human environment."

♦ The proposed line, including monopoles of up to 110 feet in height, would transect a portion of Glassy Mountain that contains a rich and remote hardwood forest feeding a variety of pristine streams and springs. The line would begin below Tiger and end at a new substation along US 76 near Charlie Mountain Road.

♦ Whatever the results of the content analysis, and the EA, the forest service is shooting to complete its review soon, perhaps in April. Boydstun said. GTC wants to begin construction in June of this year. If approved as outlined in the company's application to cut across government property, the line would be in operation for 30 years. Following review, the Tallulah Ranger District will recommend specific action in the GTC case, which can range from denial to approval and a lot in between (like approval with amendments and/or conditions.) It's then up to the Forest Supervisor of the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest to issue a final decision in the case.

Both GTC and the Forest Service have websites dedicated to the powerline review: www.fs.fed.us/cont/press/gtc-intro.htm & www.gatrans.com/projects/northburton.htm Then, there's always our own, www.gafw.org/ which will include periodic updates on the situation, as well as the website for the Chattooga Conservancy: www.chattoogariver.org (right) waterfall at Glassy Mountain adjacent to proposed powerline
The Forests of Kelly Ridge

Lack of human disturbance and calcium rich soils have combined in the Kelly Ridge roadless area to produce forests that are exceptional for Georgia in both stature and composition. These conditions manifest themselves most strikingly in the stand of uncut buckeyes in Ramp Cove. The low value of buckeye would result in the species being left when most of the other trees in the cove were cut; consequently, one can still see trees over four feet in diameter and 130 feet tall in the cove today. While the buckeyes are well known, other less noticed species add to the significance of the cove's forest. A tuliptree and a northern red oak of record height for Georgia go largely unnoticed as a result of their proximity to the giant buckeyes. Similarly, excellent examples of forest grown black cherries and white ash receive little attention.

Old trees in the roadless area are not restricted to Ramp Cove. While at least four other coves contain uncut buckeyes, the least humanly disturbed forest grows along the crest of the Tennessee Valley Divide. This forest reflects pre-settlement conditions more accurately than the cove forests do because, rather than only one species being left, the entire forest escaped logging. The exposed nature and poor soils of the higher able timber, so no economic incentive exists. Habitat harbors a white oak dominated forest, with some oaks in the length which doubles as a diminutive ancient oaks of the roadless area stands in north Georgia outside of wilder.

Below the ridge tops along drainages where other elements cause the soil pH in the common in north Georgia. These soils are common in north Georgia including yellow wood and in boulder fields in six the only native species with compound during the last ice age, but retreated to shelter as the climate warmed. Butternut or white by yellow wood and also is much less common has decimated wild populations so creek that drains the north side of Kelly Ridge are now scarce. Farther up the creek grows sugar maple, a species common in the Northeast and the ridge valley province but restricted to sheltered areas with circum neutral in the southern Appalachians. Above the sugar maples, in the headwaters of the creek, grows mountain maple, the smallest maple east of the Mississippi. In Georgia, the little maple grows on rocky, high elevation, north facing slopes like those found in the highest part of the roadless area. In 1961, this area was documented as Old Growth conditions for Georgia. Forestwatch and currently has 39 state champion trees to his name.

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Update

The Forest Service planners have done a disservice to themselves and to the public. In order to get an accurate picture of what needs to be protected, the riparian zone should be determined by the slope of the surrounding area. As you all know, this issue is imperative to the conservation of the land, the water, and the biodiversity of each. The prescription also excludes scoured ephemeral streams. These are the extreme headwaters of rivers that are often dry, except during and right after a rain event. Including these areas in the prescription caused a major portion of the land base to be protected. The prescription now states that each forest will designate the ephemeral zones locally. This means that there will be little continuity across the southeast and that the standards are likely to be weak and non-protective, or virtually non-existent. Together with Pacific Rivers Council, Southern Appalachian Forest Coalition, and several other groups, we are fighting hard to repair this damage to the plan. This turn of events also makes us fear for the rest of the plan recommendations that have been made. It is possible that the planners could take out every good thing that has been recommended. This is a depressing thought, and one that keeps us ever more watchful. For more information on any of these subjects, please call the office or visit our web site at www.gafw.org.
Conservation Target: Kelly Ridge  

by Brent Martin, Executive Director

The Kelly Ridge Roadless area, at 8,500 acres, is truly one of Georgia’s last wild places. Located in Towns and Rabun counties, it consists of rich north facing coves containing old growth forest and rare plants (see the companion article to this by Jess Riddle), high biodiversity watersheds, the Appalachian Trail, and incredible solitude. It is currently being recommended for wilderness; however, like most of our wilderness candidates, it is fraught with controversy. The first problem is that it lies completely within the State DNR managed Swallow Creek Wildlife Management Area and thereby contains several acres of DNR game species food plots. The State DNR is extremely covetous of these plots and is opposing the wilderness designation because they would lose access to them. On a recent hike up the Dismal Creek drainage with Jess Riddle, we discovered an access road to a food plot that forded the creek. The road had eroded to the point where the stream had diverted into the road and ran for approximately a quarter of a mile in the severely eroded roadbed. So much for access. The road density however is low, with only 4.1 miles in the entire 8,500 acre area.

Despite the Forest Service’s wilderness recommendation for Kelly Ridge in the last draft of the “Rolling Alternative,” (perhaps more aptly called the “Wobbling Alternative),” their most recent evaluations for wilderness on the Chattahoochee conclude that the Chattahoochee has enough wilderness based on recreational demand to last until 2050. Their recreational demand analysis, however, is based on many flawed assumptions and that subject alone would take up the entire newsletter. Perhaps they forgot the reason that the Cohutta Wilderness recently undertook a Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) process was that it was overused and being loved to death. Anyway, in the Forest Service’s most recent wilderness analysis of Kelly Ridge, the Tallulah Ranger District lists their primary reason for opposition as “Loss of the suitable acreage from the timber base.” They also list the Deep Gap shelter on the Appalachian Trail as incompatible with a wilderness designation (I’m just reporting the facts!), despite the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club’s endorsement of the area for wilderness, and the loss of game management options by the DNR.

The Brasstown Ranger district reports “fire management” and “mechanized equipment restrictions” as major considerations, along with reductions in the timber base and loss of wildlife management options. I trust that what we are up against is starting to look clear, dear reader. These antiquated views of forest management are heavily entrenched at the district level, slow to change, and resistant to alternative views. Wilderness designation is also opposed by Trout Unlimited and the off road vehicle user groups. Trout Unlimited is opposed because of the DNR's trout stream management on Swallow Creek. In wilderness, the stocking of non-native fish is illegal, as well as making the artificial stream structures that “enhance” beautiful mountain streams like Swallow creek. I have fished Swallow Creek many times and always caught wild trout above the structures, so I’m not sure why this particular fear exists. Once again, I think that it comes down to options.

But why wilderness? Because it is the most comprehensive, absolute form of protection we have in the tool chest. It forbids mechanized equipment, motorized vehicles, logging, and roadbuilding – the only designation that does so. It does not forbid hunting, fishing, horseback riding, or camping. Finally, it is important to remember that the Kelly Ridge Roadless area was once part of the 36,000 acre Tray Mountain Roadless area. That was in 1985 upon completion of the last forest management plan for the Chattahoochee National Forest. The Tray Mountain wilderness is approximately 10,000 acres, and was part of a Georgia wilderness bill passed in 1986. The Forest Service has therefore logged and put roads in close to 18,000 acres of the original Roadless area – in just ten years! (Our last Roadless inventory was completed in 1995) Wilderness is what will permanently protect this remaining vestige of wild country. Please write to Clara Johnson, Forest Supervisor, and Congressman Nathan Deal and ask that this area be protected as wilderness in the new forest management plan. Also, write David Waller at the State DNR and ask that the state DNR stop their opposition to protecting this area. (see key contacts) Once we have this recommendation, we can move forward with a bill. Many, many thanks.
FIELD NOTES

BRASSTOWN DISTRICT UPDATE:
The most noteworthy recent event in BT District was our (seemingly annual) wild fire which, as is typical, occurred in November. This fire burned over several hundred acres in mostly hardwood forest on the ridge between Dockery Lake and Stone Pile Gap.
Examination a few days after the FS (with outside help) extinguished the blaze showed little damage to standing trees as primarily leaf litter and slash had burned, although a few small white pines were consumed. The FS had reworked an existing fire brake mechanically but had established numerous water bars in steep areas to minimize erosion and mulched as soon as possible. ~Howard Markel

CHATTOOGA DISTRICT UPDATE:
A recent field trip with some local forestwatchers presented a good selection of district activities. We started the day with the Faded Footprints folks to visit a very wonderful stacked rock wall that was part of an old trail up Currahee Mountain. The Faded Footprints group has a particular interest in the history of Lake Russell Wildlife Management Area. As volunteers, they have begun an interpretive program of monthly field trips and installation of interpretive signs at many historical sites. Find out more at their website (http://winsness_sc.home.mindspring.com/).

After lunch we did a tour of the headwaters area of Big Leatherwood Creek. Southern pine beetle infestations are everywhere. Particularly troubling was a 20 year old loblolly pine stand that will be totally wiped out by next summer. The intensive management of hardwoods in this stand with herbicides has so damaged the diversity that there will be little left when the pine beetle is finished. There are many of these monocultural stands in the forest with little or no hardwood component to give it resilience in the face of insect and disease disturbance. ForestWatch will be busy over the next few years as the Forest Service decides how to deal with these problems.

Our hike took us to several sections of the Lake Russell Multiple - Use Trail. This trail for horse, bicycle and hikers is in its first stages of construction. It will eventually have up to 40 miles of trail in long and short loops and three trailheads. It is a cooperative project with horse and bicycle groups. Forestwatch is a partner, providing the rare plant surveys required for the trail corridor.

Our next field trip is February 9. We will visit the North Fork Broad River watershed and the Locust Stake ATV Trails to assess their condition and impacts. Meet at 10 AM at Junction Rock Road and Locust Stake Rd.

ATV's con't from page 4 First a strong and clear policy must be presented to the public, which protects the natural resources for which the FS is responsible for managing. This will require a policy that limits or bans ATV usage on FS lands. Certainly a hue and a cry will be heard across the land concerning people's rights and access etc., etc. but it is obvious that this form of recreation is incompatible with our steep mountain slopes and high rainfall and the mandate of the FS to 'Care for the land'. The second part of this solution follows close on the heels of the first. The FS must increase its legal presence on the forest and enforce current laws that already exist and this new policy. This will require a larger enforcement budget at the local level and because this decision is made at the federal level, concerned groups and citizens will need to assist the FS by appealing to our leaders in DC. I also believe that because of the localized nature of many of the illegal routes on FS lands a well coordinated effort by the FS legal enforcement officers could go a long way toward controlling this problem at a lower cost. The third part of this plan would require the FS to put more thought and planning into road closures; how they are constructed and placed.

GFW Forest News - Fall 2001
The Bush administration has appointed Mark Rey as Undersecretary for Environment and Natural Resources. As the political boss of the U.S. Forest Service, one cannot criticize him for being inexperienced, but the kind of experience he’s had should make us very wary. This is taken directly from the USDA web site:

“...as the under secretary for natural resources and environment, Rey oversees the programs of the Forest Service and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Rey has been directly involved in virtually all of the forestry and conservation legislation considered during the past several sessions of Congress, with principal responsibility for a number of public lands bills. Since January 1995, Rey served as a staff member with the U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. He was the lead staff person for the committee’s work on national forest policy and Forest Service administration. In addition, he worked on the Herger/Feinstein Quincy Library Act of 1998 and the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000.

In testimony before the House Subcommittee on Forest and Forest Health on November 7, 2001, Rey sharply criticised conservation laws such as the Endangered Species Act and the National Environmental Policy Act as “outdated” and “holding up projects on the ground.” He said that the requirement for environmental impact statements in USFS projects in roadless areas or with endangered species is a waste of resources. In discussing the Clinton roadless rule, which remains in limbo due to court challenges and the unwillingness of the Bush administration to defend it, he seemed to dismiss the significance of the 1.6 million comments in favor of protection, and said that “200,000 comments were more balanced.” These, according to him, came from “local interests and local government.”

A specific example of Rey’s approach is found in a recent USFS policy change issued as a directive in November 2001. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is the premier legal charter establishing the public’s right-to-know. It requires federal agencies, including the USFS, to analyze the impacts of proposed projects and consider a range of alternatives, mitigation, and provide for public review and comment, especially in regard to major projects that may have significant environmental and social impacts. For small projects, the impacts of which are likely to be minor, agencies may issue “categorical exclusions” (CE), allowing projects to proceed without extensive analysis and public review.

The new directive would reverse current Forest Service policy, which prohibits the use of CEs when critical forest resources or extraordinary circumstances are involved. These resources include:

- Inventoried roadless areas
- Threatened and endangered species or their critical

In other words, neither Georgia Forestwatch nor anyone else, such as you, may have an opportunity to comment on a proposed timber sale in Kelly Ridge roadless area, or the even the USFS adjacent to you back yard.

Given that a former timber industry lobbyist and aide to Sen. Larry Craig (R-ID) is running the show at the USFS, Congress is our best hope for permanently protecting roadless areas. Visit the web sites of Georgia Forestwatch (www.gafw.org), American Lands Alliance (www.americanlands.org), and The Wilderness Society (www.tws.org) to keep abreast of this and other issues.

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con’t from page 9

Many of the breached closures I observed would have been more effective if their placement, height and other factors had been better conceived. Certainly FS engineers can do a better job of designing closures that work.

I labor under no illusions that this issue will be resolved easily or without conflict. The FS has taken steps in the past to control illegal ATV activity on lands under their care with little success as the use of ATV’s has continued to grow unabated. The challenge for the FS now, while formulating a policy that actually protects our beloved mountain environments, will be to take a strong position without the usual compromises for the various user groups causing the resource damage. The safeguarding of these environments must be the first priority! We can assist the FS in this by continuing to push for a strong ATV policy and supporting the FS as it struggles with this difficult issue. The healing of the land cannot begin until the wounding has ceased.

~Wayne Jenkins is GFW Cohutta District Leader
GEORGIA FORESTWATCH RECEIVES GRANT FOR DARTER SURVEY IN UPPER COOSAWATTEE RIVER TRIBUTARIES

In partnership with agency personnel from the U.S.F.S. and the U.S. Geological Survey to the State Wildlife Resources Division, Georgia Forestwatch will be undertaking to survey darter habitat in the Chattahoochee National Forest. Mountaintown Creek watershed and other Upper Coosawattee River streams will be the focal area in our search for the federally threatened Goldline darter and other darters. The National Forest Foundation will be matching other funding generated by Georgia Forestwatch. If you would like to contribute to this survey send an earmarked donation to: Georgia Forestwatch, 15 Tower Rd., Ellijay, GA 30540.

--- artwork by Thomas A. Tarpey

Critical Corner Feature:
Tufted titmouse - *Parus bicolor*

Height: 4 1/2" - 5 1/2"

Song: Repeated, whistled series of "cheeva-cheeva!" Also a lisping call.

Habitat: Moist woodlands and brushy swamps: also residential areas, towns, and city parks in winter, often at feeders.

Range: Great lakes states to Maine, south to Florida & Gulf Coast; does not migrate. Info from Audubon Pocket Guides - Join Audubon!

(Ed. note: they have wonderful magazine)

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**Key Contacts**

Clara Johnson, Forest Supervisor USFS
1755 Cleveland Highway
Gainesville, GA 30501
770-536-0541

Bob Jacobs, Regional Forester
U.S.F.S Region 8
1720 Peachtree Rd., Room 760-S
Atlanta, GA 30367-9102

Ann Veneman, Sec. of Agriculture
James L. Whitten Bldg
1400 Independence Ave.
Washington, DC 20250

Senator Max Cleland
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC 20510
202-224-3521

Senator Zell Miller
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC 20510
202-222-7272

Congressman Nathan Deal
P.O. Box 1015, Gainesville, GA 30503
770-535-2392

**District Offices of the Chattahoochee/Oconee National Forest**

Ranger, Debbie Whitman
USFS Armstrong - Cohutta Ranger District
3941 Hwy 76
Chatsworth, GA 30705
706-695-6736

Ranger, Alan Polk
USFS Brasstown Ranger District
1181 Highway 515
P.O. Box 198, Blairsville, GA 30512
706-745-6928

Ranger, Michael Gryson
USFS Chattooga Ranger District
200 Highway - 197 North
P.O. Box 1960
Clarkeville, GA 30523
706-754-6221

Ranger, Barnie Gyant
USFS Oconee Ranger District
1199 Madison Road
Eaton, GA 31024
706-485-7110

Ranger, Dave Jensen
USFS Tallulah Ranger District
825 Highway 441 South
P.O. Box 438, Clayton, GA 30525
706-782-3320

Ranger, Cashes Cash
USFS Toccoa Ranger District
6050 Appalachian Highway
Blue Ridge, GA 30513
706-632-3031

**Department of Natural Resources**

David Waller, Director
Wildlife Resources Division
2070 U.S. Highway 278, S.E.
Social Circle, GA 30025
2002 CALENDARS STILL AVAILABLE (as of press time)
Our members are a very important part of our funding, so now we appeal to your generosity to help us sell our Georgia Forestwatch 2002 Calendars. We are offering them now to our general membership at a discounted price of $6 each. This beautiful calendar shows extraordinary photos of the Last Wild Places in Georgia. Your contribution will help Georgia Forestwatch offset the costs of printing these highly valued calendars as well as the National Forest we strive to protect. Please, make a contribution. Your calendar purchase means so much to Georgia Forestwatch. To know our members care so much about the protection of National Forest Lands, as well as Public lands, will mean that we will be able to continue fulfilling our mission for years to come.

2002 EVENTS!
♦ Winter Tree Identification on Armuchee Ranger District - 10a.m., Sat., February 23
♦ Stream Ecology Workshop w/ GFW staff ecologist, Katherine Groves - Sat., June 8
♦ Stream Ecology Workshop on the Oconee Nat'l Forest - Sat., April 6
♦ October 11-12 Georgia Forestwatch Annual Retreat
ALL GEORGIA FORESTWATCH EVENTS ARE FOR MEMBERS AND ARE LIMITED BY GROUP SIZE. Please, r.s.v.p. by calling or email, at which point we will forward you event details.

Please cut below dotted line

FREE GFW STATIC LOGO!
Show the world where to find us on the web by sporting a Georgia Forestwatch logo in your car window. If you would like a free green & white static logo, call us or email: info@gafw.org

GEORGIA FORESTWATCH MEMBERSHIP FORM
Name: ___________________________ please, send me a static logo □
Address: ____________________________________________
City: ___________________________ State: ______ Zip: __________
Phone: __________________________
E-mail: __________________________

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

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All are tax deductible

Georgias Last Wild Places 2002 Calendars are on sale. Members can get them for $6 each
________ # of calendars ordered $ ______ amount
GFW Limited Edition Darter T-Shirts on sale for $20 Quantity ______ Size ______
Checks should be payable to Georgia Forestwatch, 15 Tower Road, Ellijay, GA 30540 or pay with Credit Card # ______
Expiration ______ Circle One: MC Visa AMEX.