

# Georgia ForestWatch

## Acknowledges

Almost two hundred years ago, on May 28, 1830, President Andrew Jackson signed the [Indian Removal Act](#) into law. Passed just days earlier by the U.S. Congress, it is one of the darkest days in our country's history that led to the forced migration of Georgia's indigenous people, known as the Trail of Tears. The Cherokee worked together to stop this relocation but were unsuccessful; they were eventually forcibly removed by the United States government in an act of genocide.

The Cherokee removal in 1838 (the last forced removal east of the Mississippi) was brought on by the ever-increasing population of nonnative farmers and the discovery of gold. The Cherokee homeland of north Georgia was highly attractive to farmers resulting in many illegal settlements by pioneers. Long-simmering tensions between Georgia and the Cherokee Nation were brought to a crisis by the discovery of gold near Dahlonega in 1829, resulting in the Georgia Gold Rush. Hopeful gold speculators began trespassing on Cherokee lands, and pressure mounted to fulfill the Compact of 1802. The U.S. Government promised to extinguish Indian land claims in Georgia.

While the final number is uncertain, an estimated 61,000 plus Cherokee, Muscogee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Seminole were forcibly removed because of this legislation resulting in an upwards of 12,000 deaths from starvation, disease, weather, resistance, misery, and at the hands of the U.S. military under the official orders of the Commander in Chief President Jackson.

Georgia ForestWatch (GAFW), headquartered in Dahlonega, acknowledges the national forests and "public" lands our organization seeks to preserve, protect, and restore have been occupied by humans for at least 10,000 years and is home to the indigenous people forcibly removed. GAFW acknowledges that forced human displacement was supported, authorized, and enacted as the official policy of the U.S. and Georgia governments.

Our organization seeks to partner with indigenous peoples, members of modern tribes, and like-minded organizations and individuals to pursue all appropriate measures to reflect, remember, and enact policy changes to address these shameful events.