Forest News

Georgia ForestWatch Quarterly Newsletter Winter 2007

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Charlie Wharton photo

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From The Director

Defining and refining the ForestWatch vision

Wayne Jenkins
Executive Director

Entering into Georgia ForestWatch's 20th year of operation is a good time for thoughtful, even critical, analysis of our organization and purpose, to more clearly articulate our vision for the important and beautiful forests we strive to protect. We are often engaged in a reactive effort, at the ground level, working to adjust or halt Forest Service projects we believe are inappropriate. We have been proactive on several fronts over the years, engaging members to lobby for Land and Water Conservation funding for purchase of new forestlands for inclusion in the national forests; advocating for the identification and protection of old growth forests; working to control illegal ATV activity, and promoting legislation that would permanently protect large, intact forest areas. But we are known primarily for stopping poorly planned, environmentally damaging forest management. This is fine and important work. But argument can be made that this is a stopgap solution at best, fraught with difficulty, acrimony and bearing mostly short-term results. That may be the best we can hope for, but perhaps it's time to think like a forest and consider our public forests' long-term future, say 25, 50, or 100 years from now. What might they look like? What important services and values might these forests possess? What do we stand to gain if we move to adopt a broader vision and perhaps stand to lose without one?

If you have been involved with ForestWatch very long you are most likely aware of our culture's recent and historical treatment of what are now our public national forests in Georgia – management characterized by exploitation and environmental degradation typical of western societies, the wasteful use-it-and-move-on pattern that results in ecological impacts we are still struggling to assess and desire not to repeat. In north Georgia, first and second waves of industrial timber removal peaking in the early 1900s and again in the 1930s, followed by the recent clear-cut period under the auspices of the federal government from 1950-1999, were punctuated by the eco-disaster caused by human introduction of the American chestnut blight. More human caused devastation is unfortunately anticipated by the present assault of the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid. This has left us a much-changed forest, though one still vital, beautiful and diverse and of great service to society. Regretting the human- caused calamities and realizing that there is now nowhere else to go -- no more big forests to cut cheaply and move on -- we must learn to live with the wounds of our own making and make the best of our present ecological reality. In order to do that we must first strive to understand how the natural systems we care about and are attempting to protect actually function, both in the past and in the present at various scales under new natural regimes we have inadvertently created. And this within the context of additional changes such as rampant, adjacent private land development, acid deposition and global climate change. Daunting, to say the least.

Recall, we got our start at the height of a get-out-the-cut era on Georgia's national forests when thoughtful and concerned citizens questioned and eventually halted short-sighted and damaging commercial timber management. In reaction to public outrage and outcry, the U.S. Forest Service designed new Land and Resource Management Plans for our forests that outwardly appear to eschew past practices in exchange for new management proposals that claim to address issues of forest health and wildlife. Sounds good. We'll see. But in the midst of the agency's struggle to understand and implement the edicts of its vague and confusing plans, we should work to refine our values, what we are for, what we are against, and why.

So, what should guide our attempts to formulate a practical, long-term vision for our forests? To date, we can characterize our ecological approach as working to halt management that was short-sighted and damaging, knowing that the silting of streams, destruction of rare species habitat and fragmentation of large blocks of intact forests is not good forestry or ecologically sound. The new science of conservation biology addresses many of our concerns and is becoming more of a guide to our discussions and positions. We also need to strive to integrate this scientific approach with our values and needs as humans to sustain the forested ecosystems that we love.

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Georgia ForestWatch history, Part 2: Growing pains

by Bob Kibler and Charles Seabrook
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The following is the second in a five-part series covering the history of Georgia ForestWatch over the last 20 years.

Still a little wobbly on its feet in August 1986, the newly birthed Georgia ForestWatch quickly geared up for its first important mission – the deployment of a well-trained volunteer force to monitor management of the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests and rein in destructive logging practices.

Prior to the mid-1980s, the U.S. Forest Service's stewardship of the Chattahoochee-Oconee leaned heavily in favor of road-building and preparing timber sales for private industry.

Clear cutting, a particularly ruinous practice, was widespread in the Chattahoochee and other Southern Appalachian forests. Private industry clearly called most of the shots. As one candid Forest Service official put it, there was a hell bent zeal "to put logs on trucks."

But under federal law, the Forest Service is supposed to manage national forests for multiple uses – watershed protection, fish and wildlife habitat, scenic beauty, wilderness protection, recreation and limited logging.

ForestWatch would be instrumental in forcing the federal agency to abide by those mandates and do what it should have done all along – give due consideration to the crucial ecological and environmental values of the forests.

In the beginning, ForestWatch came about as part of a legal settlement in 1986 between the Forest Service and seven conservation organizations – known as the "appellant groups" – that challenged the agency's first-ever comprehensive management plan for the Chattahoochee-Oconee forests. The Forest Service had devised the intricate plan as part of the 1976 National Forest Management Act's mandates.

In the settlement, the Forest Service agreed to disclose publicly on an annual basis its logging, clear cutting and road-building plans for the coming year. To engage the Forest Service and eyeball its activities on the ground – and to ensure that it was sticking to an acceptable course of action – the appellant groups formed Georgia ForestWatch.

In the basic structure developed for the new organization, the Chattahoochee-Oconee came under the hawk-like scrutiny of a dedicated group of volunteers

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Cover photo: ForestWatch outing on July 15, 1989, to Cooper's Creek Scenic Area with Charlie Wharton. From left: mystery couple, Peter Kirby, The Wilderness Society's intern Lisa?, Shirl Parsons (then Darrow), Keith Parsons, Jack Byrne.

Growing Pains

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known as district leaders. At least one volunteer was assigned to each of the Chattahooche's seven districts and the Oconee's single district to monitor the government's activities .

When they came across what they deemed was an unacceptable activity in the forest, they reported it to the appellant groups. In turn, the groups would file, if necessary, an administrative appeal or other legal action to persuade the Forest Service to mend its ways.

ForestWatch's first district leaders and assignments were:

– Ken Kombs, working with a Gainesville textile company, transferred to Chattanooga after a year, and handed off to Mort Meadors. Mort lived near Rabun Gap and ran a trout farm, on the Tallulah Ranger District.

– James Sullivan, a self-taught botanist and canoe builder who lived near Toccoa, on the Chattooga District.

– Dennis Stansell, a Gainesville hospice worker, on the Chestatee District.

– Brent Martin, a graduate history student at Georgia State University in Atlanta, on the Armuchee District.

– Hillrie Quin, an Atlanta conservationist who was prominent in the Appalachian Trail Club, on the Brasstown district.

– Shepard Howell, a Cartersville lawyer and later a judge, on the Cohutta district.

Georgia ForestWatch photo

Prior to the birth of Georgia ForestWatch, clear cutting was a common practice

– Jim Leonard, a Superfund lawyer from Alpharetta, on the Toccoa district.

– Nathan Melear of Athens, on the Oconee district.

The first kick-off training session for district leaders was held at the old Tumbling Waters camp in Rabun County in August, 1986. Subsequent sessions were held annually at the Camp Wahsega 4-H Center nestled in the scenic mountains just north of Dahlonega.

At those gatherings, the district leaders honed such skills as getting around in the woods and assessing the impact of Forest Service activities on the forest. They also learned how to recruit other volunteers to assist them.

Instructors included the district leaders themselves and outside experts, some of whom were Forest Service personnel. "The Forest Service really helped us out during the first four or five sessions, explaining the laws under which they operated," James Sullivan said.

Sullivan himself taught map reading, orienting oneself in the forest and understanding Forest Service codes and jargon. "It was very important that we learned how to walk the woods with a compass and a map to keep from getting lost," Sullivan noted.

Hillrie Quin taught visual quality. "He learned everything there was to know about how the Forest Service dealt with visual qualities (scenic values) in various parts of the forest," Sullivan said.

The participants usually arrived on Friday night and stayed through Sunday afternoon, with a hike in the

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forest usually part of the weekend agenda. The participants were charged $25 for food and lodging. Another important volunteer group – the district leaders' spouses – did much of the cooking. Sue Murphy, wife of James, is still fondly remembered for her "mountains" of tasty spaghetti.

But with no funding or staff of its own, ForestWatch in its early years had to depend on the appellant groups, primarily the Wilderness Society, for administrative support.

The Wilderness Society stepped in at the behest of Peter Kirby. As a lawyer with the society's national office in Washington, Kirby was one of the lawyers who led the appeal in 1986 that resulted in the birth of ForestWatch. Afterwards, he became the director of the Wilderness Society's southeastern office in Atlanta.

"It was Peter's decision to support Georgia ForestWatch," Sullivan said.Kirby arranged for Wilderness Society staff members – who came to be known fondly as "den mothers" – to devote part of their time to handling administrative chores for ForestWatch. The first such staffer was Jean McGrady, who handled the duties until 1988, when she left the Wilderness Society to nurture a family. After that, it was Shirl Darrow, now Shirl Parsons.

McGrady and Parsons made the arrangements for Camp Wahsega, set up district leaders' quarterly meetings and served as liaisons between ForestWatch and the appellant groups. Parsons typed up ForestWatch's first newsletters. A file cabinet at the Wilderness Society's Atlanta office was devoted to storing ForestWatch records and other paperwork.

"I did just about everything, including arranging for speakers at Camp Wahsega, sending out notices of meetings and registering attendees," Parsons said.

She remembers that the fledgling ForestWatch's finances were strictly a "shoebox" operation. "We had only about 50 members at the time, and there were no dues," she recalled.

Later, the financial burdens were relieved somewhat by donations from Recreational Equipment, Inc. (REI). When the company opened its store in 1990 along the I-85 access road near Clairmont Road in Atlanta, it chose Georgia ForestWatch as the recipient of funds generated by its grand opening festivities.

Parsons remembers ForestWatch receiving "several thousand" dollars from REI, which became a major contributor to the organization in later years.

The trained district leaders began fanning out in their respective areas, paying particular attention to areas proposed for logging.

"I walked through the Chattooga district three or four times a month or stopped in the afternoon on the way home from work for a short hike," Sullivan said. "Some areas were easy to get into, others much more difficult. If there weren't any logging roads, you had to walk cross country. That's why it was important to know how to get around in the woods."

The district leaders were looking for possible impacts on soil, wildlife, scenery, water and other forest resources from proposed logging and road-building activities. They tried to determine whether the section should be logged at all or protected for wildlife habitat, visual quality and other purposes.

They learned about proposed logging projects from several sources, including occasional meetings with the forests' district rangers. During the meetings, the district leaders and rangers were able to resolve many of their differences and avoid legal snarls.

In April 1988, for instance, foresters postponed a timber operation to allow ForestWatch members to review a potentially controversial site near Dahlonega.

In working with the agency, ForestWatch's well-trained and knowledgeable volunteers earned respect from several district rangers.

Former Chattooga District ranger Tom Hawks once said of James Sullivan: "He doesn't just preach a party line like some paid person. He gets out there and studies the situation to learn what is going on and is very knowledgeable."

Also, in keeping with the original settlement, at least initially, top-level Forest Service officials began meeting annually with the district leaders and the appellant groups, laying out the agency's plans for the Chattahoochee-Oconee in the coming year.

"The annual meetings gave us a heads up on the Forest Service's plans so that we knew where to focus our forest monitoring," Sullivan said. "The meetings also helped us keep a line of communication open all the way up to the forest supervisor's office."

Logging plans also were revealed in official scoping notices, the first formal steps the Forest Service must take to involve the public in its decision-making, as required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The scoping process is still used today to determine the "scope," or range, and significance of the issues associated with a timber sale or road-building project. The issues and other areas of concern identified by scoping are analyzed in detail in

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Timber sales and herbicide projects on tap in Rabun County

by Joe Gatins : Tallulah District Leader

While Forest Service staffers at the supervisor's office in Gainesville continue to labor to design a five-year timber program for both the eastern and western zones of the Chattahoochee National Forest, the Tallulah District (essentially, Rabun County) is moving ahead with planning for several significant logging proposals and a pair of companion projects, including attempts to begin eradicating some of the invasive plants overtaking some parts of the district.

- **Timber sales are looming** adjacent to Flat Branch, Overflow Creek and Wildcat Creek. Georgia ForestWatch previously appealed and settled these projects after the Forest Service agreed to leave various streamside buffer areas untouched and conduct water quality monitoring of logging sites. The sales contracts were scheduled to be advertised and bid last month. The Forest Service subsequently made public a series of follow-up projects not disclosed in the original plans, including proposals to "cut-and-leave" what trees are left after the logging is done and extensive "prescribed burns" of what forest is left after that! The follow-up work also would include "heavy maintenance" of a lonely, backcountry road so heavily-used and abused by four-wheelers that ForestWatch had urged partial decommissioning of this Forest Service roadway. This would have kept Abe Gap Road open during hunting season. In response, the Tallulah District decided to gate the road in question on a seasonal basis and take other steps to reduce erosion from this often-muddy track. And it's decided to hold off on the "cut-and-leave" and burn proposals both to see whether those "treatments" are really necessary and to gauge environmental effects in the area. It just goes to show: Sometimes, it is worth slogging through the administrative paperwork required to try to affect a government project.

...sometimes, it is worth slogging through the administrative paperwork required to try to affect a government project...

- **The district has proposed two more timber sales** – the first alongside Buck Branch, the second at Dan Gap, above Tuckaluge Creek, in the fabled Warwoman watershed below Rabun Bald. ForestWatch, again with the help of the Southern Environmental Law Center, has filed a detailed response to both proposals. The Dan Gap proposal raises special concerns, as the logging trucks would have to enter and exit the area on Tuckaluge Creek Road, immediately adjacent to Tuckaluge Creek, and likely lead to further impairment of the watershed. The roadway in that area, about 0.5 miles long, descends at a gradient of 10-20 percent, and occasionally as high as 25 percent – and the adjacent grade down to the creek itself often is steeper yet. ForestWatch has asked the Forest Service to conduct a complete and thorough Environmental Assessment of this project before proceeding.

- **Brook Trout projects.** These involve an ambitious, large-scale effort over the next three-to-five years that include replacement of culverts, improving trout habitat by deepening pools and the like, and both re-introduction of the native brook trout and rehabilitation of the trout in selected, higher-order streams. Most of these are in the Tallulah District, but one involves the headwaters of the Chattahoochee River in the Chattooga District.

- **Non-native, invasive plant eradication.** This would involve eradicating – through use of powerful herbicides – stands of kudzu, autumn olive, mimosa, oriental bittersweet, privet, microstegium and wisteria on 131 sites totaling about 738 acres, in Rabun County. ForestWatch has closely examined how the Forest Service proposes to use the herbicides, as well as two companion proposals that appear to have more to do with regeneration of shortleaf pine stands and wildlife openings than eradication of the invasives. And with the help of another legal partner, WildLaw, we have filed detailed suggestion for improving the "spray-all" proposal first outlined by the district.

- **How can you get involved:** Contact the Tallulah Ranger office in Clayton at 706.782.3320 to get copies of any of these decisions or proposals, or show up in person to secure them. It is also useful to add oneself to the district's mailing lists (contact information on page 9) to receive such notices in the future. ■

Save Georgia's hemlocks update

by Lori Martell : Outreach Director

The deadly infestation of our native hemlocks continues to spread across the mountains and forests of north Georgia – but there's good news about the efforts to combat the exotic pest killing these venerable and majestic trees.

The University of Georgia has completed work on the predator beetle-rearing lab and hired its director, and Turner Foundation Inc. has agreed to put up a $75,000 matching grant to help finance laboratory expenses over the next three years.

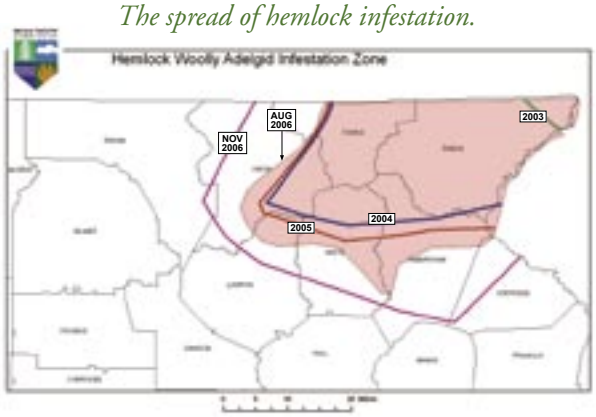
More good news: Georgia ForestWatch is proud to announce that the Lumpkin Coalition raised $10,000 from its second annual Hemlockfest last fall and that it will apply this sum to the "match." Thank you, Turner and Lumpkin!

This is in addition to the $58,000 forwarded the University in early November to support the lab restoration, the sum being raised with the Coalition's invaluable help as well as that of a real estate broker and friends from Rabun County, and ForestWatch's own members. Incredible!

The bad news is that the sap-sucking Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, the exotic insect pest endangering so many hemlocks, has gained several miles of ground in previously un-infested areas, and has now been found in three additional counties of north Georgia: Fannin, Lumpkin, and Stephens. That brings the total to eight affected counties in the state.

Down in Athens, meanwhile, the lab is getting geared up to raise its first predator beetles under the direction of forest entomologist, Dr. Tom Coleman. Initially, his focus is on rearing the predatory beetle, Laricobius nigrinus. Last fall, the lab staff assisted with four releases of predatory beetles in Georgia. The beetles for those releases were provided by Clemson University and were released on specific sites on the Chattahoochee National Forest.

The spread of hemlock infestation.



Georgia Forestry Commission map adapted by Georgia ForestWatch.

Georgia ForestWatch expects to gear up early this year to work with its partners to continue fundraising for the lab, with the goal of securing the remaining funds necessary to secure Turner's matching grant – and guarantee lab operations for the next three years.

We hope you will join with us in this effort along with our conservation partners; Georgia Wildlife Federation, Upper Chattahoochee River Keeper, Georgia Conservancy, Georgia Chapter of the Sierra Club and the Lumpkin Coalition. Our government partners, USDA Forest Service Region 8 and the Chattahoochee National Forest, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, the Georgia Forestry Commission and the University of Georgia are also working hard to do their part for funding and assisting with this effort.

If you are new to ForestWatch and need additional information on the Hemlock Wooly Adelgid issue, checkout the following link: http://www.gainvasives.org/hwa/

If you would like to donate towards research for finding a solution to the HWA problem go to http://www.gafw.org/membership.htm and click on "Make A Donation" under the Hemlock Campaign heading. 100% of donated funds go toward the lab at UGA thanks to support grants from Patagonia and REI, key partners for saving these beautiful trees in Georgia. ■

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Growing Pains

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another document – the draft environmental assessment, which is also put forth for public scrutiny and comment.

After that, the Forest Service draws up its final environmental assessment to guide logging or road-building in a particular forest tract. If the public doesn't like what it sees in an assessment, an administrative appeal can be filed to persuade the agency to change its plans. An appeal wends its way up the chain of command to as high as the Forest Service chief for a final decision.

In ForestWatch's early days, district leaders certainly did not like much of what they saw in the environmental assessments, and they were forced to crank up the appeals process.

At first, the appellant groups agreed that ForestWatch itself wouldn't file appeals. Rather, district leaders would hand over their recommendations to the appellant groups, which would file the necessary action.

One of the first appeals was made in 1988. Sullivan wrote it and turned it over to Friends of the Mountains, one of the appellant groups, for official filing with the Forest Service.

The appeal challenged a timber sale and a logging road that would have passed through the Chattahoochee River watershed and through what would later become the Mark Trail Wilderness Area.

"A main consideration in making the appeal was that the long road would involve steep, rocky terrain to reach a timber stand of the lowest quality in the entire watershed," Sullivan recalled. "There just wasn't any decent timber there."

The challenge was successful and the Forest Service changed its plans for the sale.

With the first victory under their belts, the district leaders gained considerable confidence that they were on the right track. They would go on to win many more appeals during the early years of ForestWatch.

In 1991, a legendary coup occurred when Dennis Stansell and his wife Jan in the Chestatee District found a showy wild orchid known as the small whorled pogonia (Isotria medeoloides) in a proposed logging stand in the Blackwell Creek watershed. The plant, Georgia's rarest orchid, was listed as threatened on the federal endangered species list. The timber sale was cancelled.

Of equal importance, however, the discovery was stark evidence that the Forest Service was not surveying diligently for protected species in proposed logging areas. The agency even questioned whether it had to conduct such surveys or simply rely on prior records.

The question was convincingly settled in early 1992 when ForestWatch volunteers learned that a Forest Service manual indeed required a biological survey as part of an environmental assessment. The agency had not been doing that.

The revelation was made with the help of Jim Loesel of Virginia, a citizen watchdog for national forests in his state. He had made interpretation of Forest Service regulations his life's work. "We drove up to Virginia to meet with him, and he educated us on how to interpret the manual," Sullivan said.

Loesel's information came in handy a short time later, in February 1992, when ForestWatch filed its first direct appeal. Written by Stansell, the appeal protested implementation of the Flat Creek timber sale on the Chestatee district. The logging, the appeal stated, would increase browsing by white-tailed deer and jeopardize protected plant species.

The action was a momentous move because several members of ForestWatch had been pushing for the organization to begin filing its own appeals instead of routing them through the appellant groups. Direct filing, it was thought, would be more effective since ForestWatch volunteers were more knowledgeable than the other groups about a proposed forest project and could follow the process more closely.

The first direct appeal was also significant for another reason – it encouraged the then loose-knit volunteer group to incorporate in 1993 and become a full-fledged, independent organization.

Prior to incorporation, however, ForestWatch played a major role in another important mission in the early 1990s – forest preservation.

Most of the preservation effort at that time centered around then-U.S. Rep. Ed Jenkins, who represented Georgia's 9th Congressional District that encompassed most of the Chattahoochee National Forest. Jenkins said he was concerned that too much timber cutting, especially clear-cutting, was taking place in the Chattahoochee. He had shepherded legislation through Congress in 1986 that bestowed wilderness designation on Tray Mountain, Rich Mountain and Raven Cliffs – more than 45,000 acres.

But he wanted to take more forest land out of timber production, especially areas that were omitted from his 1986 wilderness act. A fortuitous meeting in early 1991 between him and Peter Kirby helped spur legislation to accomplish that goal. As Kirby recalled: "I met Ed at an event on the forest and then asked for an appointment for Shirl and me to visit him at his district office. At that visit he asked us to prepare a proposal for him on special areas, particularly Blood Mountain."

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For help in drawing up the proposal, Kirby turned to Georgia ForestWatch's district leaders because of their intimate knowledge of the forest. They dubbed themselves the Chattahoochee Design Team. Within two months, they had a plan, which called for the creation of a national recreation area across the crest of the entire Blue Ridge above 3,000 feet, from Springer Mountain to the North Carolina border.

The plan was presented to Jenkins at a dinner in Norcross, a northern Atlanta suburb. One of the attendees was Sullivan. "I remember it being at a fancy restaurant," he recalled, "and I remember two things about that night – the superb swordfish we had for dinner, and Jenkins' saying that if he proposed this plan, he would be 'dead politically.'"

A more modest plan, therefore, was quickly prepared. The final proposal included four major sites: Blood Mountain Wilderness Area; Mark Trail Wilderness Area; Coosa Bald Scenic Area; and Springer Mountain National Recreation Area.

Dennis Stansell remembers his part in establishing the boundaries of Blood Mountain Wilderness and the national recreation area as one of the most exciting and rewarding times of his life – one of his "greatest contributions."

But it was hard work. There were few trails, and much of the work required bushwhacking, or making one's way through the forest with a compass. "A GPS instrument would have made it a piece of cake," Stansell said.

The Forest Service wasn't of much help, either: "They kept trying to narrow down the proposed areas as much as possible," said Stansell.

Quin and Sullivan met with similar frustrations in the proposed Mark Trail Wilderness Area.

After the new plan was presented to Jenkins, he sent out questionnaires in May 1991 to thousands of his constituents, asking for their views on the proposal. Kirby also intended to publish and distribute a brochure across North Georgia to explain the need for forest protection and help garner public support for it.

While trying to come up with funds for the brochure, Kirby had another fortuitous meeting – with Dr. Bob Kibler, a recently retired professor of neurology at Emory University and a long-time hiker.

"When I retired, I wanted to do something with the environment," Kibler remembered. "I first approached the Georgia Conservancy, but I really wanted to get involved with an activist group. So, I called Peter Kirby and told him about my interests."

Meeting with Kirby, Kibler asked what he might do as a volunteer for the Wilderness Society. "Peter, always direct, said the first thing I could do was contribute $700 towards the publication of the brochure, and so I wrote a check," said Kibler, who later became a leading ForestWatch advocate.

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Washington, DC 20250

A perfect day for flying in a biplane

by Donna Born

We rolled up the grass runway headed north. It didn't seem like we were going fast enough to get off the ground, but the 1942 Stearman piloted by Cal Tax easily took to the air. The air was crisp and cold and as we rose higher we could see the mountains to the north of Cumming.

The temperature had risen to about 45 degrees by the time we started our ride. We were bundled up in the open cockpit and we didn't care how cold it was. The sky was clear and the visibility was great. It was a perfect day for flying in a biplane!

Cal donated the biplane ride as a fundraiser for Georgia ForestWatch at the fall retreat. Parrie Pinyan, who actually won the ride in the raffle, chose not to take the ride. I was runner-up and I was elated when told I would get to fly in the biplane.

We banked and circled back toward the airstrip where Cal and his wife Sandi live. Then we dove and buzzed the airstrip as Sandi waved to us. We rose, banked east, and headed toward Lake Lanier. The plane has a cruising altitude of 1,000 to 2,500 feet. We waved to the fishermen in boats as we flew low over the lake. We headed south over Buford Dam, followed the Chattahoochee for a little while, and then southwest toward Northpoint Mall. We could easily see Stone Mountain, the Atlanta skyline and Buckhead towers, and Kennesaw Mountain.

The Stearman biplanes were used during WWII to train fighter pilots, so the controls are in both cockpits. Cal had put me into the front cockpit. We talked to each other using the mouthpieces and headphones built into the headgear.

Cal asked if I'd like to take the control stick. So I pushed the stick to the left. The bank to the left and slight dive were more sudden than I had anticipated and that was the only scary part of the flight. I immediately asked Cal to take over and he suggested that I lightly hold the stick while he steered. That let me get the feel of steering without doing any damage – a big relief to me!

Photo by Sandi Tax

Donna in the biplane with pilot Cal Tax standing.

When we headed back north we could see Sharp Mountain to the west of Jasper and the ridge of mountains north and east of Jasper. As we neared the end of the flight, we circled the landing strip. The touchdown onto the grass runway was smooth and gentle.

It was a treat to meet Cal and Sandi. I thank Cal, Georgia ForestWatch, and Parrie for giving me the opportunity to do something I've wanted to do for years. What a great ride! ■

*At press time, we learned with great sadness of the death of **Marie Mellinger,** 92, at her home in Clayton on December 28. Her contributions to the protection, appreciation and understanding of Georgia's forests and other natural areas are unsurpassed.*

Growing Pains

(continued from page 9)

The public response to Jenkins' questionnaire was huge. Of more than 4,000 persons replying, nearly 70 percent were in favor. Armed with the high approval rating, Jenkins introduced the Chattahoochee National Forest Protection Act of 1991. Quin, Sullivan, Kirby and Nell Jones of the Georgia Wildlife Federation testified before Congress on behalf of the measure.

The Forest Service, which had planned to proceed with four timber sales in the areas that Jenkins wanted to preserve, opposed the legislation. But when asked during the hearings why it had harvested only 60,000 board feet out of an allowed 80,000 in the forest, agency officials admitted that it was due, in part, to insufficient demand.

In the Senate, U.S. Sen. Sam Nunn of Georgia pledged his help and declared that he and his fellow supporters "would stay until the legislation was approved." The bill was passed, protecting some additional 50,000 acres of the Chattahoochee National Forest. It was an amazingly speedy journey for a piece of legislation through Congress.

"A lot of people really worked hard to make it happen," Stansell said. "We wanted to do it right. I really can't say enough about Ed Jenkins. This was his legacy."

Later, in honor of the former lawmaker, Congress changed the name of the Springer Mountain National Recreation Area to the Ed Jenkins National Recreation Area.

But about the time Jenkins' bill was moving through Congress, Georgia ForestWatch and the Forest Service were becoming more wary of one another. Their relationship was taking a decided turn. For the first several years after the organization's birth, its relationship with the federal agency was relatively smooth, probably because of the good will generated by the 1986 settlement. But by the end of the 1980s, dealings between ForestWatch and the Forest Service were becoming more strained.

Sullivan remembers that the annual meetings with the agency's bigwigs were becoming more loud, tension-filled and confrontational. At one meeting, some attendees, frustrated, pounded hard on the table to make a point.

Undoubtedly, the dozens of appeals filed by ForestWatch and other groups, and the threats of lawsuits by environmental

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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, or call our office at 706.635.8733 to use your credit card. Thanks!

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Defining and Refining
(continued from page 2)

Following is a list of issues for jump-starting a dialogue aimed at defining our values and positions, much of it borne out of our past experience, though some are new, challenging us to clarify our thinking. Some of these are formed as statements and others as questions to that end.

Our forests should provide for and protect native biological diversity. We have always supported the protection of the full diversity of life in our forests but things get complicated. What about species specifically adapted to early successional habitats, such as the golden-winged and chestnut-sided warbler, whose populations may have increased in response to our past mismanagement but whose populations are now declining?

Does ForestWatch support logging and where and at what levels? Many forest stands are vulnerable to devastation by the native southern pine beetle due to past management. We can support and encourage forest management that would move these overstocked, off-site mono-cultural plantings into a forest appropriate to their sites. Are there other legitimate opportunities for the practice of good forestry on our public forests in Georgia?

Define what a healthy relationship between forests and local communities might look like.
Accepting that good forestry should be practiced on the national forests in Georgia, how should local communities become a part of that work? Is there not an opportunity to create a local, trained workforce doing quality work with benefits to individuals, local communities and local ecosystems?

Protect water quality. This is and should be a top goal of Georgia ForestWatch and the Forest Service and may in the future be the most important service provided by our forests. The supply and regulation of quality drinking water to downstream communities is reason enough for protecting headwater streams with forest cover.

Our forests should provide for balanced, low impact recreation. As recreational demands increase across the forest what is our role in educating the public and working with the agency for protection of these natural resources? At some point recreational numbers and impacts surpass the capacity to supply a quality experience and remain sustainable both experientially and resource wise. How do we protect the forest from too much of a good thing?

Our forests should provide quality landscapes for traditional pursuits such as hunting and fishing.
Should ForestWatch have any official policy or stance on traditional heritage practices, such as hunting, fishing, trapping and mining on public lands?

Support and advocate for funding for acquisition of important tracts for adding to the National Forest land base. This one, which we already do, is pretty much a no-brainer. How might we do a better job?

Oversee forest management for appropriate planning, scale, monitoring and implementation. This goes to the heart of ForestWatch's mission, and, we do this well. How could we improve?

Advocate for permanent legislative protection of special areas. In the present political climate this work requires a highly localized approach, over many years, to build the public support necessary for legislative success with such opportunities as protection of inventoried roadless areas. Should we work to increase our ability to address this issue in a larger way at the local level?

Protect our old growth forests. The Forest Service has made this issue more difficult and complex than it needs to be. Presently, while continuing our efforts to discover unidentified old growth, ForestWatch supports protection of all existing old growth forests but we have no defined position on Forest Service Region 8 Guidelines for protecting old growth. Do we, for instance, support the small, middle and large patch system proposed by the agency in the Region 8 Guidelines? Is this enough from a landscape ecology viewpoint to ensure full protection for all old growth associated species?

Halt illegal off road vehicle abuse of our forests. We have been very involved and successful in reporting illegal activity and moving the agency to address this issue. We will certainly continue the on-the-ground survey work and the vitally important work at the state level to block bad bills -- but, again, is there more to be done?

This list is neither all-inclusive nor definitive but should be viewed as an invitation to our members to let us know their thoughts on these issues and perhaps others not mentioned. Got ideas or opinions? Do you have any insights into planning for the future of our forests? Let us know at info@gafw.org and label your message as *ForestWatch Vision*. As we proceed, we'll be sharing our progress in defining our vision for ForestWatch and our forests. Thanks for your love of these grand forests and thoughtful assistance.

Clear cutting provided ForestWatch impetus

by David Govus : Toccoa District Co-Leader

Perhaps the single most important factor behind the creation of Georgia ForestWatch was the United States Forest Service's use of clear cutting to harvest timber in the Chattahoochee National Forest during the decades of the 1970s and 1980s. Clear cutting is the practice of cutting down all trees regardless of whether the trees have a commercial value during the process of harvesting timber. Clear cutting had been employed in western forests for some time. Many western forests grew from a catastrophic fire event, were even-aged and comprised of only a few species. In this situation, if one accepted the need for timber harvest on public land, clear cutting had a certain logic to it as nearly

Georgia ForestWatch Photo

Clear cut near the Chattooga River in 1995

everything cut had commercial value and an efficiency was obtained by extracting as much timber as possible for each harvest.

Clear cutting in the Southern Appalachian forests, however, was a different matter. Our moist forests were not shaped by catastrophic fire, are comprised of dozens of species of trees, have been uneven in age for thousands of years and regenerate in gaps created by dead and fallen trees. Western clear cutting, despite its perhaps favorable economic advantages, generated much opposition centered around aesthetics and the fact that many clear cuts on steep ground resulted in unacceptable levels of erosion and in some cases landslides. On rivers originating in the Coastal Range of the Pacific Northwest these landslides destroyed salmon runs and prevented forest regeneration. Despite these obvious problems and public opposition, the Forest Service continued to argue that clear cutting was the most efficient method to harvest timber and proceeded to bring the procedure back to the eastern forests -- generating even greater controversy. Congressional opposition to clear cutting grew in the early 1970s and was centered around then-U.S. Senator Frank Church of Idaho, Chairman of the Agricultural Subcommittee on Public Lands. The full Agricultural Committee released a report recommending a more constrained use of clear cutting known as the "Church Clearcutting Guidelines." These guidelines were later incorporated into the National Forest Management Act of 1976. Despite this, a Congressional Research Service study of the clear cutting controversy requested by Congress in 1992 states that:

"Much of the public outcry against clear cutting, and demand for reducing its use in the national forests, has its basis in section 6(g)(3)(F)(i) of NFMA, which directs the use of clear cutting only where "it is determined to be the optimum method .... to meet the objectives and requirements of the relevant land management plan." When written, these guidelines were thought to have been specific enough to prevent the over-use and abuse of clear cutting, while still allowing the agency the flexibility to choose when and where to use it. Despite such direction and continuing public objections, the use of clear cutting in the national forests has apparently increased since 1976, and appears to have peaked in 1988."

Back east on our Chattahoochee National Forest the controversy swirling nationwide around clear cutting seemed to have little effect on Forest managers. Clear cutting increased from 16,000 acres in the 1960s to 53,000 acres in the 1970s to 59,000 acres in the 1980s. Conservationists were not the only opponents to clear cutting. In the early 1970s a group of independent loggers in north Georgia called for a meeting with the Forest Service. These loggers were alarmed by the clear cutting that the Forest Service was demanding of contractors on public land. The loggers felt the practice wasteful and that it would not lead to healthy forest regeneration. The Forest Service ignored the complaints of the loggers as well as the conservationists and actually increased the pace of clear cutting. The active clear cutting timber program resulted in a net loss to the taxpayers when all administrative costs, overhead and deferred maintenance of the road system built to facilitate the harvest were tallied. The timber program increased the size of the bureaucracy, however. And as a certain portion of the gross sale proceeds reverted to the agency, the timber sales fulfilled a bureaucrat's dream of increasing the agency's budget. The Forest Service continued to insist that clear cutting was the most efficient method of harvesting timber and that this would result in even-aged stands of timber that could

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Clear Cutting
(continued from page 13)

be harvested at regular intervals in the future. Conservationists argued that our native Southern Appalachian Forests were never even aged and were much too complex to be managed as one would an agricultural crop. By the late 1980s Georgia ForestWatch had organized and began filing administrative appeals to Forest Service timber sales. Georgia ForestWatch surveyors, naturalists, hunters and botanists began to notice something unusual about the now 15-20 year old clear cuts. The regenerating forests did not appear to have the same amount of oaks and hickories as did the forest that had been cut but instead were increasingly populated by non-mast producing tulip poplar, red maple and black locust. As hard mast (acorns and hickory nuts) are the chief source of protein for the animals that live in the forest, this was viewed as a very serious matter. When this was brought to the attention of the Forest Service the agency dismissed the issue and asked where the studies were. It was beyond the ability of Georgia ForestWatch to undertake such an expensive project. And, to even contemplate such a study, one would have had to have created study plots in particular areas prior to the clear cutting.

PGC Photo/Joe Kosack

Clear cuts reduce mast producing oaks and hickories – bad news for wildlife.

The Forest Service's clear cutting program on the Chattahoochee National Forest finally came to an end in the mid-1990s not because the Forest Service realized the error of its ways but because a panel of Federal judges in a lawsuit brought by the Sierra Club and Georgia Forest Watch ruled that the agency had failed in its duty to monitor the effects of its timber program. By early 2006 the Forest Service was planning new 'projects' under a new Forest Management Plan that emphasized forest health and "restoration of plant associations to their ecological potential." The Forest Service announced its desire to collaborate with interested parties in planning new projects and Georgia ForestWatch volunteers and staff were active participants in numerous meetings and field trips during the course of the year. Georgia ForestWatch remains skeptical as some of the ideas advanced contemplate the need to create 'early succession' for one species or another through what can only be described as clear cutting. During this 'collaborative process' Georgia ForestWatch raised the issue of the failure of past clear cuts to regenerate an ecologically appropriate forest. These concerns were dismissed by the agency and at one field trip when the issue was raised a Forest Service official disingenuously suggested that the group visit a nearby 25 year old clear-cut. This visit of course would have had no value without knowing the composition of the forest prior to cutting. Interestingly, shortly after the suggested visit to a clear-cut this same Forest Service official organized a field trip to the Forest Service's long time research station at Coweeta outside of Franklin, North Carolina. While at Coweeta Georgia ForestWatch discovered that scientists connected with Coweeta had in fact conducted a 22-year study on the effects of clear cutting on forest composition and ground flora diversity and abundance. This study by Katherine J. Elliot et. al., published in Forest Ecology and Management in 1997, discovered that 22 years after a clear cut on a well- documented basin in Coweeta that the abundance of black oaks, red oaks and hickories had decreased and that non mast producing tulip poplar, black locust and red maple had increased. The study also noted that ground flora (herbaceous) abundance (biomass) is now some 70 percent-to 90 percent lower than pre-cut levels and that ground flora diversity had also declined!

These dramatic and disturbing findings suggest that the Forest Service's timber program of the past three decades which resulted in nearly 150,000 acres of clear cuts on the Chattahoochee National Forest has inflicted serious and long term damage to the public's forest. The fact that the Forest Service was in possession of this study while still proposing clear cutting, albeit under different names, suggests dysfunction within the agency. Georgia Forest Watch needs to continue watching our forests. ■

Judge throws out Chattooga case; boater lobby groups vow appeal

by Joseph Gatins : Tallulah District Leader

A senior federal court judge has dismissed the attempt of various boater lobby groups to immediately open the Upper Chattooga to unlimited use by kayaks, inflatable craft, canoes, rafts and inner tubes.

"The court can think of no greater waste of time and effort than to proceed to consider the merits of this action," Senior District Court Judge William C. O'Kelley said in a 20-page ruling issued in early October.

"Simply having to litigate this action diverts personnel away from the study, and the court's opening the Headwaters to unanticipated users would certainly substantially interfere with the agency's ability to conduct its visitor capacity use analysis," O'Kelley said, referring to the detailed, multi-year study being undertaken by the U.S. Forest Service. O'Kelley is a senior judge appointed to the federal bench in Gainesville, Georgia more than 30 years ago.

By early January, though, it was plain that American Whitewater and the other boating groups were bound and determined to appeal the decision, and had taken part in a secret mediation session with the Forest Service to try to resolve the case before it was heard by the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta. (Georgia ForestWatch and other community, conservation and recreation groups that have banded together as Friends of the Upper Chattooga, and which had filed a "friend of the court" brief before Judge O'Kelley, were frozen out of that confidential mediation session, at American Whitewater's request. At this writing, it is not known what was discussed in the mediation session, or if the pending appeal was resolved.)

By the weekend of January 4-6, the Forest Service and its consultants also had decided to proceed with the first limited boater trials on the Chattooga's headwaters, under an "implementation plan" developed as part of the new study of boating on the narrow headwaters sections of the river. That plan calls for limited boater trials when there is enough rain to bring the level of the Upper Chattooga up to boatable levels.

That capacity use study was itself sparked by the American Whitewater lobby group's appeal of the 2004 Forest Service decision to maintain the ban on boating the Wild and Scenic Chattooga above Route 28. The decision to zone the river has been in effect for 30 years – a position that Georgia ForestWatch supports absent proof to the contrary.

The two-day trials showed that both anglers and boaters would use the same portions of the Upper Chattooga at the same time, creating obvious potential for user conflict. A host of various other potential problems arose, too: The boaters are seeking to create new access points on a stretch of pristine water, which likely would further erode the especially wild natural resources of the area. There are so many dead and downed trees and logjams and big waterfalls across the river that paddlers cannot really navigate it without creating numerous portage trails. These new trails are bound to destroy the natural beauty and habitats of this portion of the river. Some of the headwaters are so dangerous that inexperienced boaters likely would have a difficult time safely negotiating various cascades and falls. Emergency rescue efforts, in turn, would create even more of an access problem.

Georgia ForestWatch and the Friends group had made many of the same arguments both to Judge O'Kelley and the Forest Service and urged them to take the Chattooga's many stakeholders' points of view into account – that is, the points of view reflected not only by boaters and anglers, but also by hunters, hikers, sunbathers, photographers, swimmers, naturalists, scientists, picnickers, botanists, local families and heritage enthusiasts – all of whom access the area on foot.

The Chattooga headwaters reach at issue bisects the Ellicott Rock Wilderness and Rock Gorge Roadless Area, among the few remaining wild places in the Georgia-North Carolina-South Carolina boundary area that still provide high-quality solitude and wilderness experience. It is also home to black bears and a stunning array of native plants.

For news coverage of the boater trials, see: http://www.smokymountainnews.com/issues/01_07/01_10_07/out_chattooga.html
http://www.crossroadschronicle.com/features/ ■

Brawley Mountain Update

by Jim Walker : Toccoa District Co-Leader

The original scoping notice for the proposed Brawley Mountain project to enhance habitat conditions for the golden-winged warbler was dated December 15, 2005, so the process has gone on for more than a year now. Longer actually, since the scoping notice was preceded by a Forest Service show-and-tell field trip to the area back in October of 2005.

Forest Service field trips seldom involve much walking, and that first one at Brawley was no exception to the rule: we all walked a couple of hundred yards from the road out the central ridge and stood in a clump of nondescript, relatively young, predominantly pine forest to hear the explanation of "woodland restoration." When someone eager to stretch their legs asked if we could walk down the slope across the little valley of Brawley Branch and up the west ridge, a total distance of about half a mile, we were told, "You don't need to see that, it's just the same."

... the uncertain prospects for success of this highly experimental project should be balanced against the certain loss of the last remaining patch of healthy late-successional forest ...

By now, regular readers of Forest News are already familiar with the issues and arguments involved in this project, so there is no need to rehash the topic. Suffice it to say that the west ridge is nothing at all like the central one: it is a mature, mesic oak-hickory forest.

The Forest Service led a second field trip to the area in October of 2006. This time we did go out the west ridge, somewhat farther from the road than before, to a site that has become known as Meeting Place Gap. The site was different (numerous trees over 100 feet tall, over two feet in diameter and well in excess of 100 years old, on dark rich soil), but very little had changed in the discussion.

Two new alternatives were presented by the Forest Service, both of which call for a smaller area of timber harvest than in the original proposal but do not exclude the west ridge. The only difference between these two alternatives is that one would use herbicides, in addition to fire, to kill stump sprouts post-harvest, while the other would rely on fire alone to do so. At the meeting and in a subsequent letter, Georgia ForestWatch emphasized its opposition to any harvest of the nearly old-growth timber on the west ridge.

In the meantime, we have found two very interesting studies done by the Forest Service itself: The first, "Atlas of Climate Change Effects in 150 Bird Species of the Eastern United States" (2004), found that under any credible forecast of climate change the golden-winged warbler will disappear from North Georgia, regardless of what habitat improvement actions may be taken. The second, "Successional Changes in Plant Species Diversity and Composition after Clearcutting a Southern Appalachian Watershed" (1997), documents what Georgia ForestWatch and many botanists, naturalists and hunters have noted: that forest composition changes after clearcutting, with red maple, locust and poplar replacing oaks.

According to the original schedule, an Environmental Assessment (EA) was supposed to come out in June 2006, followed by a Decision Notice (DN) in July; the new schedule is for an EA in March 2007 and a Decision Notice some 30 days later. At a recent meeting at the Georgia ForestWatch office, Alan Polk, District Ranger of what were formerly known as the Brasstown and Toccoa Ranger Districts, then the Central Zone, and which apparently are soon to be the consolidated into a new Blue Ridge District, stated that whatever alternatives are analyzed in the Brawley EA, his decision will be based strictly on the Forest Plan goals and objectives, enhancement of golden-winged warbler habitat, and public response.

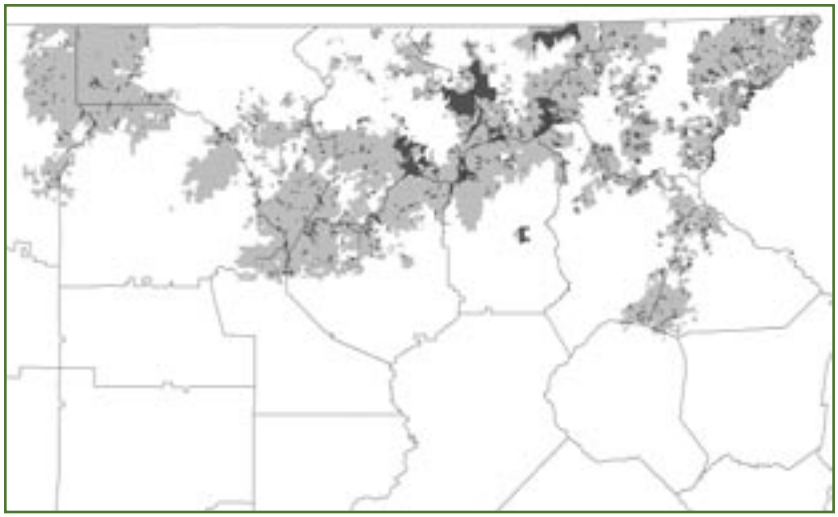
Georgia ForestWatch is not opposed to this project per se. We just believe that the uncertain prospects for success of this highly experimental project should be balanced against the certain loss of the last remaining patch of healthy late-successional forest in the vicinity, if the project is implemented on the entire proposed area. Therefore, at every step of this prolonged process we have requested that the west ridge be excluded from the project area and promised to oppose the project as a whole if it includes any timber harvest or felling on the west ridge. We already know that science supports our position and expect that public response will too. ■

(Please contact the Georgia ForestWatch office at 706-635-8733 or at info@gafw.org if you would like to receive a CD containing the original scoping notice, our 45-page response and the complete text of all references cited in our comments.)

200 years of change in the Chattahoochee National Forest

by Shawn White : Forest Ecologist, Georgia ForestWatch

How many acres of the Chattahoochee National Forest were logged between the years 1830 and 2006? The Forest Service maintains this data going back centuries, and coupling this data with a geographic information system opens a powerful visual window on our forest's history. For example, available records for the Blue Ridge portion of the Chattahoochee-Oconee national forest date back to 1830 – long before the Forest Service was established, and quite a while before large-scale timber harvest was common.



Georgia ForestWatch illustration

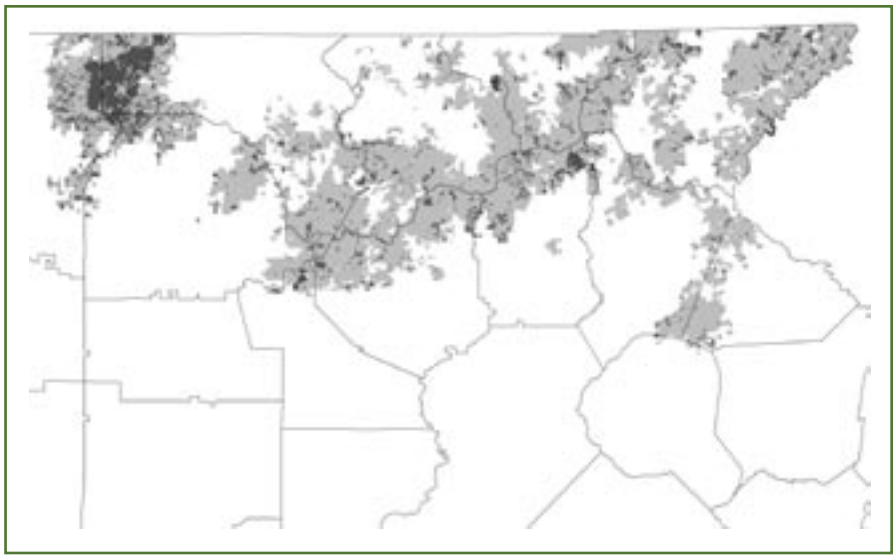
Figure 1: Areas in dark gray represent those areas harvested in the five-year period between 1900 and 1904. Georgia ForestWatch illustration based upon the US Forest Service Continuous Inventory of Stand Condition (CISC) data.

According to government records, from 1830 to 1899, a total of 126,543 acres were harvested in the Blue Ridge portion of the Chattahoochee National Forest. That averages out to 1,833 acres per year for the first 69 years of data. Figure 1 shows that from 1900 to 1904 some 81,715 acres were harvested, or an average of 16,343 acres per year. This five-year average comprises the most intense timber harvest in the history of what is now the Chattahoochee National Forest, and is the result of the first wave of industrial logging that occurred at the turn of the 20th Century.

From 1905 through 1924, a total of 197,479 acres were harvested, somewhat less per year than the previous five-year period. But at 9,873 acres per year, this timbering was significantly more intensive than in the pre-industrial harvests of the 19th Century.

The next 10-year period marked another industrial wave of timber harvest. Small-gauge railroads were developed and allowed for the quick removal of large areas of forest. From 1925 to 1934, a total of 96,290 acres were harvested, including nearly all of what is now the Cohutta Wilderness (see figure 2). While the yearly average is less than the average of the previous twenty years, at 9,629 acres harvested per year, the significance of this period is reflected in the sheer size of the Cohutta harvest.

Over the next 35 years (1935-1969), harvest acreage dropped dramatically to a yearly average of only 2,045 acres. This temporary reprieve allowed the forests to



Georgia ForestWatch illustration

Figure 2: Areas in dark gray reflect the 10 years of timber harvest between 1925 and 1934. Georgia ForestWatch illustration.

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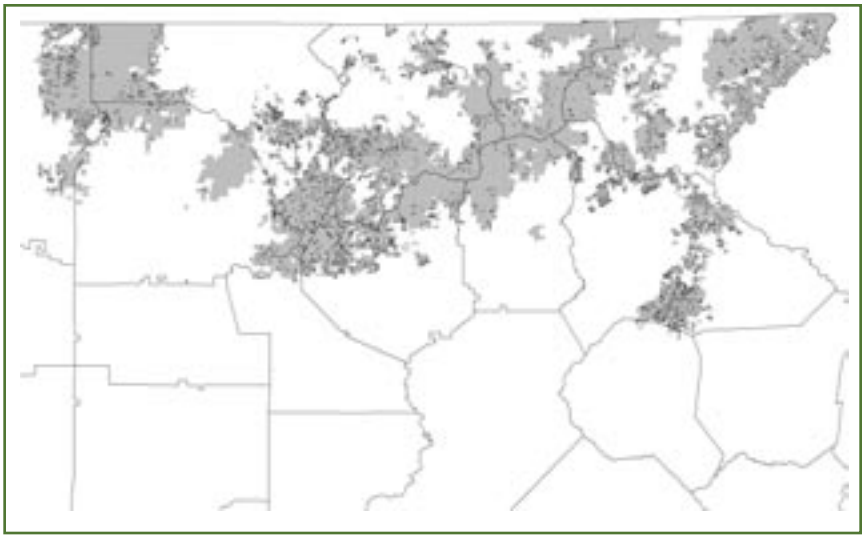
200 Years of Change

(continued from page 17)

get a little older and try to sort themselves out, before the next big harvesting era.

From 1970 to 1994 the Forest Service implemented a new management style of harvest known as clear cutting. Instead of the massive cuts seen in the two previous industrial harvesting waves, the agency began using clear-cuts, which were limited in size to 30 acres. These were dispersed across the landscape in a pattern that we refer to as the Forest Chicken Pox (see figure 3). During this 25-year period 84,083 acres were harvested, averaging 3,363 acres per year. This approach requires many hundreds of miles of roads for access, fragmenting habitat, silting streams and impacting rare forest communities.



Georgia ForestWatch illustration

Figure 3: Areas in dark gray were harvested by the U.S. Forest Service during the clear-cut program from 1970 to 1994. Georgia ForestWatch illustration.

Finally, by 1999, the Forest Service was forced to shut down the clear-cut program due to successful litigation alleging inadequate monitoring of sensitive species as required by the agencies own forest management plan. This resulted in a total timber harvest on these lands of 849 acres from 1995 to 2004. That made for 84.9 acres per year harvested across the forest – quite a change from the early twentieth century industrial harvesting. Georgia ForestWatch is still committed to monitoring management and impacts of the new forest management regime as the latest forest management plan is being implemented and is working to identify those forest types and stands most needing active management. Our hope is that upon this common ground the real needs of our forests will be addressed, excellent forestry will be pursued and the taxpayer's dollars will be spent wisely. ■

On the road to nowhere

by Lori Martell : Outreach Director

After 60 years of controversy, the "Road to Nowhere" should remain just that, thanks to recent elections. That is good news for wilderness in Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

The proposed 34-mile road, located in Swain County in western North Carolina, would have sliced through the largest unbroken tract of mountainous wilds in the eastern United States, and cost taxpayers upwards of $600 million.

The residents of Swain County, along with a host of community & environmental groups, including Georgia ForestWatch, agreed that the Smokies don't need another road. Instead, they have been pushing for a $52 million cash settlement for the county, fulfilling an agreement with the Federal government dating back to 1943.

Despite the strong support for the settlement in lieu of the road, U.S. Rep. Charles Taylor, R-N.C., continued to push hard for its completion. He's not pushing any longer, though. Taylor lost his seat to Democrat Heath Shuler, who lived in Swain as a boy. Shuler opposes the road, and promises to push for the settlement that could end this decades-old issue.

Six miles of the road had been completed in the late 1960s, before construction was stalled by funding and environmental issues. It is now used by nature lovers to access over 50 miles of hiking trails.

Growing Pains

(continued from page 11)

allies, contributed to the touchy relationships with the Forest Service. The passage of Jenkins' forest preservation legislation also generated some hard feelings within the agency.

Eventually, the annual meetings between ForestWatch and the Forest Service, as originally set forth in the 1986 agreement, ended. The Forest Service informed the district leaders that henceforth the agency would reveal its proposed logging projects and other activities through the scoping notices, as required by law.

Then, in 1989, a harried Forest Service came out with tougher rules in an effort to curtail appeals. One of the rules, for instance, placed a strict 45-day deadline for filing appeals. Formerly, extensions from 45 to 90 days were commonly granted to allow challengers like ForestWatch to gather technical information.

In an interview at the time, Kirby said that the new regulations would make groups like ForestWatch "less effective because the appeals process will become more difficult."

Still, ForestWatch was hugely successful in helping to stymie destructive logging in the Chattahoochee-Oconee. A measure of the organization's initial success became apparent in 1995 – the Government Accounting Office reported that meeting the timber quota in the Chattahoochee-Oconee had become difficult because of the Forest Service's reduced use of clear cutting and legal challenges from environmental groups.

Meanwhile, in a separate situation, ForestWatch's relationship with the seven appellant groups was heading for a change. In the early 1990s, interest in ForestWatch among the appellant groups, with the exception of the Wilderness Society, was waning. The groups had other important environmental battles to wage.

It was time, ForestWatch's leadership decided, for the organization to incorporate, become independent and take charge of its own destiny. Adding to the impetus for incorporation was an unfortunate accident in September 1992, when a young lawyer fell into a creek at Camp Wahsega and broke her arm. The episode ended without conflict, but the lawyer advised ForestWatch about the potential for law suits against individual members from such occurrences.

In the spring of 1993, the ForestWatch leadership informed fellow members by newsletter that the "loosely knit organization of national forest activist volunteers" would incorporate and gain non-profit status. The group would retain its structure, activities and purpose. Incorporation, though, would enable ForestWatch to apply for grants from foundations and other sources and charge membership dues – initially $5 per person – for operating funds.

With the incorporation would come a board of directors made up of the district leaders and two members-at-large, and an advisory board composed of representatives of the seven appellant groups from the 1986 appeal of the Chattahoochee-Oconee forest management plan.

Incorporation was officially approved by the state of Georgia on April 20, 1993. By the end of that year, Georgia ForestWatch was fully on its own, anxious to carry out its mission to protect and preserve the Chattahoochee-Oconee national forests and educate the public about their splendor and necessity. ■

Every attempt has been made to render the facts and individuals in our history as accurately as possible. We welcome files, photos and clarifications.

Welcome to new staffer

The entire board of directors and Executive Director Wayne Jenkins extend a warm welcome to Georgia ForestWatch's new outreach director, Lori Martell. Lori's responsibilities include directing our outings program, and assisting with fundraising, public presentations, and membership drives.

Lori holds a master's degree in Environmental Education from Lesley University. This field-based degree program is a unique collaboration between Lesley and the National Audubon Society called the Audubon Expedition Institute. Students and faculty live and learn in community, immersed in various bioregions of North America. Appropriately, one of Lori's semesters of travel focused on the Appalachian spine from Quebec southward, culminating in an intensive study of Southern Appalachian ecology and culture.

Lori also holds a bachelor's in Graphic Design from Graceland University. She has taught numerous classes and workshops on environmental topics such as natural history, ecological living, organic nutrition, and eco-spirituality. Her background includes environmental curriculum development, freelance graphic design, medical management, franchise operations development, and business management. She is also an artist and avid organic gardener.

We are thrilled to have Lori on staff here at the Georgia ForestWatch office in Ellijay. Stop by and say hello! ■

2006 Fall Retreat a Great Success

by Lori Martell : Outreach Director

More than 75 Georgia ForestWatch members – a record number – convened high atop Fort Mountain, at Cohutta Lodge, for the annual Fall Retreat last October. The clarity of autumnal blue skies heralded a weekend of perfect weather, fraternity and educational oppotunities.

As a newcomer to ForestWatch, I was immediately impressed at the range of generations represented and the effort to provide quality programming for everyone. The adults enjoyed nine presentations on topics ranging from medicinal plants and aquatic diversity to forest history and NEPA procedures. The youth went on an educational hike and created breathtaking nature art. The schedule of events was rich and educational, while still allowing for visiting, a nature stroll, or an afternoon nap.

Thank you to everyone who contributed and special kudos to Georgia ForestWatch office manager, Kathy Herrygers, whose extra effort and conscientious attention to detail helped the retreat flow smoothly. ■

Long time ForestWatchers were recognized, including Brent Martin (left), Bob Kibler (right). Also honored (not pictured) Angela Martin and Elmer & Betty Butler.

Patricia Kyritsi Howell taught us about native medicinal plants.

Pat Walker (middle) with district leaders Jim Walker and Dudley Sisk (right), laughing it up at the festive Saturday night bonfire with music by the Yeller Cats.

Lori Jenkins coordinated youth programming including nature art using leaves the kids collected on their hike.

Board secretary Peg Griffith handles sales of new caps, T-shirts and such.

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Income		
	Earned Income	$18,948.10
	Membership Dues	17,052.00
	Contributions	75,991.53
	Grants	47,000.00
	Total Income	**$158,991.63**
Expense		
	Admin	$55,333.85
	Program	125,163.66
	Total Expense	**$180,497.51**
Net Income		**($17,710.93)**
Total Assets		
	Total Checking/Savings	$117,738.32
	Petty Cash	180.32
	Total Curent Assets	**$117,918.64**

To e-mail or not to e-mail?

Several members of Georgia ForestWatch have asked to receive the quarterly *Forest News* only by e-mail, which we are glad to do. If you, too, would like to forego receiving a printed copy, please let us know at info@gafw.org and we will put you on the e-mail-only list.

Similarly, if your e-mail address has recently changed, or if you are not already receiving Forest Watch outing and action alerts by e-mail, please provide us with your e-mail address at info@gafw.org.

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