GA ForestWatch Newsletter

Spring 1993

CALENDAR

7th Annual National
Forest Reform Pow Wow
May 28-31

ForestWatch Botanical
Field Trip June 5

Deep South '93
29th General Meeting
of the ATC June 12-18

ForestWatch of Georgia To Incorporate

ForestWatch, a loosely knit organization of national forest activist volunteers, plans to incorporate and gain non-profit status by this fall. The purpose of the incorporation is so that the group can apply for foundation and other grants on its own and to charge tax-deductible dues for needed operating funds. For example, our mailing of newsletters now costs @$120.

The group will stay largely the same as far as activities and purpose. In addition, a revamped bimonthly newsletter (of which this is not an example) will appear sometime this summer in your mailbox with much needed information on scoping notices, guidelines to action in your home and on your field trips, and articles on current local and national public forestland issues. ForestWatch leaders hope that the fresh newsletter format will make it easier for working, scoping and commenting on ones own, if need be, or as a district group primer.

The membership dues will be a minimum of $5.00 to cover the cost of sending out mailings and for certain workshops. In place with the incorporation will be a Board of Directors, made up of the district leaders and two members-at-large, and an Advisory Board, consisting of representatives of each of the appellant groups from the 1986 appeal of the Chattahoochee-Oconee Forests Plan. The seven appellants include The Wilderness Society, The Georgia Botanical Society, Atlanta Audubon Society, Friends of the Mountains, The Georgia Conservancy, Sierra Club-Georgia Chapter and the Georgia Council of Trout Unlimited. There will be an annual meeting held each year in conjunction with the Training Workshop (September 17-19 this year) with all members invited to attend and vote on any current issues or appointments.

Current membership will be updated as the details are hammered out. If you wish to make suggestions, or have questions about the proposed incorporation or about your membership, please contact ForestWatch Coordinator Shirl Darrow at (404) 872-9453.

YES, I would like to be a member of the new Georgia Forestwatch, Inc. and receive the upcoming bimonthly newsletter and other mailings. Enclosed is my check made out to: The Wilderness Society (write ForestWatch on check).

Membership Categories:
___ $5 Forest Friend
___ $10 Forest Best Friend
___ $50 Forest Family
___ $100 Forest Lover
___ $_____ Forest Fanatic

Name:_____
Address:_____
_____
Phone Number:(h)_____ **(w)**_____

Send to: ForestWatch, c/o The Wilderness Society, 1447 Peachtree Street NE, Suite 812, Atlanta, GA 30309.
Contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Heartwood to Host the 7th Annual National Forest Reform Pow Wow on Memorial Weekend, May 28-31

The annual National Forest Reform Pow Wow, sponsored by the Forest Reform Network, held each spring in a different national forest, is the largest and most inclusive gathering of North

American forest activists and woods lovers.

This year, Heartwood will host the Pow Wow on Memorial Weekend, May 28-31, at Cathedral Domain, a private camp within the Daniel Boone National Forest, near Eastern Kentucky's Red River Gorge.

Members of grassroots groups, newcomers, and representatives of regional and national conservation organizations are invited to share information, learn from each other's experiences, and coordinate efforts for forest protection. Last year's Pow Wow in Virginia attracted over 400 participants (including some Georgia Forest Watchers!).

The theme for this year's gathering is "Branching Out." Participants will learn how the forest protection movement can branch out by recognizing the connections between forest health and community health, and between wasteful consumption and forest destruction. Workshops, walking tours and panel discussions will offer experienced activists and newcomers alike, opportunities to learn how to protect their local forests and expand their personal and organizational networks. In addition to the program, meals, free time and nightly entertainment will provide chances for lively interaction among participants in the beautiful and rugged forest setting.

Those who attended last year found it a time to gain knowledge and gather energy to take back to our own separate forest work. People from the Georgia area interested in car pooling to this event, call Susan at (404) 872-9453 and she will try to provide you the names and numbers of other trekking ForestWatchers near to your home or leaving at the same time, etc.

For registration information and more detailed program schedules, call Andy Mahler at (812) 723-2430.

ForestWatch Botanical Field Trip

The annual ForestWatch Botanical Trip is scheduled for Saturday, June 5 at Blood and Slaughter Mountains and will leave from Lake Winfield Scott at 9:30 a.m. (rain or shine).

Tom Patrick and Jim Allison of the GA-DNR will be the leaders.

The trip is limited to 30 persons, so call Shirl or Susan at (404) 872-9453 to reserve a space and for more details.

FYI: Trout Season Began March 28

SAVE THE DATE

Save the weekend of September 17-19 for the annual ForestWatch Workshop at Camp Wahsega near Dahlonega.

ForestWatch Leaders

Armuchee-Brent Martin
(404) 876-7798*
Brasstown-Howard Markel
W (404) 320-6000
H (706) 781-5418
Chattooga-James Sullivan
(706) 886-8265
Chestatee-Dennis Stansell
W (404) 536-9669
H (404) 535-3398
Cohutta-Shep Howell
W (404) 387-5124*
H (404) 386-8754
Tallulah-Mort Meadors (706) 746-5799
Toccoa-Jim Leonard
W (404) 662-2004
H (404) 751-7192
-Paul Spencer (706) 635-4393
Oconee National Forest:
-Nathan Melear (706) 769-8710

* denotes change

Forests and Public Lands In the News

News from the Western Ancient Forest Campaign and The Washington Post

President Clinton has bowed to pressure from western Senators, notably Max Baucus of Montana and Ben Nighthorse Campbell of Colorado, and will not oppose an amendment to remove the below-cost timber sales, grazing and mining provisions from his budget package.

The provisions would have raised mining, grazing and timber fees for those industries operating on public lands. A senior White House official said that Clinton still wants to raise the fees through separate legislative and administrative measures this year. Critics say the fees are so low now that they amount to federal subsidies.

The decision, which drew sharp criticism from conservationists and some Democratic House members, found Clinton contradicting his Feb. 17 plea to Congress not to allow special interests to pick apart the economic package at the expense of the common good.

Those who have fought to cut the subsidies for years argued that the best protection against influential industry lobbyists was to include the changes in a larger budget package that carried its own weight.

"Here are subsidies that the House voted overwhelmingly to do away with, and the Senate voted against the other night, and now they're given up," says Rep. George Miller (D-Calif.), chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee, "For what?"

Express your outrage at the President's unwarranted concession to special interest by calling the White House Chief of Staff, Mack McLarty, at (202) 456-6797, and the White House Comment Line at (202) 456-1111.

(A Washington Post editorial on the subject...)

Pullback on the Western Front

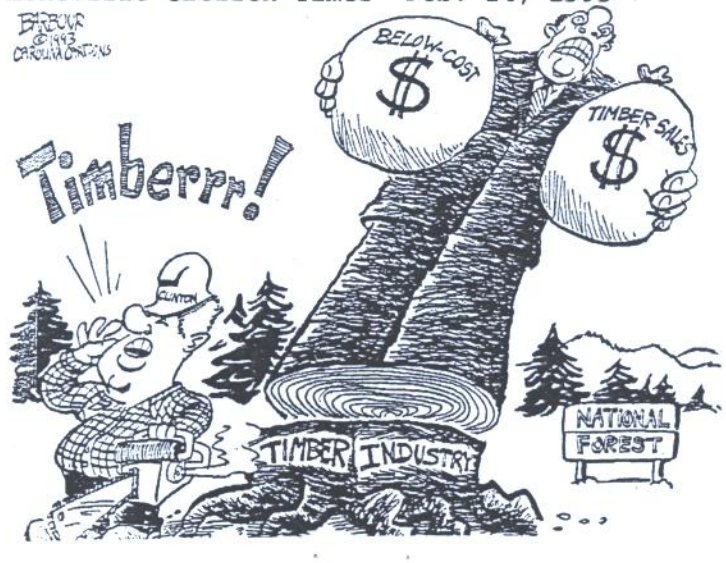
One of the ancient methods of keeping federal subsidies intact is to keep them relatively small in budgetary terms--ideally just beneath the footnote level--and generally obscure. The possible gain from extirpating them is never quite equal to the political cost. Two more examples cropped up yesterday. The Clinton administration, in deference to western Democratic senators whose votes it needs on other matters, backed off plans to reduce, as part of this year's deficit reduction effort, the subsidies of western mining and cattle interests.

. . .

The greatest resistance has typically come in the Senate, where the less populous western states are strongest. That happened this time as well. Mr. Clinton proposed in his economic plan on both environmental and fiscal grounds to extract extra revenues not just from the cattle and mining industries but from timbering operations on federal land and western agricultural interests dependant on federal water, which they are also supplied at below-market rates.

The administration says it will still pursue the grazing and mining reforms, but separately from the budget process, which greatly reduces the pressure behind them. Maybe both will still be enacted; who knows? And it is hard to blame a president for bargaining for votes; that's what presidents do, after all. But these are good ideas. Their inclusion in the economic plan brought the president well-deserved praise, and their partial abandonment at what is still an early stage of the game is a clear disappointment.

Asheville Citizen Times Feb. 24, 1993



Local Forest Lawsuit in Rabun County

As reported in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution and other news sources, The U.S. Forest Service agreed to stop all logging and cutting of timber on federal land in the Chattahoochee National Forest (3/4/93) and later, all logging was suspended on 22,059 acres under a new court order (4/9/93).

The decision and the court order are the result of a lawsuit filed March 3 by a group of citizens in Rabun County. The suit, filed in federal court in Gainesville, alleges illegal clear-cutting and sales of timber in the Chattahoochee and called for an immediate injunction to stop cutting, which was granted. The suit is the first against the service here.

"We have won a small battle, but not the war," said Robert Alexander, a plaintiff in the suit and president of Rabun County Coalition to Save the Forests. "It's great that a common citizen can make a real difference."

The suit, filed by the Rabun County Coalition to Save the Forests, alleges the Forest Service illegally decided to cut sensitive woodlands without first having biological evaluations showing environmental impact.

Forest Service officials have denied violating laws and say that only a very small portion of the tracts in question were cut (3/4/93) and then later, FS officials say they do not deny the evaluations were not always in hand when they decided to cut, but said they followed the intent of the law (4/9/93). While admitting no illegality, the Forest Service signed a consent agreement suspending logging on 19 tracts in the Tallulah District.

The judge obviously wants more information on the case before he can make a decision. Dr. Mary Kelly, an ecologist with the Western North Carolina Alliance, has been brought in to show examples of proper Environmental Analysis (EA's) and Biological Evaluations (BE's) to the judge and to explain their meaning.

The current court order may halt logging in Rabun County for six months to a year and could force the Forest Service to always complete thorough evaluations before deciding to cut timber. That could have national implications as well.

"We're elated, but the private citizen should not have to be a watchdog over our national forest service," said Alexander after the court order was announced.

No further logging, road building or timber sales can occur on the 19 tracts, the order states, until the Forest Service can "reanalyze the potential environmental impacts of harvesting timber." Under the National Environmental Policies Act, the bedrock of the nation's environmental law, the Forest Service must complete thorough "biological evaluations" of endangered species before it can decide to cut and sell timber.

The order may have for-reaching consequences for loggers; some say it will keep them out of the government-owned woods in Rabun for six months.

from the Atlanta Journal-Constitution 3/4/93, 4/9/93 and other sources

Deep South '93: The General Meeting of the Appalachian Trail Conference

The 29th annual meeting of the Appalachian Trail Conference will take place in Georgia this year at North Georgia College in Dahlonega beginning Saturday, June 12 and ending Friday, June 18. Everyone interested in the outdoors, the natural environment, hiking, and especially the Appalachian Trail, is invited. There will be hundreds of activities for all ages and interests, including over 100 different hikes; workshops on trail maintenance, photography, hiking, crafts and conservation; presentations on environmental issues; and evening entertainment. There are dormitories, tent and RV sites nearby, and area motels available. To obtain the complete program announcement with schedules and fees, write:

Deep South '93
P.O. Box 33396
Decatur, GA 30033-0396

Or call, Marilynn Mallory, Publicity Coordinator, at (404) 394-3447 (office) or (404) 879-0664 (home).

UPDATE

The new forest supervisor for the Chattahoochee-Oconee Natioanal Forests to replace Ken Henderson has not yet been named. Kirby Brock is the acting supervisor and can be reached in the Gainesville office.

Chattooga Forests to Get Unified Management

The national forests along the upper Chattooga River, containing some of the most popular recreation areas on the Eastern seaboard, will be managed on a "regional" basis from now on rather than state by state, federal officials say.

The new management approach, announced by the U.S. Forest Service in Atlanta, is supposed to change what had come to be seen by critics as a scattershot approach to managing wildlife and forest resources.

The river watershed is bordered by Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina, creating the possibility of three separate approaches to timber cutting and wildlife control.

Jack Alcock, the regional forester in Atlanta, announced that management coordination will now be done by a "project leader" and will include a $450,000 "ecosystem managementinitiative" to help that effort. The new budget is meant partly to help preserve rare and endangered species located in the area.

> *"Such an ocean of wooded, waving, swelling mountain beauty and grandeur is not to be described."*
> -John Muir,
> Southern Appalachians
> 1867

Regional environmental groups who for years have pushed for a more coordinated effort said they were pleased with the change. But the groups have long criticized the Forest Service for permitting alleged overcutting of forests and the construction of too many roads.

"For years, they've basically managed the forests according to political boundaries," said Buzz Williams, Southeast program coordinator for the Association of Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics.

"We've finally got them to admit they'll have to communicate with each other. But if they all use a harmful kind of management, what good is it?"

from Atlanta Journal-Constitution 1/29/93

A conservationist's viewpoint...

Chattooga River Watershed Management

by Buzz Williams and Rene Voss

The Chattooga River Watershed Coalition is an organization which represents a wide range of groups and individuals who came together in August of 1991 to make a proposal to the U.S. Forest Service to manage the Chattooga River Watershed as a part of their "New Perspectives" program. The proposal is based on the principles of Landscape Ecology and Forest Ecosystem Management.

Basically, the proposal calls for changing policy from one dominated by commodity production to one that protects the natural ecological integrity of the watershed as a desired future condition. This would involve among other things, more research and monitoring, protection for special areas with an emphasis on biological diversity, a shift to a "lighter touch" method of harvesting timber in appropriate areas, the establishment of a Biodiversity Consulting Team and an Ecosystem Management Coordinator, adequate protection for stream quality and recreational values, and identification of lands for aquisition and exchange to protect the watershed.

In a recent meeting with Regional Forester, Jack Alcock, the Coalition learned that the Forest Service has agreed to set aside $450,000 for and ecosystem management project. While the Forest Service has promised to address many of the points in the Coalition proposal with this project, such as research and monitoring and the announcement to fill the position of Project Coordinator, it fails to include provisions for substantive change in current management policy. The Coalition fears that this latest proposal by the Forest Service is just another attempt to "study the problem to death" while going about business as usual. The Coalition also feels that there is enough scientific evidence available now to justify policy shifts on a larger scale than on the small "demonstration areas" as proposed by the Forest Service.

The Coalition currently represents the interests of over 30,000 people in organizations from the tri-state area surrounding the Chattooga watershed (North Carolina, South Carolina and

(continued on back page)

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Submissions may be sent to the above address.
We are not able to return submissions.

The views herein do not necessarily represent the views of The Wilderness Society.

(Chattooga River...continued from inside back cover)

Georgia). The coalition's plan is to represent the interests of over 100,000 people by the end of 1993.

Interested in helping? You could endorse the objectives of the coalition. For more information on the Coalition's proposal and the Forest Service's "New Perspectives" program, contact Buzz Williams, Route 1, Box 103, Mountain Rest, S.C. 29664 or (803) 647-2773.

Or you could write your congressman and ask the Forest Service to use your tax payer dollars for "real change" including:

~ A shift to selection harvesting in the watershed except where approved otherwise by the Biodiversity Consulting Team.

~ The selection of a project coordinator with a background in forest ecology.

~ Policy decisions made on the basis of good science, not pressure to "get out the cut".

~ A moratorium on all timber harvesting and road building in areas identified as biologically significant or as roadless.

Buzz Williams is the Eastern Regional Coordinator for the Association of Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics (AFSEEE).

Rene Voss is the Conservation Chair for the Sierra Club's Atlanta Group and the Co-Chair of National Forest Issues for the Georgia Chapter of the Sierra Club.