Summer/Fall 1996

Georgia's NATIVE FORESTS

A Quarterly Publication by
GEORGIA FORESTWATCH

RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES ON GEORGIA'S NATIONAL FORESTS

Analysis:

The Economics of Recreation on our National Forests

Printed on 100% Recycled Paper
with Soy-based Ink

Georgia ForestWatch
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COMMENTARY

FOREST SERVICE AND PUBLIC VALUES

The USDA Forest Service is tasked with the important responsibility for the management and protection of our public lands, namely Georgia's Chattahoochee and Oconee National Forests. As with most federal agencies, the Forest Service is presumed to represent the public's values, or so you would think.

However, this has not always been the case and we must not take it for granted. Forest Service values have often lagged behind or even resisted public values for many reasons. Some of these include personnel which resist changes in public values or lack adequate training to address changes in the public's needs, budgets which do not reflect the resource needs of the forests, and even skewed perceptions of what the public really wants.

NOW is the time to act and tell the Forest Service how you want our National Forests managed for the next 10 to 15 years.

Georgia ForestWatch and the organizations that have provided articles for this newsletter have all had similar problems with the Forest Service in that their and the public's interests have not been represented fairly as needs change.

However, there have been some encouraging signs that the Forest Service's Plan Revision Team appears to be listening to the public's concerns. The planning team acknowledges the enormous demands for scenic beauty, the need for protecting many of our roadless areas from logging and roadbuilding, the increasing demand for trails and challenging recreational opportunities that test outdoor skills, consistent with the protection of various resources, and even the need for a timber program that is more consistent with the protection and restoration of non-extractive public uses.

These are all important first steps for eventually acting on these "needs for change." These changes should be encouraged and must receive strong support from the public. We cannot give the Forest Service any wiggling room when it comes to understanding what the public demands in the form of management of our forests.

Now is the time to act and tell the Forest Service how you want our National Forests managed for the next 10 to 15 years.

The Forest Service must comply with the National Forest Management Act which requires consideration of all public input to develop the new forest plan. With your right to comment comes the responsibility of participation in this process. A simple letter that expresses your views to the Forest Service will do. If you care about our public heritage as much as we do, we encourage you to use the guide we present on the rear of this publication. Thanks in advance for your help in protecting Georgia's Native Forests.

Georgia ForestWatch Home-Page On The Internet

Look for the Georgia ForestWatch homepage on the World Wide Web at:

http://www.mindspring.com/~gfw/home.html

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FOREST SERVICE ELECTS NOT TO PARTICIPATE IN RECREATION USER FEE PILOT PROGRAM

Three Federal Agencies- the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the USDA Forest Service, and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service- are testing the collection, retention, and reinvestment of new admission and user fees at selected demonstration areas, sites, and habitat enhancement projects across the country beginning late 1996 and early 1997.

Sites participating in this three-year test (P.L. 104-134, the Omnibus Consolidated Recisions and Appropriation Act of 1996) will be able to locally retain most of the fees collected to pay for operation, maintenance, and improvements in the overall recreational experience. Sites which previously did not collect any user fees would be able to retain 80% of the revenue collected, whereas sites already collecting fees would retain 80% of the money above 104% of what was collected in 1995 (i.e. if in 1995, a site collected $100,000 in user fees, this year they would be able to keep 80% of any amount over $104,000). Currently, all user fees go to the U.S. Treasury, with only 15% being returned to the forest.

Given the need to reduce Federal spending, both Congress and the Senate believe that this pilot program will prove that user fees can generate a significant amount of money to defray the operating and maintenance costs of theses areas. In the Chattahoochee, this would mean paying a couple of dollars (the amount of money is decided by the Forest Service) per vehicle or person/permit and having your money used locally in the construction of new trails, the restoration of old trails, the construction of new facilities, etc.

Up to 50 openings were available nationally in this first round of the pilot program; openings are applied for by the Forest Service. At present, all 50 openings are filled. The Forest Service in the Chattahoochee did not participate in the first round because they felt that it was not fiscally advantageous.

However, the number of openings could be expanding from 50 to 100 next year if Congress retains language in this year's appropriations bill. The Forest Service in the Chattahoochee has indicated that it will try to participate next year and has specific proposals in the works. Each user fee proposal will require adequate public involvement, a site-specific plan, and approval from the the Forest Service in Washington.

- Colin Meaney is a Writer and Co-Editor for Georgia's Native Forests

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ABOUT GEORGIA FORESTWATCH

The Chattahoochee and Oconee National Forests are Georgia treasures containing 850,000 acres of public land- land that belongs to all Americans. In the past this land was managed primarily for timber production. Many believe this emphasis on timber has often interfered with other important forest uses.

In 1976 Congress passed the National Forest Management Act to insure more balanced multiple use of the forests and full citizen participation in the planning process. ForestWatch is a product of this process.

In 1986 a group of organizations appealed the management plan for the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests. As part of the appeal settlement, the Forest Service agreed to involve the appellant groups in the agency's planning process. Thus ForestWatch was born. Volunteers work with the Forest Service as they develop plans and monitor activities across the forest. This year we celebrate our 10th birthday.

First-founded among similar groups in the Southeast, ForestWatch encourages Forest Service programs that protect fish and wildlife, conserve water and soil quality, provide low impact recreational opportunities, and preserve wilderness areas. Our organization also supports appropriate levels of cost-effective timber production that protects the natural biological diversity and has a minimum impact on other uses.

The Chattahoochee National Forest is divided into compartments of approximately 1,000 acres each. Every year the Forest Service looks at a certain number of compartments and plans projects such as logging, road building or trail and campground construction.

ForestWatch is presented with a list of the compartments being considered and their planned projects. ForestWatch volunteers, working in groups with the district leader, scout the compartments and make recommendations as to how they think the area should be managed.

ForestWatch's input is taken into consideration by the Forest Service before they make the final management decision. Before the final decision is made, ForestWatch has several chances to intervene on any project which they think is environmentally unsound.

"We need the tonic of wilderness, to wade sometimes in marshes where the bittern and the meadow-hen lurk, and hear the booming of the snipe; to smell the whispering sedge where only some wilder and more solitary fowl builds her nest, and the mink crawls with its belly close to the ground. At the same time that we are earnest to explore and learn all things, we require that all things be mysterious and unexplorable, that land and sea be infinitely wild, unsurveyed and unfathomed by us because unfathomable. We can never have enough of nature. We must be refreshed by the sight of inexhaustable vigor, vast and titanic features, the sea-coast with its wrecks, the wilderness with its living and decaying trees, the thunder cloud, and the rain which lasts three weeks and produces freshets. We need to witness our own limits transgressed, and some life pasturing freely where we never wander."

-Henry David Thoreau

LETTERS

GRASSROOTS GROUPS YOU SHOULD KNOW

About the Southern Appalachian Council

The Southern Appalachian Council (SAC) is a volunteer organization based in Atlanta which was started in 1994, with the encouragement and support of the Wilderness Society, by William Goodman and Bob Kibler, two longtime members of The Wilderness Society and avid backpackers. The group now includes Melissa Walker, an environmental writer, Laura Mitchell, an artist, Randall White, a psychiatrist, and Terrence Croft, an attorney at law.

The mission of the SAC came more clearly into focus in 1995 with the beginning of the Forest Service's planning project for the Chattahoochee National Forest and with the publication of Georgia's Mountain Treasures which identified the 44 remaining wildlands of the forest. By working with other established environmental organizations, like ForestWatch, the SAC plans to garner grasssroots support for the selection by the Forest Service of as many of these wildlands as possible for wilderness or some other designation that prohibits or minimizes further damaging logging or road building. At present, 72% of the forest is open to logging.

Through these efforts the SAC hopes, among other benefits, to provide residents of metropolitan Atlanta with enhanced opportunities for recreation. The need for additional recreational opportunities is clear. According to the report, Charting a New Course: National Forests in the Southern Appalachians by Peter Morton, the Forest Service has estimated a 50 percent increase in dispersed recreation use by the year 2005 and a doubling by the year 2024. The expected increase in wilderness use is even greater. Other studies documented in the report by Morton showed a latent demand for many recreational activities if the resources were available, suggesting that if the supply of recreational opportunities increased faster than current rates, future demand would also increase faster than projected. The report also discussed research which has shown that people participate in outdoor recreation in wilderness areas for a variety of personal and social benefits, including spiritual growth, physical fitness, self-esteem, self-confidence, bonding among family members, stress reduction, and decreased social deviance. These needs for and benefits of additional wilderness and dispersed recreation seem particularly relevant to the Chattahoochee NF in light of its close proximity to the Atlanta metropolitan area with its large and rapidly growing population, particularly in its northern counties. The Forest Service, in recognition of these facts, has designated the Chattahoochee NF as an "Urban Forest." Of the approximately five million annual visitors, sixty percent are from the Atlanta area. And yet the forest Service's budget for recreation remains pitifully small compared to the budget for logging activities.

The SAC plans to achieve its goals by creating a dedicated core of activists through personal contacts, mailings, "neighborhood" meetings, field trips and educational programs.

-Bob Kibler, Founding Member, SAC

HAVE HORSE, WILL TRAVEL

About the Chattahoochee Trail Horse Association

The Chattahoochee Trail Horse Association (CTHA) was formed in 1991 by several dedicated horseback trail riding enthusiasts who shared a dream. The dream was to create a network of interconnecting horse trails across the Chattahoochee National Forest...sort of an equine Appalachian Trail.

The CTHA realized a need for a better-defined organizational structure to overcome public management objections to their goals...those being financial, educational and manpower. In 1993 the Chattahoochee Trail Horse Association, Inc. was incorporated as a nonprofit organization. CTHA is now the vehicle through which the dream is becoming a reality. The Bull Mountain Horse Trail facility near Dahlonega is the first result of their efforts and they are working with the Forest Service to expand the trail network and facilities.

The CTHA, Inc.:

- Conducts monthly trail rides on various horse trails in the North Georgia mountains.
- Publishes a periodical newsletter on CTHA activities and trail riding news.
- Sponsors fund-raising activities such as horse shows, for the purpose of funding trail projects.
- Schedules trail work days for building and maintaining equine trails.
- Is a member of the Georgia Horse Council and interfaces with the Forest Service and other public land managers, presenting a unified equine voice.
- Offers periodic educational equine seminars.
- Is comprised of people with a diverse array of equine interests and types of horses.

For more information about current CTHA rides and activities call: CTHA hotline (706) 864-WHOA.

- Janice Halderson, President, CTHA

FEATURES

FALL COLOR HIKING IN THE CHATTAHOOCHEE FOREST

The fall season offers some of the most pleasurable hiking opportunities in the Chattahoochee National Forest. With the passing of the higher humidity of summer, the return of crisp temperatures and the changing of the foliage, hiking is at its optimum in the upcoming season. This year with the increased rainfall in the second half of the summer I am optimistic that we will have a better than average fall foliage season since the trees will not be experiencing stress related to low rainfall as in many recent years. Normally the best time for viewing the fall foliage in the Chattahoochee National Forest occurs around the second or third weeks of October. One advantage of hiking in the forest as opposed to driving to view fall foliage is the increased solitude that hiking offers. Several times I have been backpacking by myself and have been alone on the trail during peak leaf seasons but at the same time nearby roads had heavy traffic. An important part of hiking for fall color viewing is picking a trail with a variety of elevations and different species of hardwood trees. One of my favorite trails that fulfills these criteria is the Coosa Backcountry Trail near Vogel State Park.

Even after the leaves drop I think that hiking is still superb in the Chattahoochee since it is much easier to view the contours of the land and there is less likelihood of encountering creatures such as ticks which can be a bit unpleasant. Remember when hiking in the fall that this time coincides with hunting season. Deer season with firearms starts on October 26 and runs through January 1, 1997. However, on any given weekend at least one state Wildlife Management Area will be closed to hunting. Obtain a Chattahoochee National Forest map and a copy of the Georgia Hunting regulations to plan your trip to avoid areas open for hunting. It is also a good idea to wear an orange vest and hat during hunting season.

The Sierra Club offers many outdoor opportunities for both members and non members for the latest update on our local outing program call the Outing Hotline at (404)607-7819.

- Lee Thomas, Outing Committee Chair, Atlanta Group of the Sierra Club

WANTED: WILDERNESS WATCHERS

ForestWatch members who visit wilderness areas in the Southern Appalachians can make an important contribution to a national effort to monitor what is going on in designated wilderness areas. WILDERNESS WATCH, a national organization based in Missoula, Montana, is committed to making sure that wilderness areas of the southeast are properly used and cared for. If you plan to visit or have recently visited any of Georgia's wilderness areas-Blackbeard Island, Big Frog, Brasstown, Cohutta, Cumberland, Ellicott Rock, Okefenokee, Raven Cliffs, Rich Mountain, Southern Nantahala, Tray Mountain, or Wolf Island-please call Melissa Walker at 404-377-4426 or send a postcard with your address and telephone number to her at 343 Hertford Circle, Decatur, GA 30030.

Jackie Graham

LAC PROCESS DETERMINES FATE OF WILDERNESS AREAS

The process to address recreational management issues in the Chattahoochee National Forest is well underway. Part of this process is determined by the "Limits of Acceptable Change" (LAC) system, which serves as a framework for establishing acceptable and appropriate resource and social conditions in recreational settings. The primary emphasis is on the desired conditions of an area and how the conditions may be achieved rather than on how much use an area can tolerate. The LAC process grew out of the need to accommodate human use of a recreational area and at the same time preserve its essential wilderness quality.

The Procedure

Step 1 involves identification of area concerns and issues so that management of the area may reflect its area-specific features and values.

Step 2 defines and describes opportunity classes (subunits of the area providing different conditions, and increasing diversity). The differences are measured through indicators (quantitative), identified in **Step 3**, representing resource and social conditions for which management is striving.

Step 4 inventories the existing condition of the resource and its social aspects. In **Step 5** these data are mapped and serve as the basis for the definition of standards for each indicator in each opportunity class.

Step 6 involves identification of alternative allocations of the area among the various opportunity classes. Since different allocations require different types of management, **Step 7** requires an analysis of the various costs and benefits of each alternative in terms of environmental impacts, impacts on visitors, and administrative costs.

Step 8 determines the final alternative of step 7.

Step 9 involves the implementation of the selected alternative and establishment of a monitoring program.

Public participation is vital to this process. For additional information contact:

John Romanowski
Cherokee National Forest
(423) 476-9758

FEATURES

THE MYSTERIES OF HUNTING IN OUR MOUNTAIN FORESTS

Darkness prevails as the day takes on a fresh look before dawn; the stars glitter like lightning bugs, and a full moon illuminates the heavens. Cattle in surrounding fields take form beneath the pale moonlight. Trials and problems of life begin to fade like a heavy mist being dissolved by the ascending sun. These are times of forgetfulness and enjoyment, the enjoyment of being alone or with companions as the hunting season comes into full fruition within the confines of the Chattahoochee National Forest.

As the hunter parks his 4x4 for the hour-long mountain walk the trees stand as shadows surrounded by the unknown. A hunter needs no flashlight, for the moon is sufficient. In the distance an animal scurries along an invisible path in the Rhododendron thickets. The thrill leaves the heart beating faster.

On arriving at the old hunting ground and climbing a familiar tree, the hunter is greeted with silence. Time passes- the hunter can hear a deer munching on Rhododendron leaves; the sharp distinct pops are the sounds of an empty stomach being filled. From another part of the forest a scratching noise comes, the sound of a deer scraping the forest floor for acorns. Sounds in the night are never alarming, they are only the trademarks of different animals, unique and distinct to each species.

Dawn arrives, the sun rises with majesty above the mountain tops. Out of the corner of his eye the hunter spies movement in an ivy thicket; his eyes strain to identify its source. After an eternity he realizes that it is only a spider web in a slight breeze, catching flashes of sunlight and spinning them into phantom images. The beauty of dawn, the colors of the forest, and the myriad of animals are obsessions which he can savor and then lose himself in reality.

As the morning progresses perhaps a young buck passes by, perhaps a doe or two, maybe nothing. The hunter does not shoot for the sake of killing; he shoots to provide food for his family and to live off the land, apart from supermarket specialties.

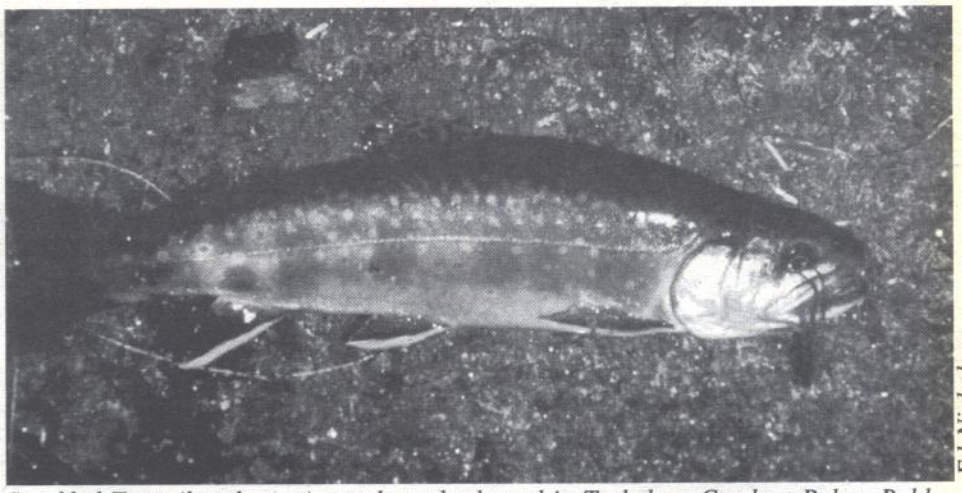
Today the hunter is lucky, he fires once and takes down an eight-point buck. The buck is strange- extra long and lean. Its coloration is somewhat more brown; the nose and head are longer than usual. Could this be one of the old mountain deer that has survived the strains introduced from Wisconsin and Texas? A question like this will linger in his mind for life, and is only one of thousands of puzzling questions inherent to the mountains.

Hunting in the Chattahoochee National Forest is a curative remedy. One can relax and on very rare occasions listen to and observe a Ruffed Grouse purr like a kitten. One might see a black bear, coyote, wild hog, or yes, a cougar. Ever been struck at by a rattlesnake or copperhead? The experience you will not soon forget!

Much of the Chattahoochee National Forest is being destroyed by unethical Forest Service even-aged management; burning kills flowers and destroys nesting places, clearcutting and shelter- and seed-tree cutts destroy native hardwoods and result in stream siltation which keeps the fish from spawning and the hatcheries working full time to restock the depleted streams. Pine trees are planted instead of hardwoods, reducing the amount of mast available to game species.

Help is needed from all segments of the public to stop the destruction. Treat the forests with respect and they will be here for posterity, for all people of diversified interests to enjoy. Exploit the forests as monetary objects, and kiss them goodbye!

-Robert L. Alexander, President
Rabun County Coalition to Save the Forests



Ed Nicholson

Speckled Trout (brook trout) caught and released in Tuckaluge Creek at Rabun Bald

FLY FISHING ON THE CHATTAHOOCHEE RIVER?

If you don't like looking at buildings towering over the trees or at the back yards of ostentatious houses while you are fishing then the Chattahoochee River may be a good alternative. The filthy Chattahoochee? Yes, the Chattahoochee! The Chattahoochee has many faces. The one I like to fish lies in the Chattahoochee Wildlife Management Area. If you follow the river upstream from Robertstown (near Helen, Ga.) into the management area of the Chattahoochee National Forest, you will find a Chattahoochee that bares little resemblance to the one we see below Lake Lanier. This Chattahoochee is a beautiful mountain stream, not a muddy ditch.

The river, when you first enter the management area, receives heavy fishing pressure. So if you want to get away from the crowds, you can park at the check-in station just inside the management area and, from there, hike upstream to the gorge (I don't know if there is a name for this area. I have always called it the gorge.). An old railroad bed, left over from the days when this area was first logged, follows the river through the gorge. The area is not very assessable, so as a precaution I would not recommend fishing it alone. There are enough good runs and holes for two fishermen, but three or more could be a crowd. The river through the gorge is easy to fish, but you will run into some dead fall and blow downs. Here, at times, it can become guerrilla fishing with a lot of pocket water and short runs that can be difficult to fish. You will find a good population of wild rainbows in the 6 through 10 inch

range. A fly fisherman can fish this water easily with an 8′ rod, although a 61/2′ or 7′ rod would be better.

Since our free mountain streams in the southeast do not have prolific hatches of insects, the fish tend to be opportunistic and take most flies that look buggy. During the spring and fall when the morning temperatures are cool, you should start fishing with nymphs until the sun is on the water. When the water starts to warm up (usually between 10:00 AM and noon) dry flies will bring fish to the surface. So what are the best fly patterns? Any of the generic patterns will work. For nymphs, the gold-ribbed hares ear, pheasant tail and zugbug will attract a hungry rainbow. Unless you see a specific insect coming off the water, dry flies such as caddis, Adams and most attractor patterns will bring fish to the surface. From June through September, you should have some terrestrial patterns, such as black ants and hoppers, in your fly box.

The summer months can be challenging depending on the water level and water temperature. If the water is down and temperatures are up because of drought conditions, the fishing can be slow. Low water and high temperatures can stress the trout and put them on the bottom. Trout can slow their metabolism down during these periods and not eat for as long as a month. So, if you want to take home a few fish, you may have to stop at Kroger.

As I stated above, from Robertstown to the check-in station, the Chattahoochee receives heavy fishing pressure. This section of the river is regularly stocked. Some of the bait fishermen will come up into the gorge during the weekends, so the best time to fish here is Monday through Friday. I have made the mistake of trying to fish here on the weekend, only to have my day ruined by bait fishermen wading up the middle of the river and pounding the water unmercifully with crickets, worms, corn, etc.

On this part of the Chattahoochee, regular fishing regulations apply. The river is open for fishing from the last Saturday in March until October 31st. A Georgia fishing license with a trout stamp is required. There are no restrictions on bait, except for live minnows. The creel limit is eight trout per day. Since the gorge is not stocked, I would recommend that you catch and release in this area. You can easily catch enough stockers below the check-in station to take home.

-Greg Moran, Trout Unlimited, Chattahoochee Chapter

WHEN, WHERE, AND HOW TO WATCH BIRDS IN THE CHATTAHOOCHEE NATIONAL FOREST

There are many bird species that reach their southernmost breeding ground in the Chattahoochee NF. Although many migrants from farther north detour around the Southern Appalachians, there is still a wide variety of interesting migrant species found here.

When: Unlike northern national forests, there are always reasonable numbers of unusual birds to see in the Chattahoochee. The time to see the most species on a single day is during spring migration and early summer (late April through early July), and again when fall migrants come through in late August through very early October.

Where: There are many areas of special ornithological interest, among them are:

Brasstown Bald- High altitude species such as Veery, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and Chestnut-sided Warbler can be seen or heard from the parking lot and on the road and trail which afford good views into the canopy. Also investigate: *Lake Winfield Scott* and *Sosebee Cove, Ellicott Rock Wilderness*, and *Lake Conasauga.*

Lt. Gov. Pierre Howard, son Christopher, daughter Caroline, and wife Nancy spot some birds (photo curtosy of Atlanta Journal/Constitution)

How: Binoculars are essential to birdwatching, you should always carry a pair. Also, pick up a good field guide to birds of the southeast. Learn to listen carefully and distinguish between different call patterns and sounds. Be patient. Many times, more calls can be heard the longer you remain still. Besides, what sound is more peaceful than the forest alive with birds. If you are a beginner, it is best to go with someone who knows the common bird calls, since you can spend a lot of time trying to hunt down a call or song before you actually see the bird.

Field trips are regularly offered by local Audubon chapters (i.e. Atlanta Audubon at 770-955-4111) and the Georgia Ornithological Society, PO box 1684, Cartersville, Ga. 30120 (dues $16).

Additional Information:

Observations of breeding birds anywhere in Georgia are needed for the state's breeding bird atlas project, and volunteers are needed for specific atlas blocks around the state. Contact Todd Schneider at the Dept. of Natural Resources, 116 Rum Creek Drive, Forsyth, Ga. 31029, tel: 912-746-4523.

For more detailed site guide information and a neat bar graph depicting the abundance of each species in Georgia by season and region, see The Birder's Guide to Georgia 1996. Joel Hitt, Giff Beaton and Ken Blackshaw, eds. Georgia Ornithological Society. Available by mail or in bookstores.

GOS operates a rare bird alert number (770-493-8862) that reports observations of interest.

-Mark Oberle, Atlanta Audubon Society

THE WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS INVENTORY

Eligibility Study Included In Forest Planning

Although it hasn't gotten the attention that the roadless areas have, the Forest Service is conducting an inventory of rivers for possible wild and scenic designation as part of the development of the long-range management plan for the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest.

Although the purpose of the inventory is to identify rivers that are eligible for designation, it will also produce a great deal of information about rivers and streams across the Forest.

There is growing conviction nationally that rivers, streams, and riparian zones may be more threatened now than ever. While the threats are numerous, timber harvesting and road building are major threats to rivers whose tributaries lie within the national forests.

Requirements and Provisions

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act actually provides for three different designations-wild, scenic, or recreational-depending on the degree of access to the river and the extent to which it has been affected by impoundment. Even though a "wild" designation provides somewhat greater protection, the primary protection is against future damming.

To be eligible for designation, rivers must be "free flowing" and possess "outstandingly remarkable resources. The Act identifies seven categories of resources that are to be considered in evaluating rivers - scenic, recreational, geologic, cultural/historical, wildlife, fish/aquatic, and botanical/ecological. Resources must be located within one quarter mile of the river, contribute substantially to the function of the river ecosystem, or owe their existence to the river.

Several Federal agencies may recommend designation of rivers, but designation itself requires an act of Congress. Once a river is designated, the responsible Federal agency must manage public lands in the river corridor in a manner that preserves the resources that led to its designation. Although they are required to develop guidelines for management by other government agencies and private individuals, Federal agencies are not empowered to regulate non-Federal lands.

The Inventory Process

The Chattahoochee-Oconee inventory is being led by two Gainesville rangers, John Petrick and Marcia O'Connor. The first stage of the inventory involved compiling a list of rivers to be studied. The list was developed primarily on the basis of recommendations from Forest Service staff and interested public; it included 87 rivers and streams.

René Voss

Chattoga Wild and Scenic River

The criteria being used in the inventory were developed in collaboration with the Francis Marion-Sumter National Forest in South Carolina. Separate sets of criteria were developed for the Blue Ridge and Piedmont sections of the two forests, with criteria related to each of the seven resource areas. Applying them involves comparing resources of one river with those of other rivers in the region; rivers with resources that are unusual across the region are rated higher than those with resources that are unusual only locally.

Because the initial list was so long, Petrick and O'Connor met with district rangers to get their help in narrowing it down to rivers that clearly merited careful study. At first, there was a slight tendency for districts to give high ratings to rivers that in fact, according to Petrick, were merely "interesting."

To help rangers better understand what it means for a river to have "outstandingly remarkable" values, Petrick and O'Connor presented examples, such as those associated with the Chattooga River, the Tallulah Gorge, and Amicalola Creek. With a clearer understanding of the criteria, it was expected that districts would recommend study of a significantly smaller group of rivers.

On the basis of information provided by the districts, as well as their own investigations, Petrick and O'Connor will make an initial forest-wide determination of eligibility, and then assign a classification (wild, scenic, or recreational) to rivers judged eligible. The final determination of eligibility prior to release of the Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS) will be made by the Forest Interdisciplinary Team.

Determining which rivers among those judged eligible are suitable for designation involves reference to a broad range of additional considerations including the mix of public and private ownership of land in the river corridor, the range of management options and associated costs, and extent of public support for designation.

Suitability assessments will be carried out, in light of public comment, in the course of preparing the draft plan for managing the Forest.

Outcomes and Issues

Because the requirements for designation are so stringent, it is likely that few rivers in the Chattahoochee-Oconee will be recommended. When asked which rivers were most likely to be considered eligible, Petrick and O'Connor mentioned the Conasauga and the Jack's Rivers, both of which are already within the Cohutta Wilderness. Other rivers that are getting a close look are the headwaters of the Chattahoochee, the Coleman River, Overflow Creek, the Tallulah River, the Little River, and the Ocmulgee River.

But designation of rivers is not the only possible outcome of the inventory. Without question, it will produce a great deal of information about resources related to rivers across the Forest. It is likely that many of these resources will be considered outstanding, even when they do not support designation. Petrick noted that some National Forests have developed management prescriptions that afford an extra measure of protection to rivers with such resources.

Continued on page 11 (see Wild Rivers)

OFF-ROAD RECREATION ON THE FORESTS

GARTRA DEDICATED TO KEEPING TRAILS OPEN FOR OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

Founded in 1992, GARTRA, Georgia Recreational Trail Riders Association, is a nonprofit, member managed club, dedicated to building and maintaining off-road motorcycle and All-Terrain vehicle trails in Georgia. The over 350 members of GARTRA work to ensure that off-road recreational areas are kept open to provide safe and environmentally responsible riding.

The best example of our trail riders' dedication to volunteer assistance in the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests is the work GARTRA has done to reopen the Whissenhant trails near Dahlonega. GARTRA was founded with the goal of reopening this popular riding area in North Georgia. Two years and over 2500 work hours were invested by the membership to repair heavy storm damage that had closed the entire 700 acre site.

Each month we schedule work days on the trails. GARTRA has signed agreements with the U.S. Forest Service that pledge work-hours, equipment and funds for ongoing trail maintenance, handicap access and improvements to the trail head at Town Creek near Greensboro and Whissenhant.

As we have taken on more trail projects, it has become more apparent that GARTRA cannot rely on only its membership to help support the Forest Service in the continual maintenance of ORV areas. To this end, our goal this year is to promote the adoption of trail areas by local riding groups that are not members of GARTRA. This was accomplished in the Armuchee District for the Houston Valley trails and we are working on arrangements for trails in the Cohutta, Brasstown and Chattooga Districts.

It is the hope of the members of GARTRA that during the discussion of recreation in the National Forests and more importantly as future policies are formed for the multiple use of the forest, you will remember and champion the efforts of one group of trail riders to have open access to the forest we all work to protect.

Where To Go

The Chattahoochee and Oconee National Forests are closed to off-road vehicle use except in designated areas or on designated trails specifically marked for ORV use. Check with the district ranger before you travel to these areas. From time to time, ORV trails and roads may be closed to allow recovery from overuse. The forests' ORV trails are listed below:

Anderson Creek, Barnes Creek, Beasley Knob ORV Area, Brawley Mountain, Davenport ATV Trail, Houston Valley ORV Area, Locust Stake ORV Area, Milma Creek, Nottely Lake ORV Area, Oakey Mountain, Rocky Flats, Tatum Lead, Tibbs, Town Creek Bike Trail, Whissenhant ORV Area, Windy Gap Cycle Trail

-Mike Kavula, President, GARTRA (770)986-3213

David Baldridge

MOUNTAIN BIKING ECO-ETHICS

Mountain biking is the fastest growing new recreation activity in the Chattahoochee National Forest. Every weekend you can encounter cycling enthusiasts on Forest Service roads or on designated trails.

Mountain bikers have long endured the attacks of other recreational trail users who believe that our tires inflict untold environmental damage. In actuality, when ridden with care, mountain bikes do no more damage than hiking boots or horse hooves. Here are a few tips on low-impact cycling:

-Stay on the trail. Do not ride around fallen trees or other obstacles in your path. Walk your bike instead. Each time you leave the path, you create the potential that other bikers and erosion will ultimately follow.

-Don't ride over wet trails. After a rain it is best to stay off the trails. The soil is softened and is more susceptible to permanent damage.

-Avoid impassable or impossible trails. Don't attempt a descent that would force you to lock up your brakes and rip the ground up as you go.

-Take out what you bring in. Don't leave broken bike parts or snack wrappers on the trail. No one wants to look at litter.

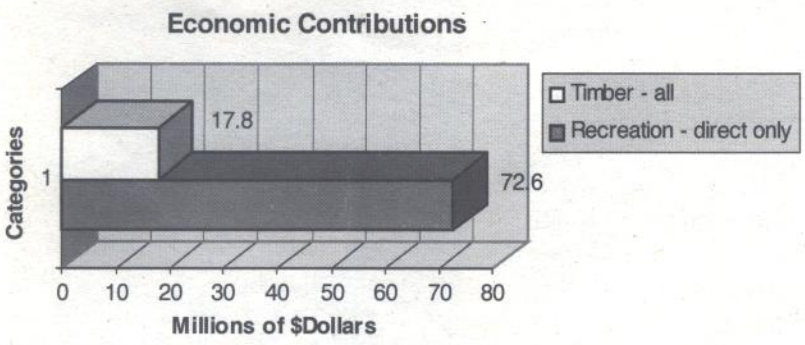
-Never ride on closed trails. Trails for hikers only may be designated that way for a reason. Steep slopes barren of vegetation, eroded areas and sensitive watersheds are no place for mountain bikes. Riding on closed trails only makes us look reckless and irresponsible, and results in more closed trails.

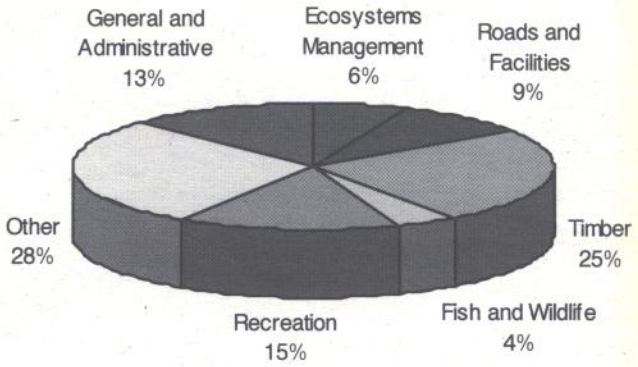
-Slow down. Consider this: if you fly down a quick singletrack at 20 m.p.h., then hit the brakes and slow down to 6 m.p.h. to pass a hiker, you're still going twice as fast as that person.

Adapted from Scott Adams, "Mountain Bike Virginia: An Atlas of Virginia's Best Mountain Bike Rides"

For more information about mountain biking in north Georgia, contact the Southern Off-Road Bicycle Association (SORBA) at (770)435-4932.

ANALYSIS





1995 Direct Economic Contribution from Recreation on Georgia's National Forests

(Chattahoochee and Oconee National Forests)

USFS Category (1)	Associated Activities or Equivalent that have $ Values (2)	1995 Recreation Visits - RVDs (3)	Net Economic Value (2) (per day - in dollars)	1995 Recreation Value (dollars)
Auto Driving	Sightseeing/Driving	598,000	$14.04	$8,395,920.00
Camping (auto, trailer, tent)	Camping	453,000	$6.05	$2,740,650.00
Hunting - game and birds	Deer Hunting	367,200	$40.29	$14,794,488.00
Hiking/Walking	Day Hiking/Trail Walking	310,500	$5.79	$1,797,795.00
Camping (general day)	No Main Activity	270,000	$35.52	$9,590,400.00
Scenic Viewing	Sightseeing/Driving	240,000	$14.04	$3,369,600.00
Fishing	Cold Water Fishing	149,300	$27.02	$4,034,086.00
Picnicking	Family Gathering/Picnics	137,000	$73.90	$10,124,300.00
Swimming/Waterplay	Pool/Outdoor Swimming	84,300	$28.54	$2,405,922.00
Motorcycle/Scooter (ORVs)	ORV - National Average	68,400	$20.29	$1,387,836.00
Warm Water Fishing	Warm Water Fishing	59,500	$10.06	$598,570.00
Boat - Powered	Motor Boating/Skiing	53,800	$33.89	$1,823,282.00
Horseback Riding	Estimated from Day Hiking/Trail Walking	45,300	$5.79	$262,287.00
Nature Study	Wildlife Viewing	38,400	$29.00	$1,113,600.00
Gathering Forest Products	National Average - Other	31,900	$18.82	$600,358.00
Canoeing	River Rafting/Boating	29,500	$126.04	$3,718,180.00
Mountain Biking	Estimated from Day Hiking/Trail Walking	24,400	$5.79	$141,276.00
Landcraft (ORVs)	ORV - National Average	22,100	$20.29	$448,409.00
Mountain Climbing	Estimated from Day Hiking/Trail Walking	20,900	$5.79	$121,011.00
Water Skiing/Water Sports	Motor Boating/Skiing	20,800	$33.89	$704,912.00
Organized Camping (night)	Camping	15,700	$6.05	$94,985.00
Organized Camping (gen. day)	No Main Activity	15,600	$35.52	$554,112.00
Recreational Cabins	Recreational Cabins - National Average	15,500	$12.48	$193,440.00
Other Watercraft (rafting, tubing)	River Rafting/Boating	12,600	$126.04	$1,588,104.00
General Information	National Average - Other	11,600	$18.82	$218,312.00
Viewing Interpretive Visits	National Average - Other	10,500	$18.82	$197,610.00
Viewing interpretive Signs	National Average - Other	10,100	$18.82	$190,082.00
Sailing	Sail Boating	3,700	$11.79	$43,623.00
Other Categories	National Average - Other	71,800	$18.82	$1,351,276.00
Total RVDs		3,191,400		**$72,604,426.00**
Chattahoochee RVDs		2,810,200		
Oconee RVDs		381,200		

(1) From Chattahoochee/Oconee NF Recreation Staff - Jim Herd - August, 1996

(2) Travel Cost Model: from *SAA - Social/Cultural/Economic Technical Report,* July 1996, or based on national averages from Walsh, R. et al, 1988, Review of outdoor recreation economic demand studies with nonmarket benefit estimates, 1968-1988

(3) One RVD means visitation of one person for a 12 hour period or 12 people for a one hour period

ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTIONS FROM RECREATION ON GEORGIA'S NATIONAL FORESTS

by René Voss

Recreation and tourism are playing a significantly increasing role in the economies of counties in northern Georgia. While these economically diverse communities are not dependent on any segment of the economy including tourism, recreation or timber, according to a 1995 economic report by Georgia Tech titled "Window on the Mountains", the main reasons why the many tourists come to the North Georgia Mountains and the Chattahoochee and Oconee National Forests each year is because of their scenic beauty. While this Georgia Tech report studied only 11 counties[1] in northeast Georgia, the economic contribution from tourism, including recreation, was significant at $624.88 million. Employment impact from tourism in those counties is over 20,300 jobs.

Recreationists from Atlanta and many other urban centers are attracted in droves to these forests because of unique recreation opportunities our public lands provide (see the table to the left). In an effort to quantify the direct economic contribution from recreation, the U.S. Forest Service has provided Georgia ForestWatch with recreational visitation numbers which we tallied for each activity in the table to the left. This visitation is estimated by the Forest Service each year and is the best information available for this analysis. It is important to note that the Forest Service also estimates that around 10 million visitor come to the Chattahoochee National Forest each year. Another important aspect of this analysis is that the dollar values per day in the table are based on "per day" values and not Recreation Visitor Days (RVDs) and since per-day visitation is less than 12 hours, the analysis underestimates the economic contribution, on average 1.5 to 2 times per activity. This analysis therefore is somewhat conservative and is meant only for use as a comparison to the economic contribution from timber extraction.

In addition, our estimate of the recreational contribution to the economy of $72.6 million only includes direct expenditures, based on travel cost, whereas the $17.8 million contribution from timber extraction includes direct, indirect, and induced expenditures in those economies. The analysis also does not factor in the value that recreationists receive from the activity they participate in, that is, what they would be willing to pay for participating in the activity. While it has been difficult to estimate the actual recreation contribution to the economy from the Chattahoochee and Oconee National Forests on their own, the Department of Agriculture in their Fiscal Year 1997 budget estimates that by the year 2000, economic contributions from recreation on all our National Forests will be almost 40 times greater than those of the Forest Service's timber program and will create over 30 times the number of jobs.

Jobs Created Nationwide from National Forests:

Recreation	~2,500,000 (1997 Forest Service Budget)
Timber	76,164 (1994 FS Timber Sale Report)

National Economic Contributions from National Forest:

Recreation	~$100 billion (1997 Forest Service Budget)
Timber	$ 2.7 billion (1994 FS Timber Sale Report)

Conclusions:

Past budgets for the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests have not reflected the disproportionate economic contributions of recreation over timber. For example, the 1995 budget included only 15% for recreation while the timber program received 25% of the $14.3 million total as depicted in the graph on the page to the left. The Southern Appalachian Assessment (SAA) indicates thatrecreational visits to the National Forests are on a steady increase and the Forest Service predicts that, nationally, recreation visits per day will nearly double in the next 50 years. Recreation trends in the Southern Appalachians have tracked national trends closely, according to the SAA, and it is likely that the Chattahoochee and Oconee National Forests can expect their visitation to also double in the next 50 years. It is clear that in order to meet these increasing demands for recreation, the Forest Service's budgets must be re-aligned and shifted towards a greater emphasis on recreation management and less emphasis on timber extraction.

[1] Dawson, Fannin, Gilmer, Habersham, Hall, Lumpkin, Pickens, Rabun, Towns, Union, and White Counties

Katherine Kolb

Clearcuts near Chattooga National Wild and Scenic River and Rabun Bald

Wild Rivers, from page 8

When they become available, the results of the inventory - the data as well as the recommendations - should be carefully scrutinized. *Wherever* there are outstanding resources, the impact of Forest Service proposals for managing the Forest on those resources should also be carefully examined. If wild and scenic designation is not an option, the question how they *will* be protected should be aggressively pursued.

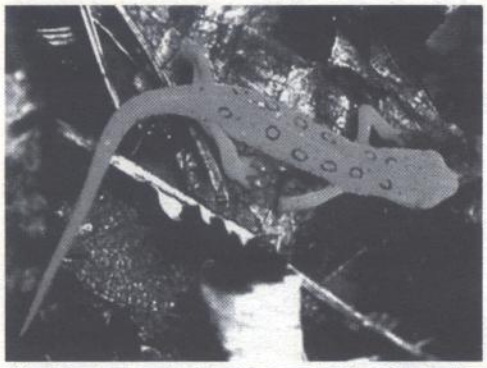
-Eric Weir
The Georgia Conservancy

TO HELP PROTECT OUR RIVERS:

Current plans for public participation in the inventory are for incorporating it into provisions for participation in development of the overall forest management plan. There will be separate tables at open houses, but there will be no information or meetings on river issues exclusively. Those especially interested in river issues should call the Forest Supervisor's office in Gainesville (770-536-0541) and ask to be put on the list to receive information and announcements regarding development of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Inventory.

ACTION ALERT!

Summer/Fall 1996



MEMBERSHIP FORM

MEMBER NAME

ADDRESS

CITY/STATE ZIP

HOME PHONE NUMBER

E-MAIL ADDRESS

Membership Categories

(CHECK ONE, ALL ARE TAX-DEDUCTABLE)

	Individual	Joint
Regular	☐ $10	☐ $15
Supporting	☐ $25	☐ $38
Contributing	☐ $50	☐ $75
Student	☐ $5	☐ $8
Senior	☐ $5	☐ $8
Life	☐ $350	☐ $500

Please send check to:

Georgia ForestWatch
1447 Peachtree Street NE
Suite 812, Atlanta, GA 30309-3029

FOREST PLAN SCOPING LETTERS TO THE FOREST SERVICE NEEDED

Exercise your right - and responsibility - to be heard!

The Forest Service needs your help now in determining the fate of the Chattahoochee and Oconee National Forests. If you care about how your lands, Georgia's National Forests, are managed over the next ten to fifteen years now is the time to be heard. From now until December 2, 1996 the Forest Service is required, by law, to take "public comments" in order to revise and update the Land and Resource Management Plan. Your input is critical. Consider the following in your written comments to the Forest Service:

- No more new logging road construction.
- Timber harvesting reduced from existing levels.
- More wilderness should be recommended by the Forest Service for Congressional designation on the Chattahoochee National Forest, also areas in the Oconee NF should be identified for future wilderness and/or special area protection such as scenic areas.
- No logging in potential old growth forest (potential old growth is 100 years old and older).
- Redirect funding from timber budgets to recreation and land acquisition budgets. The Forest Service should eliminate timber sales below cost.
- Greater protection for habitat of proposed, endangered, threatened and sensitive species dependent on unfragmented mature forests (examples are: brook trout, black bear, songbirds, red-cockaded woodpeckers, etc.).
- The new plan should not allow the Forest Service any exemptions from the "standards" required in the Forest Plan.
- Eliminate all even-aged logging methods, including clearcutting, seed-tree cutting, and shelterwood cutting, and replace with alternative methods which better mimic nature such as single-tree and group selection.
- Protect "Georgia's Mountain Treasures" described in The Wilderness Society® publication from logging and road building. Call Georgia ForestWatch @ 404-872-9453 to receive a free copy of this report. These areas are included in the following clusters:

  Cohutta Cluster, Rich Mountain Cluster, Ed Jenkins NRA Cluster, Duncan Ridge Cluster, Blue Ridge Corridor Cluster, Wilderness Heartlands Cluster, Northern Blue Ridge Cluster, Chattooga Watershed Cluster, Gainesville Ridges Cluster, and Armuchee Cluster

Send your letters to:

USDA Forest Service
Attn: Planning
508 Oak Street, NW
Gainesville, GA 30501

In addition, the Forest Service will hold a number of "Listening Sessions" for the public. These are listed in the calendar below. Thank you in advance for your letters and your attendance at these planning meetings. Your voice will help protect our National Forests.

EVENTS CALENDAR

Please try and attend our Workshop and one of the Forest Service Listening Sessions:

September 28 **Georgia ForestWatch Planning Workshop** - Vogel State Park
Contact Angela Fincher or Shirl Parsons @ 404-872-9453.

October 17 **FS Listening Session** - Gainesville, GA - New Supervisor's Office
1755 Cleveland Highway (U.S. 129 North).

October 22 **FS Listening Session** - Clayton, GA - Dillard House (Henry's Playhouse).

November 4 **FS Listening Session** - Atlanta, GA - Forest Service Regional Office
1720 Peachtree Road NW.

November 5 **FS Listening Session** - Eatonton, GA - Rock Eagle 4-H Camp.

November 7 **FS Listening Session** - Blue Ridge, GA - City Hall.

November 12 **FS Listening Session** - Dalton, GA - Tourism and Convention Center.

November 14 **FS Listening Session** - Blairsville, GA - Union County Library.

December 2 **Scoping Comment Period Ends** - Deadline for written comments.

For more information about the "Listening Sessions", call the Forest Service at (770)536-0541. Ask for Caren Briscoe or Marcus Beard.

ForestWatch Wish List:

Please consider donating or contributing to the following:

- **Color Scanner** for Computer, Newsletter, and Web Pages.
- **100% Recycled Paper** for Newsletter and Alerts.
- **Newsletter Printing** donation.
- **Tree-Ring Borer** for inventory of old growth forest.
- **Trimble GPS Unit** for field verification and data gathering.
- **Iomega External Jazz Drive** for backing up our computer data.