Forest News

Georgia ForestWatch Quarterly Newsletter Winter 2008

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From The Director

Stretching our wings to encompass the bigger picture

Wayne Jenkins
Executive Director

Occasionally, you will notice an alert or newsletter article or website entry or a request for you to take action on a problem that falls outside of the main focus of Georgia ForestWatch – to protect our national forests. We are one of many conservation/environmental organizations in the state working on environmental challenges and threats to our water, air and land. Over the last decade these groups have worked more closely together to increase their effectiveness. Though stretched to accomplish core goals, all of Georgia's groups agree that working together in this way strengthens all our efforts.

I would like to mention two such groups. Many environmental groups in Georgia are members of these key statewide organizations, the Georgia Water Coalition and Georgia Conservation Voters.

The Georgia Water Coalition

Only five years old and with over 152 statewide partners and members, the Georgia Water Coalition is working to ensure that water is managed fairly for all Georgians, with the interest of all citizens, existing businesses and farms in mind. As Georgia's population continues its rapid increase, pressure on our natural water supplies may be coming critically close to exhaustion. Our present drought starkly reveals a gross lack of realism and planning when it comes to this most precious of resources. The Water Coalition is fully focused on educating Georgians about water issues in our state that affect them and future generations, and on motivating them to be involved in the far-reaching decisions now being contemplated by Georgia's Environmental Protection Division and the state legislature. Georgia's water resources are far too valuable and important for their use to be decided solely by those with political influence. Go to www.garivers.org/gawater/ to learn more about the Water Coalition and its work for you and your water. This is a critical period. Find out what's going on and get involved.

Georgia Conservation Voters

Another group that we work closely with and that provides a critical service to all Georgians is Georgia Conservation Voters, the political voice of the environmental and conservation movement in Georgia. GCV takes its inspiration and leadership from the local, regional and state environmental and conservation groups that define the issues they work on. Because tax-exempt state groups are not allowed to engage in helping conservation-minded individuals get elected, GCV undertakes that mission on their behalf. As we all know, you cannot work very long on environmental issues without realizing the fundamental role politics plays. GCV offers several services to its many members, so they can become more informed and strategically engaged in the political choices and decisions by our leaders that affect our lives and the future. You can learn more about GCV and its work at www.gavoters.com/index.html.

Georgia ForestWatch also works with many other environmental groups in our state and region for better protection of our national forests but we occasionally step into the arena of other important environmental issues. For a more comprehensive list of partners and organizations we support and work with go to our web page at: http://www.gafw.org/links.html. Together, we form a stronger union to protect the environment that supports our lives.

In future issues we will share more information about the key groups that are at the core of the movement to protect our environment in Georgia and the region.

Hike log: Fall fungus foray

by Debra H. Davis : Outing Leader

Despite the prolonged drought in the north Georgia mountains, Warwoman Dell did not disappoint those who ventured out September 23 on a memorable fall fungus foray led by Debra and Larry Davis, and Lori Martell, outreach director.

The non-collecting foray was to educate participants about the critical role of fungi in nature. We discussed foray ethics and habitat protection. I emphasized the complexities of identification and the importance of a keen eye, thorough knowledge of field characteristics, habitats, and identification by scientific name.

Warwoman Dell, a rich hemlock-hardwood cove forest is located just outside of Clayton, Georgia, in Rabun County in the Chattahoochee National Forest. It is also rich in historical significance. A segment of the Bartram Trail named for noted naturalist and explorer William Bartram (1739-1823), passes through the area. The Civilian Conservation Corps built a camp in Warwoman Dell in the 1930s. Remains of a stone trout hatchery can still be observed. An old railroad bed dates to the pre-Civil war era. The railroad would have connected the Atlantic Coast to Ohio. The project was abandoned due to a lack of funding.

Lori Martell photo

Debra holds a magnolia cone while several Foray participants attempt to photograph the tiny Strobilurus conigenoides growing on it.

As a conservationist, educator, master naturalist, self-taught mycologist and botanical photographer, I am always amazed by the natural beauty and myriad of textures, shapes and colors of fungi in the Southeastern United States. Professional mycologists estimate there are over 5,000 species in the region.

Fungi play a critical ecological role as a food source for forest critters. They are also saprobes (decomposers) without which the

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Cover photo: Debra Davis photo. The lovely Turkey Tail, Trametes versicolor, looks and feels like fine velvet, and has been studied widely for its medicinal benefits.

A personal note from the new president

by Peg Griffith : President

In October, at the quarterly meeting of the Georgia ForestWatch Board, President Joe Gatins handed the reigns to me. I have to say: I am honored, intimidated, and excited. Honored, because a group of people who have shepherded ForestWatch for so very many years believe in me. Intimidated, because Joe is a very tough act to follow, and so far as I can tell he works 20 hours a day! Excited, because I believe so very much in what Georgia ForestWatch does.

As members, you should know that this was, and continues to be, a very smooth transition. We did a three month overlap, to ensure that "hand-offs" happened smoothly. Joe carries on as a board member and chairman of the fundraising committee. There is overlap in the board Executive Committee and in the working committees as well, so that we have both continuity and new energy, both vital to a healthy organization.

Looking forward, I am EXCITED! We have a number of initiatives underway:

1. **Increasing membership.** With a major grant from a generous foundation, we hope to significantly increase our membership over the next couple of years. I discuss this initiative and how you can help us elsewhere in this issue.

2. **Recruiting co-district leaders.** The district leaders represent the core of what we are about: they walk the forests; respond to Forest Service scoping notices; and put thought behind the proposed activities. Our awesome District Leaders know more about our forests than most people will ever hope to know. We are lucky to have them. What they know takes years to learn. Recently, three new co-leaders signed up to begin learning from these experienced folks, so that the next generation of ForestWatchers is trained.

3. **Involving and educating our youth.** People don't protect what they don't love, and they don't love what they don't know about. So it is ESSENTIAL to get young people and youth out into the woods, and give them a chance to experience nature. I believe that kids like getting outdoors and learning about bugs, fish, trees, and toadstools. We are looking into partnerships with existing environmental education programs and camps, and offer the "woods, trees, and hiking" component for these programs. Our focus must remain "Preserving, Protecting, and Restoring Georgia's National Forests" – but we want to help "raise up" the next generation of ForestWatchers.

Why does it matter, and why do I care? Because I love the woods, and to have some small part in protecting this marvelous forest is an honor and a responsibility that I treasure. Because I recently watched nine wild turkeys and two deer, plus a barred owl swooping through the evening sky hunting for food. Because I want clean water and clean air. Because I want all of these things for my family, for generations to come. ■

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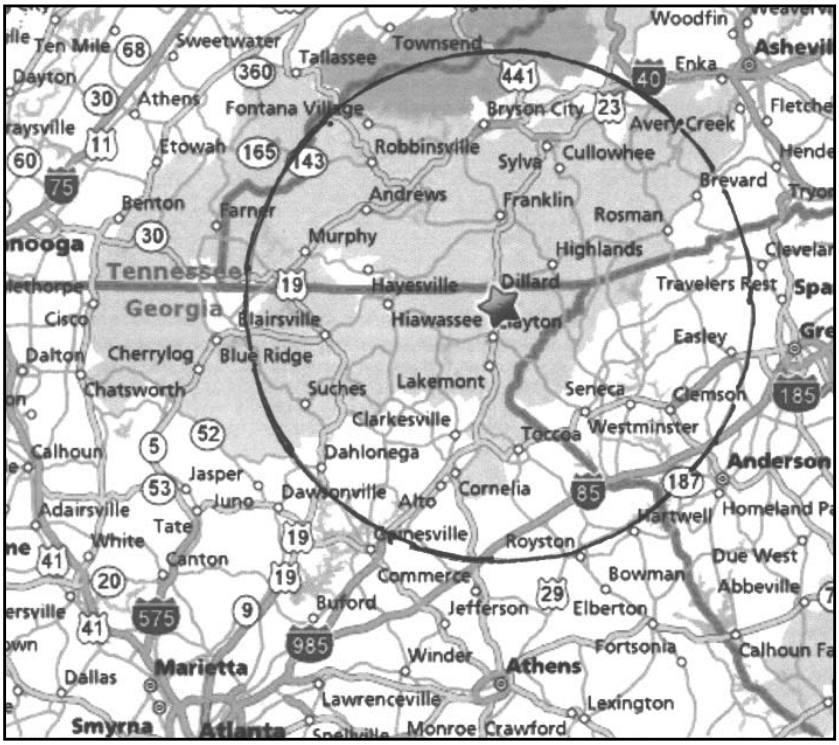
Wood-biomass power plant, large land exchange planned

by Joseph Gatins : Chattooga River Co-district Leader

Georgia ForestWatch members in Rabun County and nearby locales are closely monitoring and reviewing two developments that could have major impact on national forest landscapes in the long term.

The first involves a multi-pronged approach to trying to reopen an aging carpet and textile plant in Rabun Gap. In that case, the local subsidiary of a Virginia-based electricity co-generation company, Multitrade, has purchased the plant's wood-fired power plant with a view to expanding its capacity and using the electricity to both power the factory and resell excess electricity to the power grid in Georgia.

According to Rick Cashatt, project manager for the subsidiary, Multitrade Rabun Gap, LLC, plans are to fire the plant's boiler with wood chips derived from logging project waste and slash collected within a 50-mile radius of Rabun Gap.



This map shows the 50-mile radius from which up to 50 tractor-trailer loads per day of "logging waste and slash" would be extracted from your national forests for a proposed power plant and textile mill in Rabun Gap.

At peak capacity, the new power plant would need something on the order of 50 tractor-trailer loads of chips and fuel every day, he reported.

It does not take a genius to see that this potentially could have some noticeable effect on the Chattahoochee, Nantahala and Sumter National Forests in Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina – a development that ForestWatchers will monitor closely as Multitrade's plan evolve.

The firm already is on a fast track to seek approval for a new air pollution permit that will be required by Georgia air protection authorities. Details can be viewed at: http://airpermit.dnr.state.ga.us/gatv/GATV/TitleV.asp. Click on the letter M, and then the company's name, for details.

As for the rest of the plant, Rabun County has purchased its water intake and sewer outflow facilities and will be working to secure separate, new permits for both activities. The 1-plus million square feet of the old textile mill remains empty at this writing, but efforts are reported underway to get an out-of-state pump assembly concern to occupy the space that has remained vacant since Fruit closed the mill in June of 2006.

The second major development involves a proposal for a large, multi-party land exchange in which some 323 acres of the Chattahoochee National Forests would be swapped for some 759 acres of private land scattered in some five different counties across Georgia.

The net gain of 436 acres overall, however, comes mostly at the expense of public lands in Rabun County, a proposal that will closely be reviewed by ForestWatchers in that locale. Under the proposed swap, the county itself would pick up about 80 acres to round out the dimensions of an aging landfill that is in need of remediation. The extra landfill land

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2007 Fall Retreat: A step back in time

by Joe Gatins : Board Member

Back way before Georgia ForestWatch was formed, well before the U.S. Forest Service was even a concept, and way, way back before the first European explorer set sight on the Southern Appalachians, and even further back than that – when there were very few native Americans tromping the backwoods of what is now Rabun County, Georgia, there was an immense forested landscape as far as eye could see. Huge trees the likes have not been seen in more than a century.

Quentin Bass, Forest Archeologist/Heritage Program Manager and Tribal Liaison for the Cherokee National Forest, painted an indelible picture of that area for the more than 75 ForestWatchers who attended our Fall Retreat in October of last year – sitting on a log around a open fire, even as he knapped an obsidian piece of glass into a workable version of an Indian-era axe.

Ironically as Quentin Bass spoke on a gorgeous fall day the whine of a chainsaw announced the demise of Georgia's largest Hemlock tree. On an adjacent piece of private property the owners, concerned about the safety of a nearby historic structure, had hired a crew to remove this mighty tree infected and weakened by the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid.

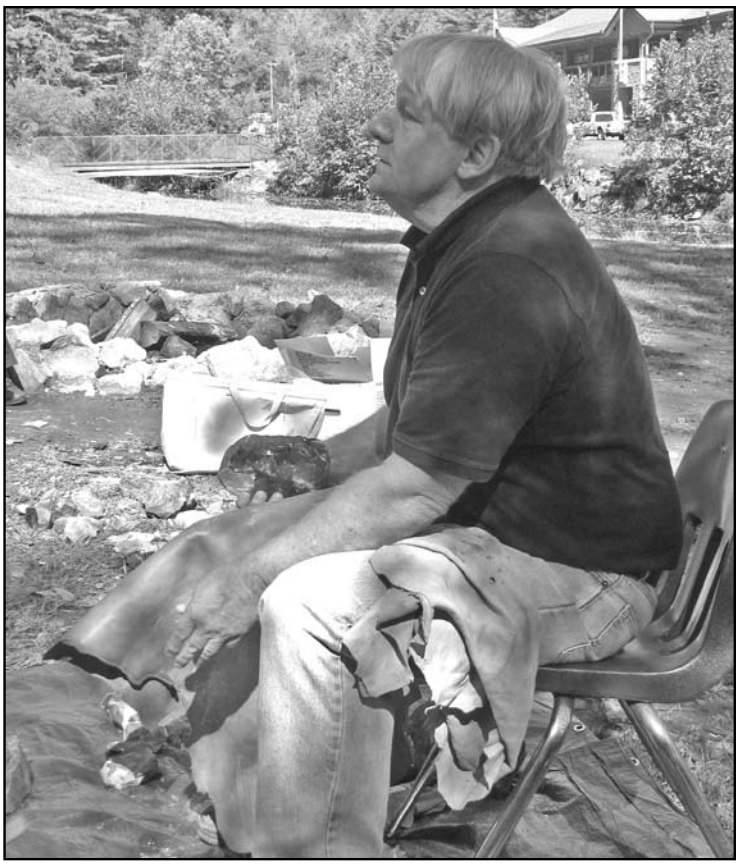
One of Bass' skills proved particularly entertaining later that night around the bonfire – he can sing old favorites in Russian. Who knew the breadth of this man's talents?

The retreat serves as an introduction for newcomers in the ways of ForestWatch, and as a place for old-timers to lick their wounds, tell war stories, and re-energize their forces for doing what we do.

The 2007 retreat, appropriately enough, was held at Camp Ramah Darom, back in the backcountry of Rabun County, the

Lori Martell photo

Ila Hatter lead a well attended herb walk, teaching the group about edible and medicinal plants. Spouse Jerry Coleman shared interesting anecdotes about Cherokee medicine.



Lori Martell photo

Quentin Bass demonstrated the ancient art of knapping on a piece of glass.

site of the old Tumbling Waters camp, where ForestWatch got its beginnings more than 20 years ago.

Other notable speakers included Dr. Jim Costa, the entomologist from Highlands and the director of the Highlands Biological Station; Ila Hatter, the noted wild crafter from Cherokee; and Jim Herrig, the expert aquatics biologist who organizes and leads the annual snorkeling forays into the Conasauga River. Tom Govus, the well-known naturalist from Ellijay, led a hike to Sweatman's Falls on Sunday.

Lori Martell photo

Shiloh, daughter of Bob Smiles, was the only child in attendance and found forever friends in staffers Kathy Herrygers and Lori Martell.

The two-day event also included a variety of other educational hikes (tree identification and hemlock health updates) and plenty of time for reflection, retreat and quiet palaver. As well as a contra dance and a lot of pickin' and singin' around the bonfire with Jim Sullivan. A good time was had by all. ■

Lori Martell photo

Joe Gatins (left) was presented with a lovely Kathryn Kolb trillium photo in thanks for his years as president.

David Govus photo

The Georgia Champion Hemlock was no match for the hemlock woolly adelgid. The old giant was cut down during Quentin Bass' seminar.

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Armuchee Timber Sale: Collaborate, but verify

by David Govus : Co-district Leader

For the past two years the Forest Service has been attempting to develop a work plan on the western third of the Chattahoochee National Forest. This effort has been called the large scale western assessment. The Forest Service has, from the start, portrayed this as a collaborative process and indicated its interest in involving interested parties in the process. In this light, volunteers and staff of Georgia ForestWatch have attended numerous meetings and field trips and provided input on how our public forests should be managed. There is an inevitable tension in this relationship as Georgia ForestWatch is a conservation organization and as such adopts the conservative position that in many cases no management of our public forest is necessary, and in others, that proposed management is questionable. The Forest Service, as a 100-year-old bureaucracy, naturally favors projects that would keep the agency busy.

Last December the Forest Service announced a tentative list of projects to be analyzed and discussed. These consisted of dozens of projects spread over thousands of acres from the Ridge and Valley physiographic province west of Dalton, Georgia, to the west side of the Cohutta Mountains in the Blue Ridge physiographic province. A great deal of this work consists of thinning non-native loblolly pine plantations that the Forest Service planted on thousands of clear-cut acres from the mid 1960s too the mid 1990s. Thinning planted loblolly pine plantations is recognized as a method of checking the spread of the native Southern Pine Beetle that has ravaged thousands of acres of these un-natural, single species plantations throughout the south. These beetle infestations are aggravated by the continuing cycles of drought that have afflicted north Georgia in the past several decades.

In addition to the thinning projects were a variety of proposals of a more problematic nature: restoration or maintenance of oak and oak pine forests and the treatment of thousands of acres with prescribed fire. Georgia ForestWatch examined these proposals and visited as many of the sites as possible. At this point in the process it became quite clear that the scope of these proposals were beyond the ability of an average citizen to comprehend and certainly impossible to ground truth. In February of this year, Georgia ForestWatch in tandem with the Southern Environmental Law Center delivered extensive comments on these proposals. We included our strong feeling that as these projects were proposed for forest health reasons and to improve wildlife habitat that it would not be reasonable to cut down mature, acorn-producing oaks. We also pointed out to the agency that the Cohutta portion of the forest was significantly different from the Armuchee Ridges area in past treatment, composition, soils etc. Within a few months the Forest Service announced that the proposals on the western slope of the Cohutta Mountains would be dropped from consideration and that the analysis would focus solely on the Armuchee sub-district in the Ridge and Valley area.

In late September, the Forest Service released the list of projects that they favored on the Armuchee sub-district and the analysis of the effects of the projects as well as alternatives based on suggestions by Georgia ForestWatch and other members of the public. The Forest Service's proposal contemplates thinning some 5,500 acres of dense pine plantations, restoring some 600 acres of mountain longleaf pine and shortleaf pine, restoring 600 acres of oak pine forest, and prescribed burning on nearly 4,000 acres. This proposal would cover an eight-year period and generate some 24 million board feet of timber to be sold. This volume of timber should yield between 2 and 3 million dollars. This is a significant sum when one considers that the annual budget for the entire Chattahoochee National Forest is 11 million dollars. The Forest Service can retain a portion of these proceeds on the Chattahoochee and this naturally raises the concern that the Forest Service's decisions are not solely based on forest health goals as the Forest Plan dictates but are also influenced by economic concerns.

Georgia ForestWatch, along with the Southern Environmental Law Center, began studying this proposal and soon realized that more information was needed. The Forest Service was quite cooperative in supplying additional information but in the end could not supply the data necessary to allow a trained surveyor to visit the exact sites where the proposed activities would take place. Fortunately Georgia ForestWatch, at considerable expense, has collected important Forest Service data over the years and possesses the software necessary to manipulate this information -- enabling us to create maps that allowed for accurate site visits. The huge number of sites, 166, precluded visiting them all so we concentrated on the older forest stands. What we found was disturbing. Two 100 -year-old stands totaling nearly 200 acres slated for clear cutting to

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Armuchee Timber Sale

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restore oak-pine forests were found to be a healthy mature mixed oak-pine forests in no need of treatment. Ironically, both of these sites at one time were official Forest Service recreation areas, now abandoned apparently for budgetary reasons and proposed for clear cutting. We also visited healthy 100–year-old oak-pine forests slated for clear cutting for replanting of mountain longleaf pine. While Georgia ForestWatch supports the restoration and maintenance of this rare forest community we question if clear cutting is the proper method to restore it and why degraded 30-year-old clear cut stands nearby at similar elevation and with more appropriate aspect were not selected for restoration. The Forest Plan that governs all activities on the forest allows timber cutting for forest health reasons but does not allow for timber harvest as a means solely to generate funds for other purposes.

One final aspect of this proposed project that we questioned was the amount of proposed prescribed burning. Prescribed burning is very expensive and as a result of our requests for additional information we discovered that in the past 15 years over 7,000 acres in the project area have been burned. Georgia ForestWatch recognizes that fire was a likely component of the ecosystem of this general area prior to European settlement but question how often it occurred and in what exact locations. As the agency has been firing the woods for years we also questioned the lack of information on monitoring past and future burns. What had been the affects of past burns and what were the plans to monitor these future burns? What are the exact goals that these burns hope to accomplish and what type of monitoring will be put in place to determine if these goals have been met. This is nearly the entire area. If in fact burning produces favorable results in terms of oak and pine recruitment and wildlife health why have these benefits not been measured? Is it wise to proceed on such a large scale without this information? The Forest Service has indicated that they are interested in meeting with Georgia ForestWatch in January to discuss these issues.

To review the Forest Service's proposal for the Armuchee Ridges and Georgia ForestWatch's response, visit our website at: http://gafw.org/watching.html. ■

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!

Georgia ForestWatch Membership Form

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(please print)

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MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

(Please circle one)	Individual
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Fall fungus foray

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forests would become engulfed with undecomposed debris. Some fungi are parasites that obtain nutrients by attacking other fungi, plants and animals. Still others are mycorrhizal symbionts of higher plants, both enjoying a mutually beneficial relationship.

Before we departed the parking lot, Larry noted a lovely blue milk mushroom, *Lactarius indigo*. Then, everyone noticed a group of *Suillus americanus* (Chicken Fat Suillus) in the parking lot. These boletes manage to be beautiful while looking like cold, icky, yellow chicken fat.

We observed an unusual organism, Lycogala *epidendrum*, a plasmodial slime mold commonly called Wolf's milk. This oddity belongs to the myxomycetes. Only with the aid of my loupe (magnifying lense) was I able to determine the correct identification, and pricking one of the fruit-bodies caused a bright pink spore mass to ooze out.

Several major mushroom groups were observed throughout the day, including species from the polypores, crust and parchment fungi, gilled, branched and clustered corals, boletes, chanterelles, Hypomyces, fiber fans and vases, puffballs, earthstars and earthballs, cup and saucer fungi, and carbon and cushion fungi.

One of the frequent groups we encountered was the polypores, also called "shelf mushrooms." (Polyporaceae) These common fungi grow in forests worldwide and are known for their thousands of tiny tubes forming the pore layer on the underside of flat plates. Polypores grow on tree trunks or from tree stumps, fallen logs and branches. The texture ranges from tough and woody to leathery. Still other species including Laetiporus *sulphureus* (Sulphur Shelf), Fistulina *hepatica* (Beefsteak fungus) and Piptoporus betulinus (Birch polypore) are fleshy when young.

One polypore, *Trametes versicolor*, was observed in abundance (see cover photo). Its common name, Turkey Tail, is indicative of the fan shaped appearance. Its scientific name refers to the cap's multi-colored concentric bands ranging from grey and brown to purple, blue and green (The green coloration is caused by an alga.). It has leathery banded caps with a prominent narrow white margin, and grows in overlapping clusters and, less often, in a rosette. It has white or cream colored pores underneath that do not stain when damaged. The wavy surface when fresh is velvety with an elegant appearance. It can easily be cultivated at home, and has become widely known for its immune supporting properties. For those who are interested in the medicinal qualities of mushrooms, I highly recommend the book, *Medicinal Mushrooms, An Exploration of Tradition, Healing, and Culture by Christopher Hobbs, L.Ac.*, Botanica Press.

After we shared good wishes at the end of a fun day, I returned home to work on my notes and by using multiple field guide cross references, the species total was 72. Not bad during an extreme drought!

Kudos to Brad Martell for having the knack to find the most unique species. His keen eye provided the group with a look at some dazzling coral mushrooms, notably Clavunina *cristata* (Crested Coral), *Tremellodendron pallidum* (Jellied False Coral), and two *Ramaria* species.

Other species encountered included Blue Stain, Cockle Shell, and the deadly poisonous, but beautiful Death Angel (*Amanita virosa* group) which provided a teachable moment to explain the identification characteristics of the generally toxic *Amanita* genus.

Larry spotted the tiny Magnolia Cone fungus, *Strobilurus conigenoides*. If he had accidentally touched the two minute gems fruiting on the cone, they would have disintegrated. He has learned by experience that I get disgruntled when mushrooms get squished on my watch!

Come join ForestWatch's educational and informative outings and meet new friends who love the forest and desire the preservation of our natural resources. See you soon! ■

Fungus Foray
A sampling of species

Ramaria formosa,
Yellow Tipped coral

Lori Martell photo

Boletus ornatipes,
Ornate Stalked
Bolete

Lori Martell photo

Lentinellus cochleatus,
Cockle Shell*

**Uncommon – should never be removed*

Lori Martell photo

Handheld GPS satellite units: modern-era ForestWatch tool

by Joe Gatins : Co-district Leader

Used to be, back out here in the mountains of north Georgia, that local people known as "water witchers" could unerringly find water (or where to dig for water) with use of a split peach sapling branch. Still do, as a matter of fact.

So, visualize this: About a half-dozen grizzled, 50- 60- and 70-something Georgia ForestWatch veterans, a pretty scruffy bunch to tell the truth, each holding a small electronic gizmo as they meandered up a remote forest lane back in the backcountry of the Warwoman Wildllife Management Area.

Welcome to the brave new world of handheld GPS mapping, the 21st Century version of dowsing.

The hardy band of ForestWatch district leaders gathered late in the fall of 2007 to get the low-down on how valuable these Global Positioning System units can be. Their mentor: Consausaga co-district leader, David Govus, who has used the units to advantage, when it comes time to alert the U.S. Forest Service to problems on the ground, like busted gates, illegal ATV traffic, eroded gullies, and the like. Translating a GPS waypoint to a map also provides a permanent record of the problems' location and a permanent record of when the agency was alerted to same.

Each district leader has been provided access to one of the GPS units made possible under a recent grant from the Fund for Wild Nature.

"This is an invaluable tool for doing what we do," said Wayne Jenkins, executive director, Georgia ForestWatch. "We are known for 'ground-truthing' the state of our national forests – and having a GPS makes for more telling monitoring." ■

Dudley Sisk photo

Georgia ForestWatch district leaders and friends learning to apply GPS technology to on-the-ground forest monitoring.

ForestWatch and GEAN Working Together

For several years, Georgia ForestWatch has partnered with the statewide Georgia Environmental Action Network (www.protectgeorgia.net) to increase direct communication between concerned Georgians and key leaders who can influence decision-making for a better Georgia. Our participation gives ForestWatch members the opportunity to understand and effect positive change on important environmental issues across the state while joining with the members of Georgia's key conservation organizations on issues affecting Georgia ForestWatch's main focus, our national forests.

Georgia Environmental Action Network (GEAN) is a collaborative effort among leading environmental and conservation organizations throughout Georgia to educate and mobilize their members utilizing a state-of-the-art email alert system. This system is a powerful way for getting our important messages to elected officials, decision makers and leaders in business and industry. Each participating group chooses which issues they will include their group on.

GEAN's constituent matching system is different from other list servers and action networks. Studies show that public officials pay closer attention to faxed or emailed letters from constituents whose names and addresses are included in the document than they do regular mass email messages. GEAN automatically matches you to your voting districts, includes your contact information and delivers each letter to your elected officials – all with one mouse click!

It is time for ForestWatch to update our list with GEAN. This is a service we provide to all Georgia ForestWatch members. To receive the occasional, issue focused email from GEAN, you need do nothing. However, if you do not wish to be included on the GEAN list, please let us know by sending an e-mail with subject "Opt Out GEAN" to info@gafw.org. (GEAN will not sell your contact info or use it for any other reason.)

We hope you choose to remain a part of this powerful tool for environmental change in Georgia. Despite what many folks believe, our leaders throughout Georgia want and need to hear from concerned citizens just like you. The Georgia Environmental Action Network unites your voice with thousands of other well informed and active environmentalists across our beautiful state for protecting ourselves, our families and our environment. Only by working together can we make the difference.

Georgia ForestWatch prepares to increase membership

by Peg Griffith : President

Big plans are underway at Georgia ForestWatch. We hope to increase our membership significantly in 2008. Why? There are lots of reasons, but here are three good ones:

1. **To be heard.** Increasing membership raises our "voice" in state and national legislatures. The more real people support our work, the more our members speak out, the greater likelihood that we will be heard.
2. **To be visible.** Increased membership, visibility and donations go hand-in-hand, and all contribute to fulfilling our mission. When we meet with potential supporters, they often want to know how many people care about our work. The more members we have; the more Tshirts seen on the street; the more emails and letters that back up every appeal, the stronger we are. Send emails; wear T-shirts and caps; fly those bumper-stickers!
3. **To be inclusive.** Georgia ForestWatch is all about protecting the forests for all of us now and for future generations. After all, the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests belong to all of us and our tax dollars pay for how they are managed. It takes all of us working together to ensure that the forests are cared for properly.

Will you help us this year? Let's be stronger together and bring more people into the ForestWatch family. Here's how:

1. **Give a gift membership.** Tell someone that you share their values; that you want to hike or watch birds or look at wildflowers with them. Give a membership in the name of your children or grandchildren, to teach them what you value. For less than a tank of gas, you can give a friend a gift that lasts all year.

   3 Easy ways to make it happen: (Please, do one now.)
   - Tear out the coupon in this newsletter and mail it in.
   - Go to the website, and click on "Donate Now" to sign up a friend online.
   - Call the ForestWatch office and ask Kathy sign up your friend.
2. **Ask a friend to attend an outing or an event.** Share the fun!! ForestWatch hikes, retreats, and plant sales are stimulating events full of interesting people.
3. **Spread the word.** Leave our newsletter in a public place: at a friends' house; in a doctor's waiting room; on an airplane; at church. Tell people you're a member and they should be, too. ■

Wood–biomass power plant

(continued from page 5)

is needed to facilitate mitigation of the landfill pollution now flowing onto national forestland, officials have explained. And Rabun's County board of education would pick up some 237 acres of public land – roughly situated between existing elementary and middle-and-high school complexes.

The swap also involves selling some 15 acres of Forest Service land along US 441 to a private developer and real estate man from Bogart, Georgia, Larry Cooper. When contacted in mid-December, Cooper said he had no particular plans at this juncture for the acreage he was about to secure.

In exchange, the national forest would get land for a new Conasauga District ranger office in Dalton; a new heliport location between Wiley and Tallulah Falls; an in-holding on Yonah Mountain deemed crucial to long-term protection of that popular visitor destination; the upper reaches of the Cliff Creek watershed, which is seen as a critical environmental bulwark against pollution of the Wild and Scenic Chattooga River watershed; and several, larger pieces of industrial forest below Athens, which are in danger of being chopped up for local development.

Georgia ForestWatch will work hard, especially in the case of the landfill acreage coming to Rabun county and the additional land for its board of education, to ensure that no environmental damage occur after the swap is accomplished and to try to guarantee that such lands are used for public purpose in perpetuity, rather than ever being resold to private interests.

The outline of this plan and maps can be reviewed on the Forest Service website: http://www.fs.fed.us/conf/press/2007-mplxchng. ■

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2007 Financial Report

Income		
	Earned Income	$23,988.63
	Membership Dues	$17,767.00
	Contributions	$107,793.88
	Grants	$151,500.00
	Total Income	**$301,049.51**
Expense		
	Admin	$56,603.97
	Program	$139,984.76
	Total Expense	**$196,588.73**
Net Income		**$110,538.44**
	Total Checking/Savings	$227,126.24
	Petty Cash	$274.72
Total Current Assets		**$227,400.96**

USFS: Chattooga boating decision now set for February

The U.S. Forest Service plans to issue an environmental assessment regarding the issue of boating on the Upper Chattooga sometime in February. This release also is supposed to contain the agency's recommendation whether to allow boating or not, and if so, what kind of limits might be included.

Boating of all types has been banned on the 21 miles of the Chattooga above the Russell Bridge on Route 28 for more than 30 years, a position Georgia ForestWatch believes continues to have merit. For more information, and for the latest comments from interested members of the public, see: http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/fms/forest/projects/chattcomments.shtml.

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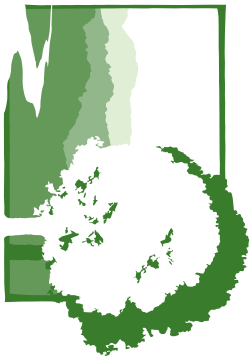

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