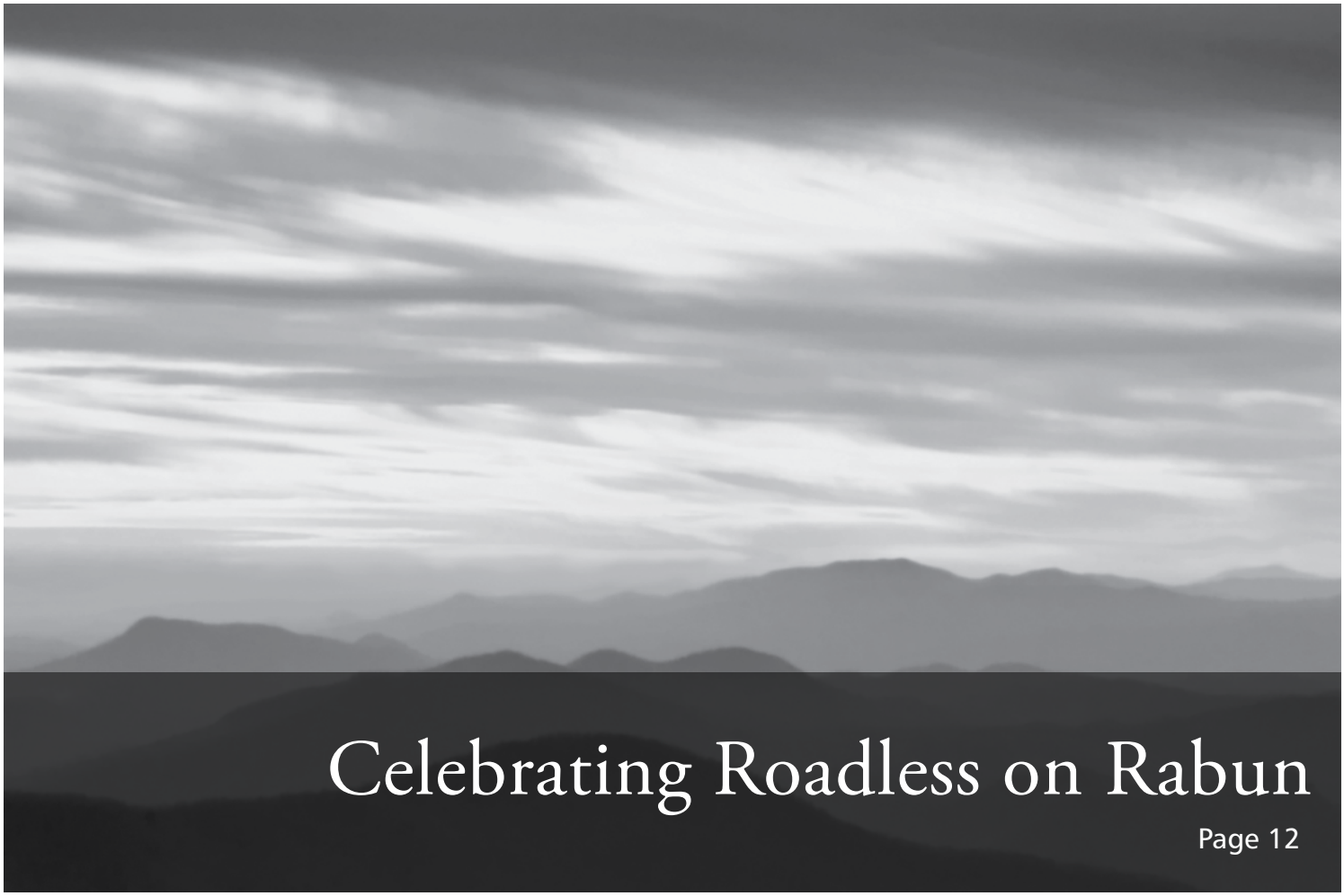
Forest News

Georgia ForestWatch Quarterly Newsletter Fall 2010



Celebrating Roadless on Rabun

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From the Director

No thought for the future

Wayne Jenkins
Executive Director

There is a hunger that gnaws at the heart and soul. It has grown and matured since childhood or may even be newly discovered as we have been drawn to nature's beauty or become deeply curious about her ways. For some of us, it has become a necessity, an appetite that must be fed. Perhaps you feel it, too. The demands and constraints of this complex world drive many of us out of our houses, and settled neighborhoods, away from our burgeoning cities. Out and beyond. *Away*, and into that *other* world.

We long for places still wild, recognizable as naturally functioning, mostly unaltered; *there*, we have the chance to touch the evolving natural face of the divine, take time out and still our hectic pace. Living in this world of wounds, many of us react by seeking a living, breathing wholeness in the woods, along the rivers and streams.

But in our crowded and overdeveloped state, where?

Georgia is the largest state east of the great Mississippi River, which now serves as our national sewer. In our state's 37 million acres, extending from the soaring Blue Ridge mountains in the north, down across the vast rolling piedmont and onto the broad and gentle coastal plain and seashore, *Away* is hard to find. Escaping Atlanta's thronging millions is not so hard, as all roads leading in run both ways. But to fully escape, to fully experience "the wild" in Georgia, where does one go? Is there any wildness left?

We Georgians are blessed with some of the greatest biodiversity and most interesting natural places in the nation. But many of these natural havens are small, though vitally important, strands of the grander cloth of protected plants and animals, forests, streams and coastline. The immersion we seek, the full mind-body-spirit exaltation we crave are not so easily found. It takes large swaths of nature, almost untouched or mostly recovered from our use and abuse. Though a bit hard to describe, we all know it, or perhaps better said, feel it when we are there.

These places are not common. We have been much too industrious for that. In fact, they are very rare. But these few are precious beyond measure. The Okefenokee Swamp, Cumberland Island, the Cohutta and Ellicott Rock Wilderness areas come readily to mind when contemplating where to experience the nature and solitude we need. Do we yet have the opportunity for more?

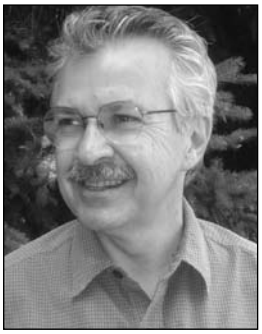
Roads are the capillaries of civilization and the destroyers of wilderness. The eastern United States has some of the greatest density of roads anywhere on earth. The Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests have over 1,400 miles of roads. Roads give us access but fragment the land, slicing it into ever smaller places. A roads analysis of the 750,000-acre Chattahoochee National Forest reveals that on 70 percent of our public forest, one cannot walk a half mile from a road without coming within a half mile of another one. Yet, there is opportunity in the forest, a chance to permanently protect a handful of places with few roads and wilderness qualities.

The Sarah's Creek (Rabun Bald), Joe Gap, Kelly Ridge, Lance Creek, Rocky Mountain and Pink Knob (Mountaintown) Inventoried Roadless Areas – and 17 smaller areas – could be added to existing Congressionally designated Wilderness. These are the last large, unfragmented places in the Chattahoochee National Forest. The big six are over 5,000 acres each, with the lowest road densities in the forest and they are in the public domain, belonging wholly to the people. There is a total of 64,000 acres of identified Roadless areas in Georgia's national forest.

So let's run all the numbers. The Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests contain a bit over 865,000 acres. Existing permanent and Wilderness protection totals 117,000 acres. If all existing roadless areas were added by legislation to our present Wilderness system, it would still amount to less than 21 percent of total national forest acres in Georgia. That's .05 percent of the 37 million acres of our state. Does this seem unreasonable?

In the next issue, I'll examine why the U.S. Forest Service and other management agencies do not fully support new Wilderness.

Doug Scott to appear at Fall Retreat



Georgia ForestWatch is thrilled to announce that Doug Scott, manager of Policy and Research for the Campaign for America's Wilderness, Pew Environment Group, will be among the featured speakers for the September 24-26 Fall Retreat at Vogel State Park in Blairsville.

Doug Scott is a leading expert on wilderness preservation in the United States. He has been involved in the congressional enactment of many major wilderness protection laws over the last 45 years, including the Eastern Wilderness Areas Act (1975) and the newest – the Omnibus Public Land Management Act (2009). His two books, *The Enduring Wilderness* and *Our Wilderness: America's Common Ground*, examine our relationship with wilderness and offer a strong case for permanent protection of our wild lands.

Along with our own Brent Martin, past ForestWatch executive director and now the Southern Appalachian senior associate for The Wilderness Society, Doug will assist the "New Wilderness" Panel to examine the history, current status and opportunities for building an expanded Wilderness future for Georgia. The panel will aim to create a strategy to guide our wildlands protection work going forward.

The "New Wilderness" Panel includes:

- Brent Martin of The Wilderness Society
- Sally Bethea of Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper
- Will Wingate of the Georgia Conservancy,
- Bob Kerr, former executive director of the Georgia Conservancy
- Doug Scott of Campaign for America's Wilderness
- Wayne Jenkins of Georgia ForestWatch

Other events include hikes, tree climbing, great food, music around the campfire and camaraderie with fellow ForestWatchers!

The afternoon will bring an offering of hikes and non-hike programs, including tree climbing. This exciting activity, first introduced last year, will be led by Genevieve Summers of *Dancing with Trees* and our own Jim Walker. Tree climbing is an exciting way to experience trees in a whole new way. Safely harnessed, climbers on ropes will ascend the hickory tree we have selected, guided by Genevieve and Jim.

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Nonprofit educational corporation.

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Cover photo: Sunset from the top of Rabun Bald within the Sarah's Creek Roadless area. Photo by Peter McIntosh.

Study for Interstate 3 has started

by Jim Grode : Executive Director, WaysSouth

If you thought the specter of Interstate 3 had gone away, think again.

WaysSouth, originally the Stop I-3 Coalition, reports that the Federal Highway Administration has signed a contract for a study of the "steps and estimated funding necessary to designate and construct a route for the 3rd Infantry Division Highway," or I-3. This interstate is proposed to run from Savannah to Augusta, Georgia, and then to Knoxville, Tennessee, through the mountains of north Georgia, western North Carolina, and possibly the upcountry of South Carolina and eastern Tennessee. The I-3 study is specifically

The proposed Interstate 3 could have significant visual impacts on the Southern Appalachian mountains similar to this recent road cut on Interstate 26 near the North Carolina-Tennessee border.

authorized and funded with an earmark of $1.32 million inserted by Charlie Norwood, then the congressman from Georgia's 10th District, in SAFETEA-LU, the transportation funding act passed in 2005.

The study, which will be conducted by federal contractor ICF International, is projected to take about a year to complete and includes significant requirements for public involvement. The contractor will develop four or five alternates combining different alignments and design levels (freeway or expressway) for each segment of the project. At least one of the alignments must go through Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The contractor will then estimate the costs and necessary steps to construct each alternative.

Finally, there is an option for additional "sub-studies" on various economic, social, and environmental factors. These would go well beyond the scope of the Congressionally mandated study.

WaysSouth opposes the construction of I-3 because:

1. It is unnecessary, serves no real transportation purpose, and is a waste of taxpayer money.
2. It would have devastating environmental effects.
3. It would not promote economic development but instead would undermine the economies of the regions it would pass through, which are based on the unique natural beauty and resources of the southern Appalachians.

ForestWatch's partner, WaysSouth, is participating in the Expert Working Group that will be monitoring and providing input on the study. Jim Grode, executive director of WaysSouth, stated, "The construction of this highway would have a negative economic, environmental, and cultural impact on the Southern Appalachian region. We intend to ensure that the study is objective and thorough and fully considers the public's opinions."

WaysSouth will provide updates on their website, www.wayssouth.org and will issue action alerts when important public participation events occur. Sign up and help ensure that the study unequivocally confirms what we already know: This multi-billion-dollar project should never be built. ■

Georgia ForestWatch welcomes the following new members

Karen Lindauer
Blane Goss
Rick Lucas
Carol Jordan
Susan Fitzsimmons and Jennifer Sams
Holly Beyersmith
Mark and Kathryn Gialanella
Mark and Bonnie Gramlich

Georgia ForestWatch questions Chattooga District burn proposals

by Joseph Gatins : Chattooga District Leader

The U.S. Forest Service and its lovable wildfire prevention icon, Smoky Bear, are getting ready to light a fire under 14,410 acres of national forestlands over the next five to 10 years, most of it in and along the remote National Wild and Scenic Chattooga River corridor.

National Wild and Scenic River is a Congressional designation designed to protect wild and scenic values. Burning on this scale – 10,699 acres of land in or adjacent to the corridor – is possibly a threat to the very nature of Georgia's only National Wild and Scenic River.

What many members of the public do not realize until they smell smoke when the wind turns the "wrong way" is that the Forest Service has been pursuing this practice of setting "controlled burns," or "prescribed burns," for many years – all for reasons of "forest health" or "hazard fuel reduction." The agency also asserts that such burns are meant to "improve wildlife habitat diversity." The agency claims such "hazard fuel reduction" is aimed at creating "defensible space within designated Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) zones," although it appears few such areas exist within the proposed areas.

WUI zones, generally speaking, are private land containing structures adjacent to or almost surrounded by national forest. ForestWatch has asked for more detailed information on how areas in the Chattooga River Corridor, which contain no buildings or other man-made structures, can be deemed WUI zones.

Georgia ForestWatch supports carefully mapped, appropriately scaled, and controlled burns at appropriate locations for specific reasons of forest health, and supports scientifically based, ecological restoration with adequate monitoring and evaluation. And we have made clear, in the latest instance, that we support burns that meet those criteria. We approve of burns proposed for the Stone Grave Ridge area in Habersham County (1,024 acres), which will improve habitat for two populations of Smooth Purple Coneflowers, and the Dickenson Branch Pine Serpentine Barren (150 acres), a very rare habitat in Rabun County, which includes a unique mix of "prairie" type plants. In addition, ForestWatch supports burns which mimic natural fire – those on dry ridges and southern aspects of several of the other burn units.

But ForestWatch questions whether the U.S. Forest Service is proposing the big burns at an appropriate scale, whether such burns will succeed in their stated purposes, whether the proper environmental analysis has been conducted, and whether they are budget-driven.

We question whether recent Forest Service proposals are occurring at appropriate ecological scale for the right reasons and if the current level of monitoring is adequate to accurately inform current and future burn proposals.

The latest proposals are to set more than 10,000 acres afire in or adjacent to the Chattooga River corridor, the Congressionally designated Wild and Scenic area that serves as the boundary between Georgia and South Carolina.

Georgia ForestWatch volunteers spent a good bit of time last year reviewing the Chattooga River Ranger District's burn records for the 10-year period 1999-2008. On average, according to District Ranger David W. Jensen, the district aims to ignite about 5,000 acres of controlled burns per year. In 2010, this total came up to 6,600 acres.

By comparison, so-called "wildland fires," i.e., those that are not set by the Forest Service, averaged only 335.11 acres per year over the same period, according to records maintained by the Chattooga River Ranger District. And most of those were either caused by man or related to human activity (such as children playing with matches, arson, uncontrolled debris fires, or trees falling and sparking over electricity power lines).

The district's burn records suggest that many of the prescribed burns do not immediately produce the desired effects. Repeat burns are authorized in subsequent years with little more than a one-paragraph notation in the files, along these lines: "Since this time [the last time a particular area was burned], an Interdisciplinary Team has determined additional prescribed burn will be necessary in order to meet the original purpose and need of these projects."

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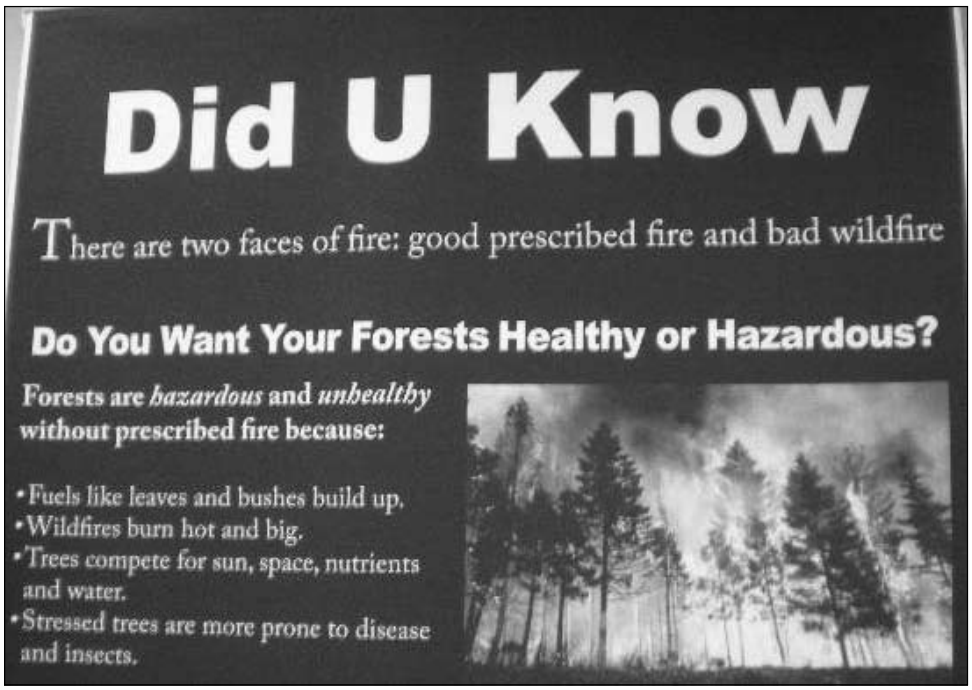
Chattooga District Burn Proposals

(continued from page 5)

In records for the 1,596-acre Camp Creek Burn, references to "new information" noted that "it will require several more prescribed burns on a three-to-seven year rotation to meet the intended goals, objectives and standards of the revised Land and Resource Management Plan." In no case reviewed over the 10-year period, however, did the files include detailed information on the teams' specific findings that rationalized the need for additional burning.



"There are two faces of fire: good prescribed fire and bad wildfire," the poster bluntly warns. What the poster does not show is that the wildfire depicted is in the arid West, where conditions differ from the temperate forests of the southern Appalachians.

ForestWatch formally asked the Chattooga River Ranger District to conduct a thorough environmental assessment to ascertain whether the 13 different "burn units" contained in the latest proposals are all needed as planned. ForestWatch believes the district's decision to proceed under a "categorical exclusion" that would eliminate the need for detailed environmental review and analysis is a violation of the National Environmental Policy Act.

Georgia ForestWatch, in responding to the agency's requests for public comment, raised numerous questions about how these burns would be accomplished and suggested a variety of steps that could be taken to improve the proposed projects. These included limiting ignition zones to ridge tops; avoiding ignitions in the Wild and Scenic River corridor; taking precautions when burning in steep and riparian areas; and setting up detailed and appropriate monitoring protocols to assess the merits of such fires.

ForestWatch also has asked for more detailed information on specifically how much fuel build-up has occurred in this wet area of the forest, which routinely receives 60-80 inches of rain per year.

Although the agency, in recent years, has appeared open to more cautious and judicious use of fire, some of the Chattooga district's recent prescribed burns appear to have included overly liberal use of drip torches and/or the use of so-called delayed aerial ignition devices. These 1.25-inch, ping pong ball-like polystyrene spheres contain potassium permanganate, which is an oxidizing compound that, when mixed with ethylene glycol, causes the chemicals to react and ignite into fire, usually within 25-30 seconds. These firebomb balls are fed into a dispenser and generally dropped onto the forests from helicopters.

Most burns on the Chattooga River Ranger District in recent years have involved a $45-per-acre budget reimbursement request from the federal treasury, according to the district's individual fire files.

As with other burn files reviewed by ForestWatch, the Camp Creek burn paperwork included a standard cost reimbursement breakdown:

- $3-per-acre for planning
- $36-per-acre for implementation
- $3-per-acre for preparation
- $1-per-acre for "mop-up"
- $2-per-acre for monitoring
- $45-per-acre TOTAL

This would total $648,450 if the amount of $45 per acre was applied to the entire 14,410 acres proposed to be burned.

The agency, in turn, appears to be taking unprecedented steps to publicize such burns, most recently with a large, stand-alone 10-foot-tall display at the Rabun County Public Library, which includes the warning that "forests are *hazardous* and *unhealthy* without prescribed fire." [Italics in original.] ■

Other Chattooga District Projects

- Large-scale thinning of 6,663 acres of mostly pine trees scattered on 227 different stands over the period 2011-2020, primarily as part of efforts to reduce the threat of Southern Pine Beetle infestation. This project will be advertised in mid-October. We support such thinning, but are concerned about the long-term effects on soil productivity if these trees are taken whole and then chipped up for the biomass electricity plant in Rabun Gap. As you know, Georgia ForestWatch is strongly opposed to biomass removal from national forestlands. Details are available at http://www.gafw.org/biomass.html.

- Mountain bike marathon. Mountain bike enthusiasts scheduled a 350-mile, nine-day marathon mostly on backcountry Forest Service roadways and trails from the South Carolina line at the Chattooga River to the Alabama border, beginning on September 4. The Forest Service opted not to require a permit for this endeavor, but has since decided to follow-up with race organizers after ForestWatch pointed out that the bikers had not followed their own rules to avoid riding through the Ramey Creek area down from Wilson Gap in Rabun County.

- A portion of the new, 270-mile fiber-optic network planned for north Georgia by the North Georgia Network Cooperative (its main partners include the Habersham and Blue Ridge Mountain electric cooperatives) will crisscross national forestlands in Rabun County adjacent to Route 197 and U.S. 76 West, heading toward Towns County. Georgia ForestWatch has filed formal comments asking that the entire new line along the very scenic stretch of affected territory along U.S. 76 be installed underground. Most of the rest of the line will be affixed to existing power poles. Additionally, Rabun County is attempting to secure a grant to run a spur line from the main network to the Habersham EMC substation at the intersection of U.S. 441 and Bethel Road "mostly through overhead power transmission lines along Bridge Creek," according to the chairwoman of the Rabun County Economic Development Authority's Technology Committee. ForestWatch has asked for more details about this branch broadband line.

All ForestWatch members and friends may keep themselves apprised of such projects by requesting their names be added to the "public scoping mailing list" maintained by the Chattooga River Ranger District. The agency is mandated to honor such requests for information under the National Environmental Policy Act. Write:

Ranger David W. Jensen
Chattooga River Ranger District
USDA Forest Service
9975 Highway 441 South
Lakemont, Georgia 30552
706-754-6221 or e-mail: dwjensen@fs.fed.us

Visit the ForestWatch website on a regular basis as we continually update these issues.

Meet our new office manager

The Board of Directors and Executive Director Wayne Jenkins extend a warm welcome to our new office manager, Lisa Gagnon. Lisa is responsible for membership processing, bookkeeping, and all the details that keep our office running.

She has a Bachelor of Science in Information Technology, graduating summa cum laude from Kaplan University. Her 30-plus years of experience in writing are being utilized as she works on our quarterly newsletter, *Forest News*, and with Executive Director Wayne Jenkins on raising awareness about ForestWatch via news releases and media contacts. She is also working with Michael Griffith on the website.

Lisa keeps her hand in the newspaper field by writing for the *Fannin Sentinel.* She also builds websites for charitable and civic organizations; volunteers for Relay For Life, the Alzheimer's Association, and the Blue Ridge Labor Day BBQ; and helps sew quilts for soldiers.

The mother of five sons, ranging in age from 14 to 23, and three rescue dogs, she claims the office offers her a haven of sanity and organization. She also appreciates the opportunity to prepare and share "grown-up food" for volunteers, board members and staff.

Her most recent projects include brushing up on Spanish and French and teaching her 75-lb. mutt how to pull a scooter. In her free time, she enjoys yoga classes and container gardening on her eight-by-twenty-foot front porch, which offers the only sunlight on her property in Blue Ridge. Although she admits that performing music isn't her forte, she enjoys listening and travels to music festivals throughout the U.S.

With her mother, she makes fringed quilts, purses, and mountain hats. She also hand-mixes teas and herbal pillows, makes hemp jewelry, and sews "Crystal Cool Doggie Bandanas," all of which she sells at craft and music shows.

After working in the private sector for most of her life, Lisa is adjusting to working for a nonprofit. "I'm happily surprised by the open and enlightened atmosphere here at ForestWatch. Wayne, Jill, Darren and the board members are some of the most knowledgeable people I've ever met, and I truly enjoy learning from them," she said. ■

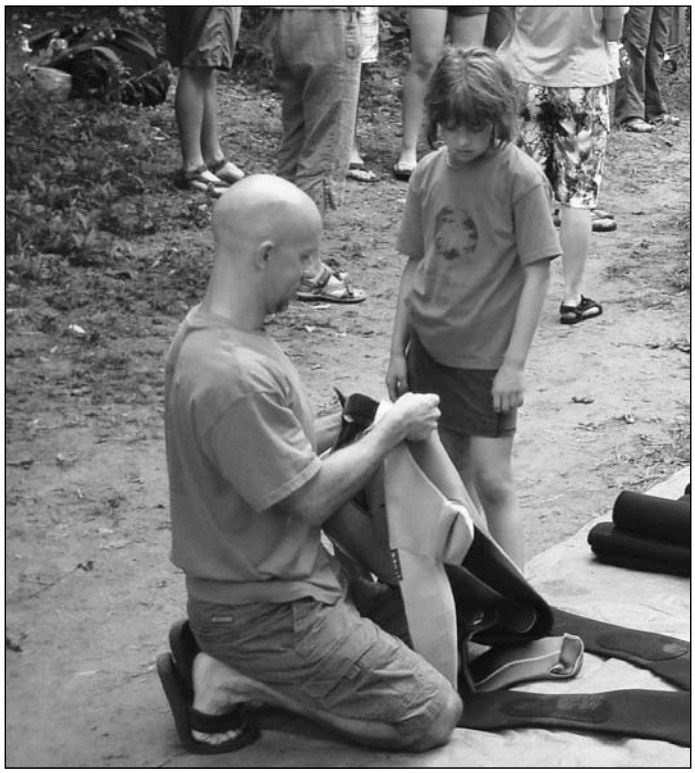
Wet and wild at the Conasauga Lake snorkels

by Jill Gottesman : Outreach Director

ForestWatch staffers and guests took to the waters of the Conasauga River to snorkel a record four times this summer. In addition to members and friends, ForestWatch hosted Atlanta area REI employees for a special outing, welcomed the Cherokee County Social Adventures Group, and teamed up with Keeping It Wild for the final snorkel of the year.

Shaconna Haley walks into the water to join her fellow REI Atlanta staffers as they snorkel through the crystal-clear waters of the Conasauga River.

Cherokee National Forest aquatic biologist Jim Herrig shows Ashanti Parks and Evan Bryson how to breathe underwater with their snorkels.



Former ForestWatch Board Member Bob Smiles and his daughter, Shiloh, look through the wetsuits to find a good fit. The suits keep snorkelers warm, but also help them float with ease on the river's surface.

Evan Bryson helps her friend, Ashanti Parks, adjust her mask and snorkel for a good seal before they get into the water.

Invasive plant species: Nemesis of southern forests

by Darren Wolfgang : Forest Ecologist

Darryl Haddock and his daughter, Candice, smile for the camera…they might have bullfrog tadpoles or bronze darters nibbling on their toes!

Before suiting up and getting in the water, Cherokee National Forest aquatic biologist Gary Williams shows pictures of the fish the snorkelers might meet up close in the water.

Photos by Jill Gottesman

Non-native invasive species of plants are a very serious and ever-growing threat to native ecosystems of the southeastern United States. Despite the efforts of the U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, and numerous other state and local government and non-government conservation organizations and universities, the spread of non-native plants into our public and private forests across the Southeast continues to go largely unchecked and unmonitored.

These non-native, exotic, alien, or noxious plants include trees, shrubs, grasses, vines, ferns, and broadleaf plants (forbs). The introduction of invasive plant species to North America can be largely attributed to the early landscaping and ornamental plant nursery trade. Exotic plants, many from Asia, were widely imported and distributed throughout the Eastern U.S. in the 18th, 19th, and early 20th centuries. They were prized for their exotic beauty, vigor, tolerance to drought stress and general ability to persist across a wide variety of soils and growing conditions.

Invasive plants colonize the understory of forests and open areas such as roads and rights-of-way adjacent to forests and woodland tracts. Invasive plants also colonize and often dominate forest openings, such as roads, near existing invasive plant colonies, thus spreading their populations further and further into forests and across the landscape. Because of their vigorous response to increased light levels, once dense colonies of invasive plants establish themselves, they contribute to the reduction of forest and ecosystem productivity, as well as hindering forest use and management activities, plus degrading forest diversity and wildlife habitat.

An example of invasive destruction all residents of the Southeastern U.S. should be familiar with is the kudzu vine. Kudzu, *Pueraria lobata*, was initially introduced to the U.S. for livestock forage and erosion control. This troublesome vine spreads rapidly, engulfing native plants, trees, and even houses in a smothering green blanket. Because of the dense nature of kudzu, little sunlight reaches the ground, and many native "sun-loving" plants, intolerant of shade, perish.

While small successes are being achieved around the South, the problem is currently being perpetuated by a lack of state and federal regulations on plant imports and sales. Nursery and garden distribution centers continue to sell invasive plants on the open market to unknowing and well-intentioned citizens, with little regard to the ecological destruction they are profiting from.

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EarthShare of Georgia creates new ways to support Georgia ForestWatch

by Jill Gottesman : Outreach Director

What is EarthShare?

EarthShare of Georgia is a nonprofit that raises funds through employee giving for 65 local and national environmental member organizations. Founded in 1988, EarthShare is the nation's oldest and largest environmental fundraising organization focusing on giving in the workplace. EarthShare of Georgia was founded in 1993 by member groups as the Environmental Fund for Georgia to represent them in employee giving campaigns, and to provide an efficient and secure way to manage their donations. You may be familiar with the United Way campaign, which focuses on human-service organizations. EarthShare uses a similar model but supports environmentally-focused organizations dedicated to conserving and protecting our air, land and water.

What is an employee or workplace giving campaign?

Employee giving campaigns are fundraising drives organized by companies through payroll deductions to generate support for community issues and organizations. Employees have the option of donating to a common pot of funds, or to choose a particular member organization to receive the funds. Giving a small gift each pay period can make giving more convenient and spreads your donation out over the year. EarthShare now participates in more than 70 government and corporate campaigns including: Cox Enterprises, Inc., The Home Depot, Kaiser Permanente, Emory University, Turner, City of Atlanta, the Combined Federal Campaign and Georgia state employees. Thanks to generous Georgia employees, more than $3.5 million have been raised for the environment!

What does EarthShare of Georgia do for Georgia ForestWatch?

In 2008, Georgia ForestWatch was invited to join EarthShare's member groups, a collection of highly regarded conservation organizations across the state. EarthShare of Georgia represents member organizations at events and campaigns. It also invites ForestWatch to participate in events and campaigns throughout the year, which increases the visibility of our work and the variety of our audiences. Because EarthShare annually certifies that member groups operate within the highest ethical and professional standards as well as run high quality programs, donors know that their contributions will be used efficiently and effectively. Employees who give through a workplace campaign can choose to have their gift designated for one or more groups of their choice or be shared equally among all groups. ForestWatch receives a quarterly allocation of funds.

How can you help?

If your workplace has an EarthShare campaign, please contribute! If you are a Federal employee, we are part of the Combined Federal Campaign, and the Georgia ForestWatch CFC# is 77233. If your company does not have an EarthShare campaign, please let us talk to them about the benefits! We welcome the opportunity to give a presentation to company representatives and help start a new workplace giving campaign. To learn more about EarthShare of Georgia, check them out at http://earthsharega.org, and for a list of member groups see http://earthsharega.org/MemberGroups/tabid/68/Default.aspx. For questions or more information please call Jill at 706-635-8733 or e-mail jgottesman@gafw.org. ■

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Invasive Plant Species

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What can you do?

- Educate yourself, your friends, neighbors, colleagues, and community members about non-native invasive plants, their identification, and the methods used to effectively control and eradicate this threat to our native forest ecosystems. An excellent resource to familiarize yourself with invasive plants is available **free of charge** from the U.S. Forest Service Southern Research Station: http://www.srs.fs.fed.us/pubs/gtr/gtr_srs119.pdf. Additionally, you can request a hard copy of "General Technical Report: 119: *A Field Guide for the Identification of Invasive Plants of Southern Forests"* **free of charge** by e-mailing pubrequest@srs.fs.usda.gov.

- Plant native species. Our native plants are beautiful, hardy, and most importantly natural! The Georgia Exotic Pest Plant Council advocates the planting of native and non-invasive plants, trees, shrubs, and vines. You can view a complete list of these "alternative" plants at http://www.gaeppc.org/alternatives.html.

- Visit the Georgia Exotic Pest Plant Council website to learn more about invasive plants in Georgia at http://www.se-eppc.org/index.cfm. ■

Knocking Out Kudzu

The traditional methods to remove or maintain kudzu and other invasives have been by mechanical and/or hand mowing and the use of herbicides. Recently, a group called the Kudzu Coalition in South Carolina has discovered a non-chemical means for removing this deep-rooted pest. Through monitoring, experimental design, and the use of adaptive management, the coalition has developed and refined a series of management options for kudzu that apply to a wide spectrum of management scenarios.

Photo by: Elaine Owen

Kudzu has invaded the neighborhood near old copper mines in Copperhill. The rapidly growing Asian vine was introduced to control erosion from the timber harvests and burning associated with the Copperhill copper mining industry.

One of the most interesting "surgical" methods discussed on their website is to first mow or remove the above-ground vines, primarily to provide access to the site. Then workers pull the vines to the surface and remove the root crown of the plant using a prong-hoe for smaller roots (two inches in diameter and smaller) and a pruning saw or mattock for larger, older roots. Without the root crown, the kudzu vine cannot survive and re-sprout.

This technique appears to have been effective over the last several years of field trials. The coalition estimates that the average worker can cut 50 root crowns per hour, although a high school volunteer (who helped refine this technique) cut 180 root crowns in one hour! Naturally, this method is not appropriate for all situations, but with determination, education, and a strong labor force, one would be surprised at what can be accomplished! Learn more about these hard-working folks at http://www.kokudzu.com.

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Renewed attention on roadless areas

by Jill Gottesman : Outreach Director

Roadless and Wilderness issues have resurfaced this year for Georgia ForestWatch, from National Roadless Recreation Week to our own Fall Retreat, where knowledgeable panelists will focus on "New Wilderness" in Georgia. Whether for wildlife habitat, water quality protection or quiet places where one can escape the modern world, protected Wilderness holds a unique place in the psyche and politics of the American people.

While ForestWatch has been working since 2004 for permanent Wilderness protection for the 12,000-plus acre Pink Knob Inventoried Roadless Area, also known as Mountaintown, there are an additional 51,000 acres of public forestland across north Georgia that meet the roadless area requirement of less than a half mile of road per 1,000 acres. Mountaintown is the largest piece of Georgia's 23 inventoried roadless areas. Across the United States, a total of almost 63 million acres of inventoried roadless areas on national forests were codified by President Clinton's 2001 Executive Order, which halted road building threatening their Wilderness character. A designation of "roadless" is a prerequisite for future Wilderness designation.

Although the result of the largest public lands review process in United States history, the 2001 roadless rule attracts continued judicial scrutiny with each changing administration. The Obama administration has recently appealed to the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals to uphold the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule against a 2008 ruling by a federal court in Wyoming that determined the rule violated federal environmental laws. The nearly 10 years of challenge to the roadless rule reminds us that the fate of these areas is still uncertain and likely will be until, piece by piece, they are brought into the fold of lands designated as Wilderness.

To maintain this issue in the hearts and minds of Americans, the first National Roadless Recreation Week was celebrated August 7-15 this summer. The nine-day event was organized by the Heritage Forest Campaign, a project of the Pew Environment Group, and was held nationwide as a time to get out and enjoy roadless areas, as well as draw attention to the upcoming Court of Appeals decision. More than 50 events in 14 states brought people out to enjoy their local roadless areas and learn more about the significance of these lands. The Heritage Forest Campaign maintains that "with more than half of America's national forests already open to logging, mining, and drilling, the [2001] rule was intended to preserve the last third of undeveloped forests as a home for fish and wildlife, a haven for recreation and a heritage for future generations."

Georgia ForestWatch's Roadless Recreation event was Poetry on the Mountaintop Sunday, August 15. Two hike groups met at the top of Rabun Bald in Rabun County's Sarah's Creek Inventoried Roadless Area. ForestWatch volunteer Brooks Franklin led a small group, including Georgia and North Carolina Bartram Trail Guide author and avid trail maintainer John Ray, up the more difficult Bartram Trail route. On the way up the trail, ForestWatch hikers sawed away several logs blocking the trail and cleared debris out of culverts, thanks to Ray's motivation. ForestWatch volunteers Maureen Keating and Brenda Smith led a second group up the old fire tower road, a more moderate route to the second highest peak in Georgia. Along their way, hikers were treated to original and borrowed wilderness-inspired poetry read by local poet Laurence Holden.

When the hiking groups met at the top, the peak was enveloped in a shroud of cooling mist and clouds, a high mountain greeting after a hot uphill climb. ForestWatch Outreach Director Jill Gottesman gave a presentation on the inventoried roadless issue. As the sun came out and the mountains became visible, the group climbed back up to the observation platform, where Holden read poetry as the other hikers enjoyed the view.

The poetry and the surrounding panorama affected those who participated in Poetry on the Mountaintop. Ray, who has also supported the Wilderness Society's "Mountain Treasures" projects across the Southeast, said that "these are the last areas that have not been compromised by human behavior. In these, and only in these, areas, we return to the earth whose form shepherded our evolution and development. You can go to places where you hear only the sounds of Nature (except for planes!) and all around you are the sights of Nature as for eons. Because of human nature, it is nearly a miracle that we have any of these areas at all. We must do all that we can do to see that they are preserved for future generations."

The conversation about Inventoried Roadless Areas and Wilderness designation opportunities in Georgia will continue September 25 at Vogel State Park during ForestWatch's Fall Retreat, where some of the most knowledgeable professionals in the state, region and nation will come together as the "New Wilderness" Panel. Doug Scott, policy director at

(continued on back page)

The Poet and the Power of the Land

by Laurence Holden : Poet

"The land is like poetry: it is inexplicably coherent, it is transcendent in its meaning, and it has the power to elevate a consideration of human life." – Barry Lopez, Arctic Dreams (1986) p. 274

Photo by: Mark Zemmin

Poet Laurence Holden read poems about Wilderness as part of the August 15 poetry hike on Rabun Bald, Georgia ForestWatch's contribution to National Roadless Recreation Week.

People have doubtless been walking up to the top of mountains for a declaration, a message, or a witness to be made or acknowledged, forever. Some rituals are so ingrained, we don't even have to know that's what we're doing. So our merry band walked up Rabun Bald, thinking we were doing it just in mutual celebration of such a pleasant day, of the mountain itself, and of our fellowship. (At least us mountain folk walked; the flatlanders among us thought perhaps it was a hike).

At the top we emerged from a laurel thicket onto a windswept precipice. A real mountain top for sure – the thick roiling cloud cover a low ceiling just above our heads. But a real precipice too, for not only is Rabun Bald a mountain, it is also a weather-scoured ridge that is the Eastern Continental Divide.

It is a great and certain divide indeed, for as we topped the ridge, the mountain suddenly fell away from us down into the steep roadless area of Sarah's Creek. Not a road, not a clear cut to be seen. Rugged country for real – a place you wouldn't enter without a real back-up plan. A place you hear stories about the "back of beyond." A place for stories.

I'm still preparing my back-up plan for a sojourn there, a trip I know I may never actually make. But it's there. It's actually there. Enough for countless generations of stories. Stories to keep, to tell, and to pass down. That's the way we keep what's sacred in the land, keep it all alive, and us as well – alive to its miraculous presence. As author Christopher Camuto puts it in *Another Country: Journeying Toward the Cherokee Country,"* in a landscape where nothing is sacred, nothing is safe."

We saw it from atop Rabun Bald. I know it's there, there in all its roadless fullness just as I know the waters of Sarah's Creek way down below in a gentle cove where I've gently touched my open hand to its surface, and felt the tremble and the thrum of it all above – all the way up to Rabun Bald.

We sat a while on the top. Inveterate celebrator extraordinaire Brooks Franklin passed around his morning's harvest of cherry tomatoes, each one exploding in our mouths like bountiful bursts of ripe sunlight. Jill and I each prepared to give our talks, but once there, as we looked about at the grandeur at the summit, I knew my words could not match the experience of being there. But we both did, but each with more than a little humbleness in our voices. Surely we are sewn out of the wonder of the world!

Persistence pays off in Cashes Valley

by David Govus : District Leader

This summer, our friends in the Benton MacKaye Trail Association (BMTA) conducted maintenance on the section of the Benton MacKaye Trail that passes through Cashes Valley and the Mountaintown Roadless Area. This 10-mile section of the trail is located on the Tennessee Valley divide from Bushy Head Gap to Dyer Gap and curls around the head of Cashes Valley and Fightingtown Creek.

This is the most remote section of the trail in Georgia. For the past 20 years, Cashes Valley has been plagued by illegal ATV use. The Benton MacKaye Trail, designated for foot travel only, had well-worn entrenched ATV tracks created by illegal use.

Georgia ForestWatch mapped these illegal trails for years and brought this issue to the Forest Service's attention on numerous occasions. In the spring of 2008, Georgia ForestWatch collaborated with the Forest Service on a week-long effort to close, block and sign these trails. This successful effort was chronicled in the fall 2008 Georgia ForestWatch newsletter, found online at http://www.gafw.org/newsletters/2008fall_newsletter.pdf

This summer we received a message from Ralph Heller, the president of the BMTA, announcing that, for the first time in 20 years, trail workers had seen no signs of ATV use on this section. This is good news for the trail, Cashes Valley, the Mountaintown Roadless Area and a tribute to Georgia ForestWatch's well-organized, persistent campaign to end illegal ATV use in the Chattahoochee National Forest. ■

Fall Retreat

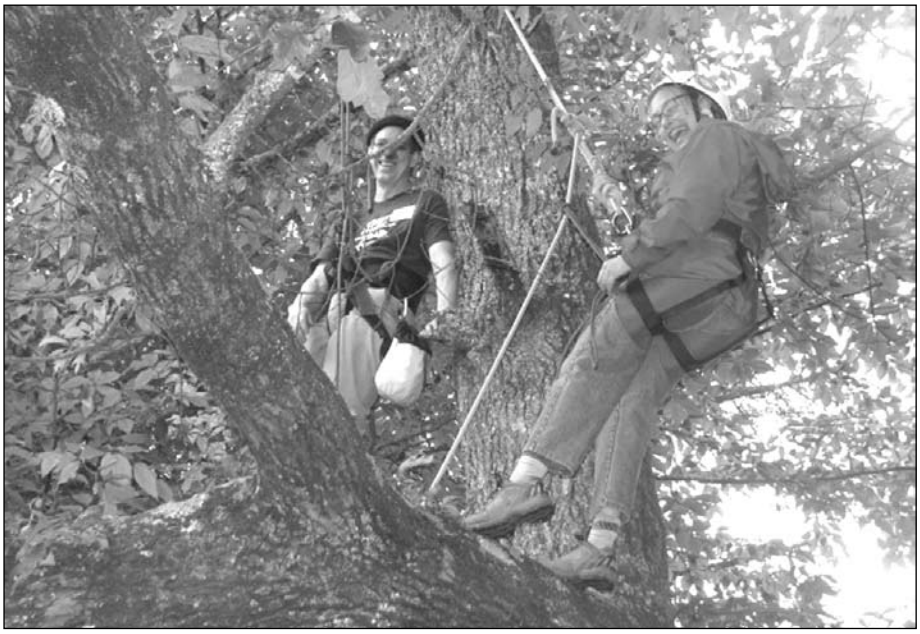
(continued from page 3)

On Saturday, we will have plenty of time to enjoy the scenery and socialize with new and old friends as we enjoy great food, including a chili lunch and a full barbecue dinner. Music around the campfire will round out the evening, so bring your instruments and join in!

Come for Saturday or join us for the whole weekend.

For those who plan to spend the weekend, bring your favorite dishes to our Friday potluck at 6:30 pm. We have plenty of electricity and fridge space for those who need to keep their dishes hot or cold.

Wind it all up with a leisurely Sunday hike led by Outreach Director Jill Gottesman.



ForestWatch volunteer Jim Walker gives member Lori Jenkins some advice on tree climbing during last year's retreat.

Cost is $20 per person (kids 12 and under free) and includes programming, hearty lunch, and full barbecue dinner. There is an additional $5 parking fee for the park. Weekend camping/cabin accommodations are available at additional costs. Contact Lisa Gagnon at info@gafw.org or 706-635-8733. ■

JOIN NOW! Complete this form and mail to Georgia ForestWatch, 15 Tower Road, Ellijay, GA 30540; or call 706-635-8733 to join via phone. Want to go paperless? Join online at **www.gafw.org/join_give.html**

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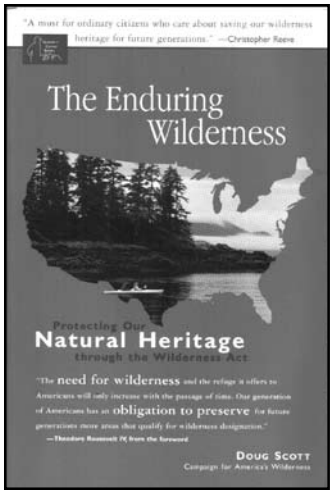
Book review: *The Enduring Wilderness*

by Peg Griffith : Board Member

The Enduring Wilderness: Protecting Our Natural Heritage through the Wilderness Act, by Doug Scott
Fulcrum Publishing, 2004, 184 pages



In the United States of America, 107 million acres of land are designated as Wilderness. Though that is less than five percent of this country's total land mass, it is still impressive in one very significant way: No other country before ours had ever done such a thing. No other nation had set aside some portion of its geography – and yes, its resources – saying, "This should be preserved forever, for all future generations." The Wilderness Act of 1964 did just that. The journey was neither easy nor short. This book chronicles both the struggle and the citizens who willed the Wilderness Act into law.

More astounding than the fact that the U.S. is the first country with designated wilderness is how long it took us to get there: John Muir began calling for preservation in the late 1800s, yet it took 64 years and an act of Congress to make it happen. Why? Ironically, the very organizations most Americans think would work to save the wilderness fought it – not just timber men and miners, but the U.S. Forest Service and the Parks Department as well. Humans like to manage nature. Somehow, we think we know better than Mother Nature herself.

But this is not just a story of environmentalists versus industrialists. The author describes the need for wilderness as fundamental to the shape of this country and its citizenry: "… not merely as a quarry of raw materials but as the very fabric of a distinctive American culture." The rise of the great individual American character was shaped by the raw wilderness.

Author Wallace Stegner takes the discussion to a spiritual level: "We simply need that wild country available to us, even if we never to more than drive to its edge and look in. For it can be a means of reassuring ourselves of our sanity as creatures, a part of the geography of hope."

Some of the people who fought the battle for natural purity and a wellspring of spiritual healing are familiar names: John Muir, Aldo Leopold, and Bob Marshall. But others may be new to the reader: Howard Zahniser, for one, who literally wrote the Wilderness Act of 1964.

It's a compelling story, and one that hasn't ended. Today, land continues to be added to the designated Wilderness system. Georgia has Wilderness areas in the northern mountains, on the Atlantic coast, and on the southern border. Those areas are: Big Frog Wilderness, Blackbeard Island Wilderness, Blood Mountain Wilderness, Brasstown Wilderness, Cohutta Wilderness, Cumberland Island Wilderness, Ellicott Rock Wilderness, Mark Trail Wilderness, Okeefenokee Wilderness, Raven Cliffs Wilderness, Rich Mountain Wilderness, Southern Nantahala Wilderness, Tray Mountain Wilderness, and Wolf Island Wilderness. (For more information about each area, go to http://www.wilderness.net/index.cfm?fuse=NWPS&sec=stateView&state=GA) ■

About the Author: Doug Scott

Doug Scott is policy director of the Campaign for America's Wilderness, working nationally from his office in Seattle. He holds a forestry degree from the University of Michigan (1966), where he did his graduate research on the history and drafting of what became the Wilderness Act of 1964.

Scott began his own work for wilderness preservation soon after the Wilderness Act became law. In the 1980s, Scott was conservation director and later associate executive director of the Sierra Club. In 1996, he received the club's highest honor, the John Muir Award.

Doug Scott will be a featured speaker at Georgia ForestWatch's Fall Retreat September 25 at Vogel State Park.

Renewed Attention on Roadless Areas

(continued from page 12)

The Campaign for America's Wilderness and author of *The Enduring Wilderness: Protecting Our Natural Heritage through the Wilderness Act* and *Our Wilderness: America's Common Ground*, will be a featured speaker and will provide insight on building successful Wilderness campaigns despite less-than-favorable political climates. Speaking next will be past ForestWatch executive director and The Wilderness Society Southern Appalachian Program Director Brent Martin. Martin and Scott will then join the "New Wilderness" panel, which also includes ForestWatch Executive Director Wayne Jenkins; Sally Bethea, executive director of Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper; Will Wingate, vice president of Advocacy and Land Conservation with the Georgia Conservancy; and Bob Kerr, former executive director of the Georgia Conservancy; and others to share their extensive knowledge and experience on permanent land protection and to shape a plan for moving the Wilderness issue forward in Georgia. ■

Correction

In the previous issue of Forest News, under "Legacy and memorial fund programs initiated" on page 3, the phone number listed for Wayne Jenkins is inaccurate. The text read:

"We ask that you contact our executive director, Wayne Jenkins, at 706-782-9944 or at wjenkins@gafw.org to discuss these planned giving options."

It should have read, "We ask that you contact our executive director, Wayne Jenkins, at 706-635-8733 or at wjenkins@gafw.org to discuss these planned giving options." We apologize for the error.

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