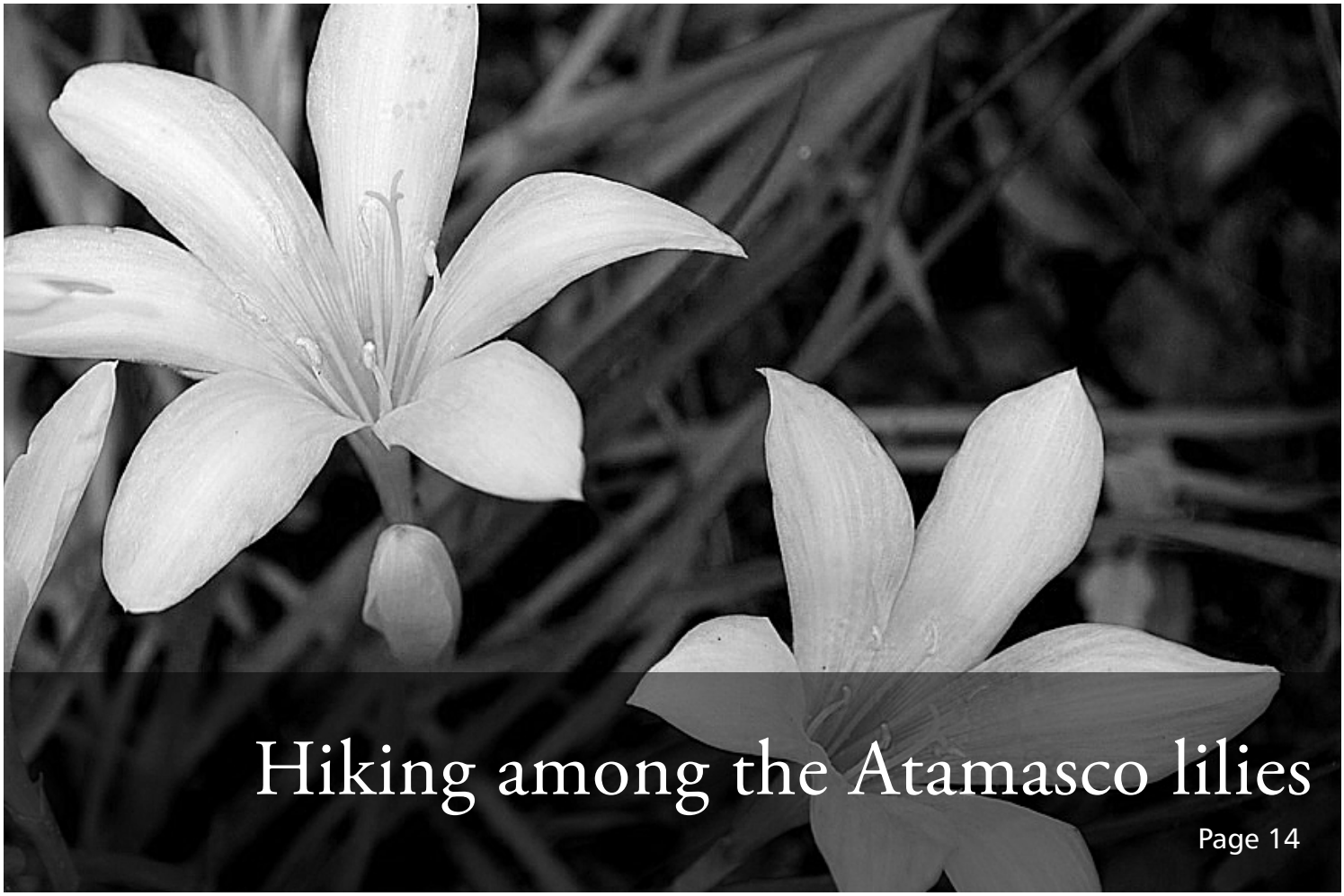
Forest News

Georgia ForestWatch Quarterly Newsletter Summer 2010



Hiking among the Atamasco lilies

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From the Director

No thought for the future

Wayne Jenkins
Executive Director

Next year, 2011, the USDA Forest Service will remember and celebrate the passage of the Weeks Act of 1911, the federal legislation that created the eastern forest reserves as they were known at the time. Today we refer to these as our National Forests.

No thought for the future

Thus is titled a short piece by James Wilson (1835-1920) from the book *The Height of Our Mountains*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, in which he observes timber harvest practices around 1900. "The lumberman attacked this forest several decades ago when he began to penetrate it in search of the rarer most valuable trees, such as the walnut and cherry. Later as the railroads entered the region to some extent, he added to his list of trees for cutting the mountain birch, locust and tulip poplar, and successively other valuable species. During the past few years he has cut everything merchantable."

Wilson's personal observation was included in his *Report on the Forest Conditions of the Southern Appalachian Region (1902)* as part of his responsibilities five years into a sixteen-year tenure as Secretary of Agriculture under presidents McKinley, Roosevelt and Taft (1897-1913). He continues, "In these operations there has naturally been no thought for the future." I found this statement curious in the use of the term "naturally" used to describe the lumberman's behavior, as if to say the actions were unavoidable. And then, "The home and permanent interests of the lumberman are generally in another State or region, and his interest in these mountains begins and ends with the hope for profit." So, this ***natural*** inclination for profit is born by folks from "off" or outside, a kind of economic colonialism, driven by private greed. And, "There is, however, no evidence that the native lumberman has in the past exhibited any different spirit." It seems the approach is culture deep and the accompanying destruction universally accepted.

The author continues in his report to describe the wholesale destruction of the landscape: the removal of the protective forest canopy, the raging, humus-destroying fires fueled by leftover slash and the wholesale loss of the forest's functionality for regulating water quality and supply flow rates resulting in repeated destructive floods visited on the inhabited valleys below. Along these lines he states, "This destruction of the humus has always resulted seriously both to the forests and to the soils. In some cases, where the forests covering the steep, rocky slopes were thin, the loss of the humus has resulted in the washing and leaching away of the soils to such an extent as to destroy the forests entirely;" and continues, "Furthermore, the storage of water (in soils from which the humus has been removed) is far less perfect than in the original ***perfect*** forest."

Original perfect forest! I love that. Perfect from the standpoint of functioning as the protector of the land, creator of fertility and regulator of water quality and supplies downstream. Perfect in hindsight, in the face of our ignorant approach and subsequent destruction of those very resources necessary to our society.

Wilson concludes, "The rapid rate at which these lumbering operations have extended during the past few years and the still more rapid rate at which they are being extended at the present time, considered in connection with the destructive work of the fires and the clearing of agriculture, indicates that within a decade every mountain cove will have been invaded and robbed of its finest timber, and the last of the remnants of these grand primeval Appalachian forests will have been destroyed."

Secretary Wilson's report informed and supported a growing national consensus for protection and better management of the nation's eastern timber resource. Congress had already passed the Organic Act of 1897 for creating western forest reserves while the onslaught in the east was reducing the great hardwoods to stumps and gullies. Finally Wilson calls for action: "And indeed the time is now at hand when the great interests involved make it imperative that the Government take hold of this problem and inaugurate here in these great broad-leaved forest of the east a new conservative forest policy."

(continued on page 13)

Legacy and memorial fund programs initiated

As our beautiful and diverse public forests take hundreds of years to grow and mature, the mission and charge of Georgia ForestWatch require great vision and patience as well as an understanding that we are working, not just for the present, but for a better future. With restoration and protection of our public lands being tasks accomplished now for generations to come, we must accept that we might never truly experience within our lifetimes the impact of what we accomplish today. Likewise, there will come a time when today's members of Georgia ForestWatch will no longer be present to financially support our mission on a day-to-day basis.

With this advanced time frame, there are multiple ways to carry on our vision and strategies long after we are gone. This fact was evident in a recent member survey in which more than a dozen members volunteered they were willing to consider naming ForestWatch as a beneficiary in their wills or trust in effect planting the seeds for tomorrow's forest protection.

Georgia ForestWatch stands ready to accept such precious gifts from estates in the form of cash or stock and is willing to discuss gifts of real estate. 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. There are also more complicated ways to structure such gifts over time. In those cases, we ask that you confer with a financial or tax advisor and then give Wayne a call.

Naming ForestWatch as a beneficiary has multiple benefits, the greatest being that your gift of naming the organization as beneficiary enables us to continue with our conservation mission. Another simple way to achieve the same end is for the bereaved to ask friends and family to send Georgia ForestWatch a memorial gift in lieu of flowers, a process commonly handled by funeral homes. ForestWatch is a 501 (c) 3 organization and such gifts are tax-deductible.

So, please remember us when the time comes. Georgia ForestWatch and the next generations of conservationists will be grateful for your continuing support. ■

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Georgia ForestWatch is a 501(c)3
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Cover photo: William Vann: EduPic Graphical Resource

It takes a village to watch a forest

by Jill Gottesman : Outreach Director

Do you enjoy working on projects with like-minded people? Do you love to hike through the national forests and wish that you could share your experience? Do you have some extra time that you would like to give back to your forest community? Along with joining Georgia ForestWatch, there are many ways to volunteer with us to ensure that our public lands are restored and protected. Read on to learn about the various people who are central to our non-profit organization and other ways that you can actively contribute – we couldn't do it without you!

Office volunteers: About 10 times each year we open our office to this wonderful group that helps us to assemble our large-scale mailings – and we have fun doing it!

Event volunteers: Our Spring Wild and Woolly event and Fall Retreat could not happen without a great number of individuals who assist with planning, food coordination and preparation, and event setup and cleanup. This is a group that ensures our unique events are engaging, enjoyable, and memorable.

Veteran plant sale volunteers Karen Pietrowicz (left), and Helen Meadors help customers choose plants.

Hike leaders: All ForestWatch hikes are led by knowledgeable volunteers who plan diverse and enjoyable ways to get out and experience our national forests. Do you have trails to share?

District leaders: These volunteers are the "eyes and ears" of ForestWatch, who assist our Forest Ecologist by observing the activities in their local national forest district. The District Leaders meet every other month, monitor and compose notes from the field, write comments on proposed projects, and represent ForestWatch in a myriad of other ways. This is a great way to learn the more technical side of Forest-Watching.

Miscellaneous projects: Throughout the year ForestWatch has various needs and short-term projects. At this time we are looking for assistance with a new outdoor sign for our office and new places to distribute our newsletter!

If you would like more information on any of these volunteer opportunities or would like to discuss how you can get more involved with Georgia ForestWatch, please call Jill at 706-635-8733 or e-mail jgottesman@gafw.org. ■

Oh the places we go

This spring, Georgia ForestWatch outing participants have:

- Ventured through 21 miles of the Wild and Scenic Upper Chattooga River corridor
- Traversed Kelly Ridge to enjoy the high country wildflowers
- Explored the Arkequah Trail
- Scrambled up the White Cliffs
- Enjoyed blooming lilies and nesting herons in the Monticello Woods
- Hiked the first two sections of the Bartram Trail
- Marveled at the Big Trees in Noontootla
- Enjoyed a gourmet lunch by the Chattooga River

All of our volunteer hike leaders are experienced guides and we have many more adventures planned for the summer and fall – come join us and explore a new corner of YOUR national forests! We invite you to sign up to receive our hike list alerts by sending an e-mail to info@gafw.org, and we'll see you on the trail!

Southern Blue Ridge Fire Learning Network studies controlled burning in Appalachians

by Darren Wolfgang : Forest Ecologist

The Nature Conservancy in cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service recently hosted a three-day retreat and field trip aimed at promoting awareness and sharing knowledge about the use of "controlled burning" in the Southern Appalachians. The mission of the Fire Learning Network is to bring together private land managers, concerned citizens, environmental groups, leading regional fire researchers, as well as state and federal land managers from the Southern Blue Ridge region of the Southeast, for the purpose of discussing the appropriate use and safe application of controlled burning on public and privately held lands.

The focus of this year's meeting, held in Crossnore, North Carolina, centered on the Central Escarpment region of the Southern Blue Ridge mountains, with additional presentations and demonstration area updates from land managers and researchers in Georgia, Virginia, Tennessee and North Carolina.

Several goals were identified during the meeting:

- Refine landscape-level desired conditions and criteria and determine where to restore fire-adapted ecosystems in the landscapes and what vegetation structure is desired. This year there was emphasis on the Pine-Oak Heath and Shortleaf Pine-Oak forest types. Pine species associated with fire disturbance and these forest types include Table Mountain, Pitch, and Shortleaf Pines.

- Discuss landscape fire needs. Determine what flora and fauna associated with certain forest and woodland communities should be a priority for restoration. Additionally, the group sought to refine fire awareness communications and messaging, as well as to refine and plan the ever-evolving fire monitoring protocols.

Monitoring also was a central theme of this year's meeting. There was much discussion around using monitoring to inform adaptive management, as well as identifying and prioritizing research needs and shortcomings in data sets to further investigate the influence of fire on the landscape. Most of the presenters at the meeting expressed enthusiasm and willingness to prioritize prescribed burning activities on xeric ridges, where the appropriate rare and degraded flora and fauna communities were present. In an effort to bring land managers, researchers, and scientists together the Consortium of Appalachian Fire Managers and Scientists has been formed. Its mission is "to facilitate a flow of information about fire science and research needs among managers and scientists in the Appalachian region." The primary limitation of conducting detailed monitoring and research appears to be funding. The new consortium's organizers reported that there is some funding available from various sources and they intended to do as much as possible with the resources at hand.

While progress is being made regarding the appropriate timing, location, and use of fire to restore disturbance-associated and dependent ecosystem components, it appears that some managers still buy into the "fire is a silver bullet" theory. We hope that land managers will remain open minded and observant as they proceed with implementation of landscape restoration activities. Georgia ForestWatch was happy to have the opportunity to participate in this year's meeting and looks forward to participating in ongoing discussions concerning controlled burning, land management issues and techniques. ■

Board of Directors author new strategic plan

by Ted Doll : President of the Board of Directors

Georgia ForestWatch beginning in 2009 decided to review and revise its vision and mission statements, goals and a previous strategic plan, which had become outdated. In furtherance of that purpose, a planning committee was organized, funds allocated (with the help of a generous grant from The Sapelo Foundation) to retain a consultant, interviews conducted with 40 stakeholders to gauge the organization's strengths and weaknesses, and a planning retreat held February 19-21, 2010. The detailed revised vision, mission, strategies and goals statements below were accepted and approved by the Georgia ForestWatch board of directors on April 5, 2010.

Photo by: Jill Gottesman

ForestWatch president Ted Doll outlined options during plan retreat.

Our Mission

Our mission is to promote management that leads to naturally self-sustaining forests and watersheds within the more than 850,000 acres of national forest lands in Georgia; to engage and educate the public to join in this effort; and to promote preservation of this legacy for future generations.

Priorities: The detailed goals discussed during the revision process identified several key programmatic and organizational goals, listed below:

- **Oversight & Monitoring:** Our main mission continues to involve monitoring and oversight of U.S. Forest Service management of the 865,000-acre Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests.
- **Protect watersheds:** Continue efforts to protect watersheds on the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests, which serve as the drinking water source for millions of Georgia residents.
- **Special protection for special areas:** Continue efforts to permanently protect roadless areas on the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests by all means necessary.
- **Membership & Development:** Continue emphasis on increasing membership and raising the funds necessary to adequately support a small, dedicated staff.
- **District Leader Program Enhancement:** Effective monitoring and oversight involve recruitment and retention of trained staff and volunteer district leaders to monitor forest management at the ground level.
- **Outreach and education:** Educate and inform the public and our members about the values inherent in the National Forests, both as a means of preserving those values and to ensure Georgia ForestWatch's ability to recruit and retain new supporters to carry on our mission.

Biomass

Georgia ForestWatch opposes extraction of timber from national forests in Georgia for the purpose of producing biomass energy, and opposes conversion of diverse natural forests to single species plantations for any purpose.

Climate change

Develop climate change plan to determine what active

management is appropriate on our national forests and share this position and science with the public via newsletter and website and media outlets.

Engage partner organizations & forest user groups

There is a burgeoning demand for recreational use of the Chattahoochee National Forest which is damaging the resource, and creating user conflict and safety problems. In cooperation with other recreational user groups and the U.S. Forest Service, we seek to identify failing trails, assess impacts, re-design facilities, and identify social use patterns and relationships, with the goals of reducing user conflicts, equitably sharing resources, and enhancing law enforcement and public safety. This will have direct positive impacts on forest health and critical issues such as water quality and rare forest community protection.

Science and research

Continue to advocate science-based forest management and monitoring and evaluation of forest interventions. This will involve developing additional relationships with supportive scientists, enhancing our library of scientific studies, and nurturing relationships with regional universities.

Prescribed burning

There is disagreement among scientists and between Georgia ForestWatch and the U. S. Forest Service on the extent to which fire is a natural influence on moist southeastern forests, and on the conditions under which prescribed burning is an appropriate forest management tool. We plan to review scientific literature on fire in relation to the southern Appalachians, consult with scientists to determine ecologically appropriate uses of prescribed burning, and identify appropriate and inappropriate sites for prescribed burning in our national forests.

Develop board & nurture staff

We expect our board members to actively participate in accomplishing the Georgia ForestWatch mission and in fundraising to support that mission. We plan to identify weaknesses in the board and ways to educate, compensate, or work around those weaknesses. This process will inform the board recruitment process as to specific new board member needs. We also seek to encourage staff job satisfaction and retention by increasing salaries and benefits, learning opportunities and atmosphere, and professional development activities.

Georgia ForestWatch style

We strive to be objective and professional in our dealings with partner organizations and government agencies, and to communicate this to the public. We collaborate with the U.S. Forest Service when doing so enhances healthy ecosystems, but reserve the right to litigate when necessary. ■

Photographer visits Mountaintown roadless area

The mystery photographer is Nelson Guda, professional outdoor documentarian of remarkable wild images from all over the United States. For the past couple of years Nelson has been traveling the country, hiking deep into America's roadless areas and striving to return with revealing and stunning pictures of our last wild places. You can see some of these beautiful photographs at http://nelsonguda.com/roadless/.

Nelson uses his artistic efforts to educate and inform thousands of citizens about the importance of roadless areas and the need to protect them. In early spring, Nelson was the guest of Georgia ForestWatch. We invited him to visit the Mountaintown roadless area, Georgia's largest roadless area. There he attempted to capture the visual soul and feel of one of the Chattahoochee National Forest's richest coves. Note: the large crooked stems entangling Nelson are wild grape vines, some as large as a human leg and attached to their chosen old second growth poplar, buckeye and hemlocks.

Photo by: Michael Griffith

Nelson Guda documents the wilds of Mountaintown.

Rain did not dampen Wild & Woolly festival: M

by Joseph Gatins : Board Member

Wild & Woolly
NATIVE PLANT SALE AND BOOK FESTIVAL

The rain came in a steady drizzle all day, but nothing that day was going to dampen the spirits of ForestWatchers near and far who attended the 2010 Wild & Woolly Native Plant Sale & Book Festival.

The plants felt fine – and sold like hotcakes.
The food, hearty basic fare, warmed our hearts.
The fiddlin' was most lively, and that songstress had soul.
The authors were very engaging, their books balm for the mind.

That's because more than 120 friends found themselves shelter in a dry and spacious locale, the very comfortable Sheehan Barn, a made-to-order party retreat spot nestled in the quiet and remote Persimmon Creek valley of Rabun County.

We could not have asked for more. Thank you all who attended – and ***all*** those who volunteered of their time and efforts to make this event the success that it was.

Native plants for sale at the festival.

Artist-poet Laurence Holden was accompanied by Marie Dunkle on viola.

Visitors quizzed authors (from right), Charles H. Souther, Fran Moeller Gatins and Hoke Shirley.

usic, food, authors, plants made for fine day

Fiddlers Marie Dunkle and Kelly Smith played a lively duet.

"Plant people" lined up to purchase native plants.

The Sheehan Barn provided ample, dry space for event.

WATCHING THE FOREST GROW

By Mildred Greear : March 2, 2009
poet, and presenter at the Wild & Wooly event

Station 1
Everything that does not grow today will die.
It is the burgeoning of every leaf that keeps the trees alive.
A smallest dribble of moisture washing the leaf of poplar,
The needles of pines, getting heavier, and heavier
And spilling to the leaf, the needle below,
Until unremarked a veritable river flows downward,
Sieves through air to wetten ground, link with dew
Just now manufactured before our eyes.

You didn't see it? Really. Weren't you watching?
Look, Look up there!
Follow my finger. See the one that is greener?
The one that is taller? The one both greener and taller?

Yes, That one.
That is where it rained.
Today, this moment, we witness the forest growing,

Station 2
And if no rain has fallen, look then for dew
Appearing, disappearing, by morning or night
Keeping a cycle of wet in place.
Miniscule, so taken for granted
So unworshiped, you cannot hear it like rain,
Nor trace its path on your private flood plain,
So you measure that
By watching the forest grow.

Station 3
Oh now, saturated with wet thinking, rejoicing
At being washed, cleaned, and yes, WET!
Oh, hie me to an umbrella, quickly.

I must get towels! Turn from all that verdance.
Spray spigot on those dirty last night and breakfast dishes.
Should have done that first. Of course, I knew.
But a chance to watch the forest grow
Can do me in every time.

Photos by Michael Griffith & Jill Gottesman

National Forest Management Act: Planning rule revisions underway

by Wayne Jenkins : Executive Director

Background

The 193 million acre National Forest System consists of 155 national forests and 20 national grasslands, which are administered by the United States Forest Service under the United States Department of Agriculture. Several federal laws presently govern the process and implementation of management on these lands held in trust by the United States government for the American people. The National Forest Management Act of 1976 is one of these laws. Others are the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act, The Clean Air Act, Coastal Zone Management Act, the Wilderness Act, National Environmental Policy Act, and etcetera.

The millions of acres of national forests, mostly purchased from 1896 to 1914, were not extensively used for timber harvest until the 1940s' wartime and post-war housing boom. which significantly increased timber cutting on public lands. Simultaneously, dramatically increased recreational use led to increasing concerns over forest road building and timber harvest practices, revealing the huge challenge the agency faced in having "multiple" management goals. In 1960 Congress passed the Multiple Use Sustained-Yield Act, which for the first time recognized recreation as an important use of national forests, though not necessarily an exclusive or dominant use.

The debate became a part of a wider national environmental awakening over the proper use of public lands. Discussion raged in the forests, halls of Congress and the courts. Several suits targeting the rampant road building necessitated by the almost exclusive use of the clear-cut method of timber harvest and its effects on recreation, water quality and other issues brought the agency to a near standstill. All of that led to more legislation.

The 1976 Forest Management Act reorganized, amended and expanded the previous Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resource Planning Act of 1974, which called for planned management of renewable resources on national forest lands. The new act was strengthened and passed to minimize damage to natural ecosystems on public lands resulting from earlier forestry practices that negatively affected the people's forests, streams and wildlife. The National Forest Management Act requires the Secretary of Agriculture to assess forest lands, develop a management program based on multiple-use, sustained-yield principles, and **implement a resource management plan** for each unit of the National Forest System. Land and Resource Management Plans are the final product of what can be a costly and lengthy public process. The last planning process for the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests lasted nearly seven years. These plans are used to guide the next 10-to-15 years of forest management until a new planning process is completed. The purpose of creating and updating a forest plan is to ensure that the concerns of citizens are being addressed, and appropriate use of the land is planned. Planning is also mandated to reassess the effectiveness of land management approaches and to incorporate new scientific

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research into forest management. Despite the management act's emphasis on ecological and recreational values, the statute's lack of detail leaves the Forest Service great freedom of choice in managing the national forests. While many individuals and groups have sued the Forest Service to halt plans or projects viewed as environmentally destructive, the courts have generally deferred to the agency because of the generality and ambiguity of management act language and the alleged technical expertise of the agency. On balance, however, the act's enactment has helped to insure that the Forest Service deals with the National Forest System in a more environmentally conscious fashion than might otherwise have been the case. Now there is an opportunity to remedy the language.

Revision underway

Presently, according to the Notice of Intent filed in the December 18, 2009 Federal Register, "the Forest Service has 127 land management plans. Currently, 68 plans are past due for plan revision and assessment. Most plans were developed between 1983 and 1993, and should have been revised between 1998 and 2008. The Agency now has an urgent need to establish a national planning rule that protects, reconnects, and restores national forests and grasslands for the benefit of human communities and natural resources." The agency also needs an approach that is efficient, scientifically accurate and publicly inclusive if there is any hope of getting the planning process back on track, workable and accepted by the public.

Twice before the agency has tried to "fix" forest planning. Here is a brief outline from the recent past illustrating the "political football" nature of the NFMA.

- 1976 National Forest Management Act passed by Congress.
- 2000 Planning Rule. President Clinton revised forest planning regulations before leaving office in late 2000. The proposed Rule considered the recommendations of a committee of scientists and 20 years of experience implementing forest planning. The new rule would consider ecological, economic and social sustainability in forest planning, include the public and scientists in the process, require the agency to focus on managing entire ecosystems rather than a single species approach and integrate planning and management for responding to new information and opportunities in a timely manner.
- In May of 2001, the Bush administration suspended the 2000 regulations under pressure from the timber industry and revised the management act regulations without consulting a committee of scientists or using an open process for weighing public opinion. The draft plan of the administration's changes, released in September of 2003, revealed their intention to eliminate environmental review and cut out scientific review of planning.
- In 2005 the Bush administration published new regulations that would weaken the safeguards for national forests. Greater discretion was given to forest managers to approve logging and mining without environmental review while eliminating the requirement to maintain viable populations of native species and limited public participation in the creation of management plans. This regressive step was not only bad for public forests and their owners but found to be illegal in March of 2007, forcing the administration to come up with another set of regulations.
- The Bush Administration's 2008 Planning Rule was announced in August of 2007. The "new rule" was little improved from the 2005 rule. The 2008 forest

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Curiosity, sweat and strong legs

by Peg Griffith : Board Member

What does it take to be a Georgia ForestWatch District Leader? The requirements that you must provide are curiosity, a love of all things environmental, and a half-day of time every now and then. Beyond that, Georgia ForestWatch staff and fellow volunteers will teach you what you need to know: how to use a GPS unit; how to read a topographical map; and how to fill out a site visit report form. It's pretty simple (even I could do it!). Any more than that depends on what you WANT to know. Personally, I want to know it all, and the smart staff and District Volunteers know a lot.

Photo by: Michael Griffith

Forest lore and forest science were discussed during district leader outing.

The weekend of May 15 and 16, the District Leaders joined with staff and others to enjoy District Leader Training at Lake Russell. Armed with our topo maps, we followed James Sullivan and Darren Wolfgang and Wayne Jenkins along a three mile trail through woods "managed" in a variety of ways: cut, burned, sprayed with herbicides, and left alone. We talked about how to restore an area that was thinned a few years ago to ready it for commercial harvest. We filled out our datasheets as if we were sending them in to the office. What are the predominant canopy trees? What is in the mid-story? What herbaceous undergrowth do we see? Is there evidence of Hemlock Wooly Adelgid or other invasive species? Are there any rare or endangered animal or plant communities?

Along the way we saw fascinating things: a Broad-headed Lizard (he was BIG!) and a click beetle. We saw trails rutted by mountain bikes. We passed by (and photographed) some fellas enjoying the outdoors by parking their pickup truck IN the stream.

We learned a lot. We shared ideas. We asked questions: What is that tree? What is this flower? Why are the leaves on that tree eaten up? Will the tree die or come back? We broke off leaves and crushed them and smelled them. We trudged uphill and down, and sweated profusely. And at the end of the day, we enjoyed food and beverage together, and the beauties of the lake. It was great fun, because ForestWatch people are smart, curious and willing to share.

Do you love the woods and hiking? Do you like learning about the environment? Can you read a map? Are you willing to sweat a little (it washes off)? If your answer is "Yes," consider becoming a Georgia ForestWatch District Leader. You'll help the environment; you'll be fitter; you'll be smarter; and you'll have fun – all at the same time. ■

National Forest Management Act

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> planning rule did away with a necessary requirement to maintain viable wildlife populations, removed key protections that limit clear cutting, eliminated critical protections for water quality and watersheds from timber harvests, roads and other potentially damaging activities and made public participation in forest planning more difficult.

In August of 2009, new Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack called for a new rule for guiding the development of National Forest Plans and specifically charged the Forest Service with creating the new rule using a collaborative process. The new Planning Rule Revision aims to develop planning procedures to address ever changing forest health and restoration needs. Such issues include developing plans to address effective and pro-active collaboration with the public; management and conservation of protected, endangered, threatened, and sensitive species; forest pests; non-native invasive species; diseases; the use of prescribed fire; increasing forest diversity to address climate change, watershed health, quality, and restoration; recreation; commercial forest products; and numerous other important issues that impact the national forests. By improving and expanding the management act for forest planning, the Forest Service hopes to further standardize procedures, to

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From the Director

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Ten years after Wilson's report and years of debate the Weeks Act was enacted on March 1, 1911 with solid public support and senatorial votes of 57 to 9 in favor.

National Forests in the southeastern United States now cover over 13 million acres due greatly to the Weeks Act. Seven hundred and fifty thousand of these sprawl across north Georgia. Can you imagine what the landscape of northern Georgia would be like without the "reserves"? Roads cut down, every ridge lined with houses. Large swaths of mountainsides covered in clear-cuts and solid young pine stands, beetle killed and struggling to recover. No place to hunt and fish, hike or camp. No trespassing signs everywhere you turn. Can we even begin to calculate the dollar value of that decision one hundred years ago? Can we articulate the physical and spiritual blessings of having such forests to go to?

I know it's popular to blame "government" for every problem under the sun. But, in preparation for the 100th anniversary of the Weeks Act let's remember our history of heedless greed that devastated hundreds of watersheds, took the money and ran. Let's remember that despite current and recent concerns about public forest management sometimes government gets it right. And let's not forget those original perfect forests!

Join us for the Georgia ForestWatch

ANNUAL FALL RETREAT

Saturday, September 25, 2010 • Vogel State Park

Our theme this year:
PROTECTING FOREST TREASURES

Environmental leaders who have worked for decades protecting Georgia's Southern Appalachians will discuss the history, values, and politics of forest conservation and Wilderness in our state. Brent Martin, Bob Kerr, Sally Bethea, Will Wingate, Wayne Jenkins, and other notables will share their knowledge and views on the history, current status and opportunities for building an expanded Wilderness future for Georgia. Attendees will have an opportunity to question the speakers and panelists and give input on how to take the greatest advantage of present opportunities for increasing permanent protection of roadless and other significant areas in the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests.

In the morning session Brent Martin, Georgia ForestWatch's first executive director and now Southern Appalachian Senior Associate for The Wilderness Society, and ForestWatch's present Director Wayne Jenkins will be joined by a remarkable panel of speakers. Bob Kerr was the founding director of the Pollution Prevention Assistance Division of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources and is currently a member of the Georgia Advisory Board of the Trust for Public Lands. He is a National Council member and former Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the National Parks Conservation Association. Sally Bethea is the well known and super-active founding director of Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper, and has served on the national boards of Waterkeeper Alliance and River Network, as well as the Georgia Board of Natural Resources. Currently, she serves on the board of EarthShare of Georgia. Will Wingate, presently the Vice President of Advocacy and Land Conservation at the Georgia Conservancy and previously active as a specialist in policy making and political strategy in Georgia, rounds out this talented and experienced group of environmental leaders.

The Retreat has something for everyone! On Saturday afternoon, we'll offer fun educational hikes and interesting programs and speakers for non-hikers. In addition, we are offering a children's program concurrent with the morning and afternoon events. These two sessions, led by Lori Jenkins, middle school art teacher, naturalist and artist, will have our younger Forest-Watchers creating primitive charcoal leaf prints, journaling books, watercolor art, sun-prints, and tie-dye bandanas!

Again this year, we will have the pleasure of our chef par excellence, David Govus, fixing some great barbeque for Saturday night with the help of volunteers Honor Woodard, Andy and Melinda Edwards, Michael Griffith, Jim Walker, and others to round out the feast. Later, we'll relax and enjoy music around the campfire. Don't be shy – join in with your own musical instrument and voice!

All retreat programming will take place on Saturday, September 25th. We will host a potluck dinner on Friday evening and a hike on Sunday morning so come enjoy an autumn weekend at beautiful Vogel State Park with the whole family! Admission to the retreat is $20 per person (FREE for kids 12 and under) and includes lunch, refreshments, BBQ dinner, and all activities. We are limited to 75 persons because of the shelter size at Vogel -- so don't miss out! There are minimal fees of $10 and $15 for the children's morning and afternoon programs which are limited to 18 participants. Families with more than one child participating receive half-price discounts for each additional child. Sign up now and reserve a campsite or cabin and your child's participation in the eco-art classes today! Call Lisa at 706-635-8733 or email us at info@gafw.org.

Hiking among the Atamasco lilies

by Jill Gottesman : Outreach Director

After a long and cold winter, I was fortunate to celebrate the arrival of spring this year by attending the Georgia ForestWatch Atamasco Lilies hike on Saturday, April 17th. Volunteer hike leader Donna Born led our group to a special site in the Oconee National Forest outside of Monticello that she discovered as a child. Deep in these woods there is a 30-acre low, wet area where the lilies bloom by the hundreds, and we hoped to catch the beautiful blooms of Zephyranthes atamasco along with whatever other wonders we could find on that sunny spring morning.

We started hiking from a classic middle-Georgia pine monoculture, with straight rows of trees as far as the eye could see. We soon left the trail, though, and as we meandered down the slopes the trees around us slowly changed into a diverse and vibrant forest, with blooming dogwood and redbud trees capturing our attention. Stopping along the way to identify plants, I was amazed to see such a mix of north and south Georgia varieties sharing the same woods. To see trillium, rattlesnake plantain, and cucumber magnolia just a short walk from saw palmetto, wax myrtle, and carnivorous bladderworts drove home the ecological significance of the Oconee National Forest.

The Atamasco lilies were indeed just starting to bloom, and we saw dozens as we reached the bottomland area of the forest. After marveling in the delicate beauty of the white blossoms, Donna pointed out one tree in the distance that had five herons' nests in it. This was a heron rookery, or nesting area, and we continued on around the edge of the pond to get a closer look. As we approached, two male herons circled high above us to serve as a distraction from the nesting females. We stopped first to observe with binoculars and then crept a bit closer to stand in hushed awe at the clusters of nests and a huge stately female heron seated high up in the trees.

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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**

Georgia ForestWatch Membership Form

Name: _____

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CHOOSE YOUR GIVING LEVEL

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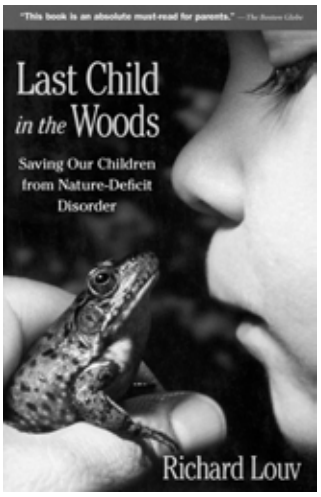
Book review: *Last Child in the Woods*

by Peg Griffith : Board Member

Last Child in the Woods, by Richard Louv
Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2006
310 pages



Nature does more than provide us with recreation and beauty. It's more than a home and food source to wildlife and plants. It's more than the source of and protection for our water supply. It's more than a contributor to our weather. It is much more even than all that. Nature is a source of our creativity and curiosity, the keeper of our physical health, and the wellspring of our mental health. According to Richard Louv, without close contact with the outdoors, our children fail to develop a sense of freedom, independence, creativity, curiosity, the abilities to focus and observe. In other words, we lose essential parts of ourselves.

In *Last Child in the Woods*, Louv advances the notion that there is a malady he calls "nature deficit disorder." Deprived of nature, children lose the opportunity to wonder, to explore, to pretend. They may also lose the ability to listen, focus, and attend. Without these skills, they fail in school. Instead, they fidget. They act out. Children are verbs – given their own choice, most children are on the move all the time. Think of children you know between the ages of 3 and 10: What do they ask? What do they do? At age 3, their favorite word is "Why?" That is a word of exploration and learning. How do they learn? By using their senses of touch, sight, smell, taste, and sound. By moving and comparing. Louv also reminds us that exploring nature builds physical strength and mental confidence by removing fear. Instead, parents actually are teaching their children to be afraid: "Don't go out there – the animals might get you!" or "Don't climb that tree – you might fall!"

By the 1970s, most U.S. residents lived in urban or suburban areas rather than in rural areas. Even as their children played less outside or even had access to woods, farms, and streams, their time with TV, computers, and videogames was increasing. Not coincidentally, the diagnosis of Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder was on the increase. Since 2003, children medicated with Ritalin and other psychotropic drugs have increased 66% (American Psychiatric Journal, 2009). So what do we have? Drugged up restless kids who are afraid of the outdoors.

Read this book. Give it to every parent, grandparent and teacher you know. Take a child with you into the woods to see the flowers and the trees, the birds and the streams. Let them get dirty. The dirt washes off. The learning and the memories are forever. ■

National Forest Management Act

(continued from page 12)

ensure that all relevant advances in science and forest issues mentioned above are adequately and thoroughly considered.

In order to create a new management act rule, the Forest Service has hosted a number of public meetings in Washington, D.C. and around the country using a professionally facilitated approach for addressing the many issues associated with managing our national forest lands. ForestWatch Director Wayne Jenkins and Forest Ecologist Darren Wolfgang were invited to attend the recent management act "Regional Roundtable" for Region 8, held in Atlanta, Georgia, in April. Background information and summary documents for this and other planning meetings can be found at:
http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/planning/documents/USFS_R8_Roundtable_Summary.4-27-10.pdf

I must admit leaving the Region 8 meeting with mixed feelings. Having attended countless meetings with the agency, both as a citizen volunteer and representing ForestWatch over the years, this meeting was more open, less top-down and more sincere than any I have previously participated in. Professional facilitation combined with a realization on both sides that the forest planning process needs improvement led to substantive break-out session discussions that captured a welter of ideas, complaints and potential roadblocks to better forest-planning and management. In balance, it seems to me, we must be very careful to insure that any desire to improve the management act actually does so. And that, dear reader, seems much easier said than done. Stay tuned as this important process moves toward the next crucial chapter in the National Forest Management Act's troubled yet exciting evolution. ■

Hiking amongst the Atamasco lilies

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The blooming lilies and the nesting herons were treasured sights for me from that day, but my favorite aspect of our hike was the company. We were fortunate to have a small group from Agnes Scott College, ForestWatch members from Macon and Alpharetta, and even two of the earliest ForestWatch initiators and supporters, Tom and Linda Partington, join us. This group, newbies and veterans alike, shared knowledge of the plants and animals around us as we breathed the fresh air, chased frogs, took pictures, and helped each other cross the stream and climb the steep bank on our way to the pond.

As we climbed the slope back up to our cars, we paused for a rest before we left the enchanting realm of the native forest. We talked about ForestWatch and its work, including support for the restoration of the Oconee National Forest. Tom told us about the early days of the organization and we marveled at the tenacity of a small and determined group of people that has grown into a dedicated nonprofit organization. Hiking back through the transitional woods into the pine monoculture, we felt the importance of not only the need for restoration but the essential nature of public land itself. As Donna shares this place with us, we fulfill another part of our mission—to educate, inspire, and connect people to their national forestland, and move them to help protect it.

For more information about Donna's Atamasco Lily hike, please see page 5 of our Summer 2008 Forest News at http://www.gafw.org/newsletters/2008summer_newsletter.pdf. ■

Georgia ForestWatch welcomes the following new members

Tapobrata Bandyopadhyay
Brooks Bollman
Lana Bommicino
Lisa Gagnon
Sarah Gillespie
Linda Jordan
Jo and Kevin Kingsman
Michelle Kleinhans
D.C. Miller
Carolyn Nohria
Robert Platt
Barbara Rice
Laurence Rudisill Jr.
Ivy Rutzky
Lynn and Jan Saperstein
Thomas Smith
Monique Swyer
Lucy Venable

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