GEORGIA FORESTWATCH
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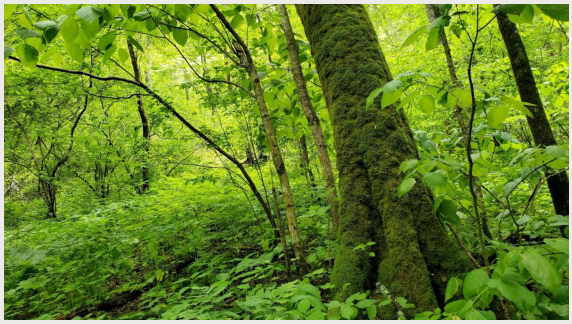
FORESTWATCH JOURNAL



Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests Updates

Keeping up with the multitude of projects and timber sales in the Chattahoochee Oconee National Forests (CONF) (such as the Foothills Landscape Project below) can be overwhelming. Still, there are tools you can use to follow the proposed actions of the U.S. Forest Service.

You can always rely on Georgia ForestWatch to provide you with the up-to-date analysis and guidance needed to comment on proposed projects when public input is vital, but you can also go here to review proposed actions such as road building, recreational use permits, campground renovations, and logging. Once a commercial logging project is approved, it moves onto this page, where you can scroll to the bottom to see all active timber sales.

To receive notifications directly from the USFS you can go tothis page and sign up. And finally, another source of timely information can be found on the USFS CONF Facebook page.

GAFW Outings

Enjoy an Outing and Learn About Our Forests

Coming Up

Wells Viaduct at Locust Stake with David Carswell - 3.11.22

Lichens on Wolf Knob with Malcolm Hodges - 3.27.22 - full, waitlist available

If you, or someone you know, would like to share your ecological, historical, recreational, or cultural knowledge of the forest please contact our Outreach Coordinator Andrew Linker at **alinker@gafw.org** to discuss opportunities.

Registration is required for our Outings.
Learn More

Recent Outings

Ivy Pull at Warwoman Dell with Melanie 3.4.22
Great day pulling 480 pounds of invasive plants from Warwoman Dell!
Also first bloodroot spotting of the year! May the native flowers flourish.
#gaforestwatchvolunteers #noherbicides **Photos here**

Wow! What a turn out for: **Raven Cliffs Falls Geology with Bill 3.3.22**
A huge thanks to Bill Witherspoon for leading and his expertise! **See photos from the day** **(by Maria Klouda)**

Georgia River Guide Mobile App

River Adventures Just Got Easier

Georgia River Network, the only statewide advocacy organization dedicated solely to protecting Georgia's water, recently released the Georgia River Guide mobile app – a free trip planning tool designed to empower river recreationists to experience Georgia's network of more than thirty water trails.

For paddlers, boaters, anglers, and anyone else looking to recreate on Georgia's waterways, Georgia's water trails offer hundreds of miles of adventure from Georgia's mountains to its coast. With the Georgia River Guide mobile app, in a few simple taps, users can discover nearby water trails and learn about safe public access points, river mileage between accesses, points of interest, recommended runnable levels, nearby shuttle services, and more.

Learn more and **download today**

Foothills Landscape Project

The Foothills Landscape Project (FLP) is a massive forest management plan proposed by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) in the Chattahoochee National Forest and is the single most important Forest Service proposal in Georgia in the last 15 years. Stretching over 157,000 acres (almost double the size of the city of Atlanta), the project proposes the use of logging, herbicides, and prescribed fire to manage forests while also altering trails and roads.

It is still unclear how, and when, input on specific actions will be considered by organizations like GAFW and concerned citizens - like

yourself.

This is why Georgia ForestWatch and partners: Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC), Georgia Chapter of the Sierra Club, Chattooga Conservancy, and The Wilderness Society filed a formal objection to the Foothills Decision Notice late last year. Our concerns, previously raised at every step in the process, are threefold.

The Final Programmatic Environmental Assessment (EA) unlawfully fails to identify the actions that will receive an additional review and the actions that will not. The Forest Service's Final Environmental Assessment seeks to use a programmatic review for the project, in which an entire suite of actions is broadly reviewed now, and, in the future, the agency commits to conduct further environmental reviews of individual actions. However, the Final EA does not specify which actions have been fully evaluated and will not receive additional review under this programmatic approach.

The Final EA improperly defers key decisions to the collaborative to be made without NEPA review. The Final EA defers key decisions into the future, to be made based on input from a collaborative group made up of forest stakeholders. We agree that getting input from stakeholders is important, but the environmental effects of the collaborative group's recommendations also need to be evaluated. These decisions should not be made after the environmental review is completed.

The Final EA fails to properly consider the climate impacts of the Foothills Landscape Project. The Final EA does not quantify the project's impact on greenhouse gas emissions. Given the threat posed by climate change and the need to reduce emissions in the near term, the Forest Service needs to understand the impact of its actions on carbon emissions and sequestration.

On February 25, 2022, the objecting partners and leadership from the USFS met to discuss the objections. SELC attorney Brian Gist did a tremendous job articulating our concerns and the USFS representatives asked thoughtful questions in careful consideration of our objections.

Forest Supervisor Ed Hunter optimistically stated "we are closer than we think we are" to a mutually agreed-upon resolution.

The next step is for the USFS to review the input and generate a letter detailing the decisions of the USFS and how the project will proceed. The time frame for a response will be "soon" but "fluid." It is only after this process is completed that the FLP can move to the implementation phase. As always, we will keep you informed.

In the News

"Allowing our Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests to grow into the complex, rich, diverse forest that Europeans encountered when they first arrived in this area 250 years ago is the most sensible, economical, and climate-friendly policy that we could follow."

Photo: Gainesville Times

Longtime members of GAFW David Govus and Cliff Shaw joined together to craft a response to an opinion letter written by a former U.S. Forest Service (USFS) staff member and run by the *Gainesville Times* last year. The letter decried the role of environmental nonprofits in slowing timber cutting, road building, and herbicide projects in the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests (CONF) under the Foothills Landscape Project. (See above for more on FLP)

Their piece entitled "Opinion: Management should allow national forests to return to natural state" masterfully advocates for more of a hands-off approach in contrast to what many consider to be an overly aggressive approach to forest management with an emphasis on timber production.

They close their piece with the powerful proposal that suggests "allowing our Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests to grow into the complex, rich, diverse forest that Europeans encountered when they first arrived in this area 250 years ago is the most sensible, economical, and climate-friendly policy that we could follow."

GAFW could not agree more.

Who We Are

Georgia ForestWatch (GAFW) is a nonpartisan grassroots nonprofit organization that sees a future where people can enjoy forests that have reached their full majesty, where intact natural processes support healthy ecosystems and thriving biodiversity, and clean streams supply water to millions of Georgians. We believe this future requires the protection and appreciation of Georgia's national forests, and the watersheds, native plants, and wildlife they encompass.

Our mission is to enhance the health of Georgia's over 867,000 acres of national forest by protecting our forests and streams, advocating for natural processes, and identifying opportunities to improve forest management.

Upcoming Events

March 18-20, 2022 - We will be participating inConfluence 2022 Georgia Adopt-A-Stream's Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Conference at

Unicoi State Park and Lodge.

Saturday, April 9, 2022 – GAFW Executive Director J.D. McCrary will be speaking on a panel at the Go Tell It in The Mountains Regional Environmental Forum at the Stephens County Center for the Performing Arts.

Wednesday, April 20, 2022 – Stop by and say "Hi" at our table at the University of North Georgia Gainesville Campus 2022 Earth Day celebration.

Saturday, April 23, 2022 – We will be with the North Georgia Conservation Coalition Earth Day program at the Dawsonville Bowen Center for the Arts.

Saturday, April 23, 2022 – Look for us at the Earth Day event at the Sautee Nacoochee Center.

Georgia ForestWatch's annual retreat scheduled for Saturday, October 15, 2022, at Lake Winfield Scott.

Legislative Updates

As a grassroots organization, GAFW is actively involved in public policy discussions that affect the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest but also in important environmental discussions that parallel our mission.

Georgia may be the largest land area state east of the Mississippi, but when environmental concerns are raised, or regulations that protect us all from pollution are rolled back, Georgia can feel awfully small. Policies that stem from the Georgia General Assembly each year can have profound effects on not only our forests but also our communities and our backyards.

This is why GAFW is committed to being actively involved in broader policy discussions that may not be limited to the geographic confines of the CONF, and as a proud member of the Georgia Water Coalition (GWC), including being a member of the GWC Legislative Team, we stand in solidarity with those who are fighting each day to ensure our air and water are clean, our forests are healthy and standing, our energy is produced in a renewable manner, and we are addressing climate change before it is too late.

As a member of the GWC we are proudly committed to supporting the proactive legislative priorities agreed upon by the coalition each year and in advocating for environmentally positive bills that arise during the session and against those that rollback much needed protections. Please visit Protect Georgia to learn more, sign up for alerts, and take action on bills that the GWC is supporting, opposing, and monitoring.

And if you have been away from the Capitol for the past two years, GWC is thrilled to announce the return of the in-person Capitol Conservation Day for 2022. Please consider joining GAFW, and other GWC members, at this important event to ensure your voice is heard. You can register and even sponsor the event by visiting this page.

In addition to the GWC bills, GAFW also supports, opposes, and monitors its own slate of bills that are typically forest and logging related.

Our Updates

If this email was forwarded to you, please register here to receive updates from Georgia ForestWatch.

Part of the iNaturalist Community?
Find us at iNaturalist

Save the Date!
October 15, 2022

Thank You

Georgia ForestWatch is the only nonprofit organization with a mission solely dedicated to ensuring the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests remain healthy and available for future generations, and we can only pursue our mission with the support of the community.

In 2021 donations from individuals, such as yourself, provided for 72% of our budget, and we are asking again in 2022 for your support.

Please support our mission by ensuring your membership is up to date and providing additional support as you are able.

On behalf of our entire national forests in our beautiful state, we thank you for your support.

Connect with us