GEORGIA FORESTWATCH
PRESERVE PROTECT RESTORE GAFW.ORG

August 11, 2022

FORESTWATCH JOURNAL

Volume 1, Issue 10

The Inflation Reduction Act of 2022

"Climate change is an emergency."
— President Biden, July 20th, 2022

While not perfect (What bill is?) **H.R.5376**, The Inflation Reduction Act of 2022, is a significant step forward in addressing the impact of climate change on our warming world and is estimated to cut U.S. climate pollution by up to 40 percent by 2030.

This bill will, among other things, expand access to electric vehicles, clean up dirty power plants, invest in clean energy, reduce U.S. reliance on fossil fuels, and unfortunately includes some support for the fossil fuel industry. However, to meet the energy demands of the next decade, some support for our existing energy infrastructure is needed during the transition from dirty coal and oil to cleaner options.

According to the EPA, the U.S. is responsible for 15% of global carbon dioxide (CO_2) annual production, with only 4.23% of the global population. Since 1970, CO_2emissions have increased by 90%, with 24% of global greenhouse gas emissions coming from agriculture (cultivation of crops, livestock, and timber) and deforestation.

The U.S. must step up its leadership in the world to address the impact of climate change. Thankfully the U.S. Senate passed H.R.5376 last week, and it

now goes to the U.S. House before passing onto President Biden's desk for his signature. From our partners at **The Wilderness Society**, you can **thank our senators** for taking historic action on climate.

GAFW supports the passage of H.R.5376 as a total package but does have some concerns specific to the forestry and U.S. Forest Service provisions within this bill.

Provisions of the bill affecting the U.S. Forest Service:

- $1.8B for "hazardous fuels reduction projects" in our National Forests under the guise of protecting structures and communities from wildfire. Unfortunately, this promotes using prescribed fire and logging; however, the empirical evidence of the effectiveness of such combined operations are costly (financially and ecologically) and unproven to reduce the effects of wildfire.
- $200M for vegetation management in our National Forests. The term "vegetation management project'' means an activity intended to enhance the ecological integrity and achieve the restoration of a forest ecosystem through the removal of vegetation, the use of prescribed fire, the restoration of aquatic habitat, or the decommissioning of roads. While GAFW supports forest restoration, this funding is sometimes used for logging and timber sales. This line item needs to be monitored carefully during implementation.
- None of the USFS funds above may be used for any activity in designated wilderness areas, wilderness study areas, or roadless areas, nor for the construction of a road or motorized trail except for a temporary road that is decommissioned within three years after the road is no longer needed or the project is completed.
- $100M to provide for environmental reviews under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969. GAFW is very supportive of NEPA if the voice of communities is reflected in a project's final decision and implementation.
- $50M for the protection of old-growth National Forests and to complete an inventory of old-growth and mature forests within the National Forest System. This is a significant step forward for our forests and partially funds **President Biden's 30x30 initiative**. $50M is a good start to preserving our forest treasures. Still, additional funding and prioritization within the USFS are needed to fully reach a goal of preserving 30% of our federal lands by 2030.
- $100M for administrative costs of the USDA, including the USFS, for implementation costs of this bill.

Provisions of the bill affecting forestry conservation:

- $4.9B to implement conservation projects that assist private forestland owners in directly improving soil carbon, reducing nitrogen losses, or reducing, capturing, avoiding, or sequestering carbon dioxide, methane, or nitrous oxide emissions associated with agricultural production.
- $300M to quantify carbon sequestration and carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide emissions through the **USDA Greenhouse Gas Inventory and Assessment Program**.
- $250M for a competitive grant program to support the participation of underserved forest landowners and those who own less than 2,500 acres of forest land in emerging private markets for climate mitigation or forest resilience.
- $50M for a competitive grant program to provide grants to states to provide payments to owners of private forest land for implementing forestry practices to provide measurable increases in carbon sequestration and storage beyond customary practices.

Provision of the bill supporting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in the USDA and USFS:

- $10M to fund an equity commission addressing racial equity issues within the USDA, including the USFS.
- $250M to support and supplement agricultural research, education, and extension, as well as scholarships and programs providing internships and pathways to agricultural sector or Federal employment, for **1890 Institutions**, including Georgia's **Fort Valley State University**.
- $2.2B of financial assistance to farmers, ranchers, or forest landowners determined to have experienced discrimination.
- $24M for administrative costs, including training employees, for the USDA, including the USFS, to implement the above.

Provisions of the bill affecting state forestry conservation:

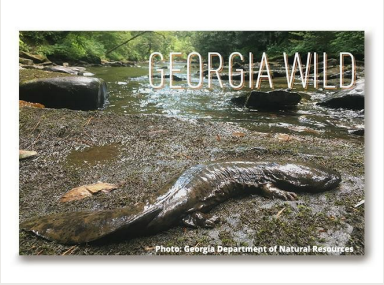
- $700M to provide competitive grants to States for projects for land acquisitions.
- $1.5B to provide grants to a State or local government for tree planting.

While GAFW would like to see more funding for protecting our national forests, this bill goes a long way towards addressing America's role in climate change.

GAFW encourages you to contact **your U.S. House Member** and ask them to vote yes on **H.R.5376**. **The bill is expected to be voted on in the House before the end of this week.**

Is That a Snot Otter?

Also known as water dog, mud dog, grampus,



mollyhugger, and lasagna lizard, most of us know them as Eastern Hellbenders, North America's largest salamander, and native to Georgia's clean, cold mountain streams.

Growing up to two feet long and weighing up to five pounds, the Eastern Hellbender is considered threatened under state criteria but not federal. Wildlife biologists with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources want your help tracking this elusive creature.

Notoriously hard to locate, you can spend your entire life exploring the creeks of northern Georgia and never come across one. However, if you are lucky enough to see one, you will know it, and if you do, please leave it alone.

Instead, snap a photo and write down a description of the hellbender. Be sure to include details such as the day, time, and place you saw it, as well as the estimated size; then send everything to GA DNR wildlife biologist Thomas Floyd at **thomas.floyd@dnr.ga.gov**.

Wander North Georgia Opens Second Location

GAFW supporter and partner **Wander North Georgia and Tallulah Adventures** will be celebrating the opening of their new location on August 19th through 21st with a full weekend of events, live music, workshops, giveaways, and more!

Located in historic Tallulah Falls and adjacent to Tallulah Gorge State Park, the Wander Outpost and Tallulah Adventures are a new collaborative venture for all outdoor lovers.

Wander North Georgia has opened their second retail location on site, and Tallulah Adventures is running a restaurant, bar, and Adventure Zone complete with a 120-foot rock climbing and bouldering wall.

We are Hiring

GAFW is actively seeking a Development Coordinator (Grant Writer) to secure grants to support the work of Georgia ForestWatch now and for future growth.

This position is an excellent opportunity to be a part of an established but growing grassroots organization's expanding capacity. **More information and apply here.**

Don't Miss Out

There is still time for **you personally** or your **business or organization** to sponsor our 19th annual retreat at Lake Winfield Scott on Saturday, October 15, 2022. Remember you must **be a member** to attend.

Tickets to the event will go on sale on Thursday, September 1, and we fully anticipate the event will sell out as soon as ticket sales start. The best way to ensure you get a ticket is to sponsor the event now.

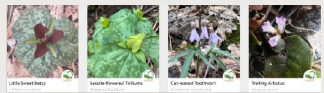
GAFW Outings

Upcoming Outings!

Invite your friends to sign up for Outing notices, but keep in mind, ForestWatch **members** get first notification!

Looking for pics of the latest Outings? Find them all here:
Photos! Recent Outings

iNaturalist @gaforestwatch
Community Science and species identification!



Upcoming Events

Saturday, September 10–**Elachee Wildlife Festival**, Elachee Nature Science Center, Gainesville, GA

Saturday, September 24 & Sunday, September 25–Annual **Trail Skills Workshop** at Lake Winfield Scott - **Preregister**

Saturday, October 15–**GAFW** Annual Retreat, Lake Winfield Scott. Reservations open soon!

Saturday, October 22–Wurst Festival GAFW fundraiser at **Fannin Brewing Company**

Friday-Sunday, November 4-6–**Hemlock Fest** at Cherokee Farms, Lafayette, GA

Ways to Help GAFW

Join the Board of Directors

GAFW is always looking for active and engaged board members who can lead

the growth and direction of the organization.

To learn more, please send an email to Board Chair Anne Heikkila at **anne.heikkila@icloud.com**.

Save the Date

Reservations will open soon for our annual retreat on Saturday, October 15, 2022, at Lake Winfield Scott.
Remember you must be a member to attend.
Join or renew your membership today.

Planning to join us at Lake Winfield Scott for the annual retreat? Send us an email at **info@gafw.org** if you would like to reserve a camping spot at Vogel State Park.

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.

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.

If this email was forwarded to you, **please register here** to receive GAFW updates.

Our Mission

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

Connect with us