GEORGIA FORESTWATCH
PRESERVE PROTECT RESTORE GAFW.ORG

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Grassy Mountain old-growth surveyed and protected by Georgia ForestWatch. Photo by Cliff Shaw

Use Your Voice to help define Old Growth & Mature Forests

The U.S. Forest Service and other Agencies are requesting input on how to define old-growth and mature Forests across the nation. If you have relevant information to contribute, you can submit it by August 30th, 2022, at the link below:

Submit your comments here

Below are some suggested points to consider in your comment. The most effective comments will be personalized and rephrased using your voice and experiences.

Encourage the Agencies to:

- Support complete implementation of the executive order and conservation of old-growth and mature forests;
- Use an inclusive definition framework that errs on the side of considering more forests old growth or mature;
- Define old-growth based on old ecological processes

rather than just old trees (i.e., include forests that have never been logged but have been subject to disturbances like tornados or wildfires);
- Incorporate existing regional old-growth forest inventories

Georgia ForestWatch encourages the Agencies to take an inclusive approach to define old-growth and mature forests because old growth can never be completely protected. In practical terms, defining old growth largely comes down to what kinds of disturbances are acceptable within old-growth forests. We encourage the Agencies not to focus too much on tree age and to include areas subject to recent natural disturbances.

We believe focusing definitions on mature forests and making the degree of anthropogenic disturbance a key criterion will help the definition framework remain useful as climate change alters forests. We also encourage the Agencies to base the inventories on existing regional inventories and ground truthing as much as possible. Where modeling is necessary, correlating mature forests with canopy height estimated from climatic variables and physical site conditions should provide robust predictions. You can find GAFW's official comments here.

Thank you to Forest Ecologist Jess Riddle, Old-Growth Champion Cliff Shaw, and graduate student Emma Kiser for their efforts in drafting our official comments.

Submit Your Comments Here

Fire in the Forest

If you are a member of GAFW, you will receive your quarterly newsletter in the mail very soon. If you are not a member, please consider joining to ensure you are up to date on the most relevant news and in-depth analysis regarding our state's national forest land.

In this edition of our newsletter, we completed our study of Fire in the Forest that we began in our Spring Newsletter and have made the full position paper available online. Thank you to Forest Ecologist Jess Riddle for his work in authoring the paper.

GAFW's current position supports the use of prescribed fire that mimics natural (lightning) fire regimes or that can effectively protect life and property and supports allowing lightning-

ignited fires to burn where they do not threaten life or property but does not support allowing other wildfires to burn.

At the end of our research, GAFW has landed, for now, on a fire position that has less to do with fire and more to do with the complexities of the entire ecosystem and the bureaucracy of managing the land. GAFW recognizes the historical role fire has played in our state's landscape however feels the increased support for prescribed burning is reducing much-needed financial support for the Chattahoochee Oconee National Forests' (CONF) most pressing concerns of clean water and watershed resiliency.

GAFW feels CONF management and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) budget priorities should focus on road and trail maintenance over the current resources directed towards prescribed fire. Only when the USFS can proactively manage (including law enforcement) or permanently close all roads that aggressively contribute to waterway sedimentation upstream, downstream, and within the CONF should the USFS look at funding a rotation of prescribed fires.

In Memory of Allison O'Grady

Family and friends of Allison O'Grady came together to support GAFW in the wake of Ms. O'Grady's recent passing due to an automobile accident.

Allison's family requested donations be made to GAFW in memory of her resulting in over $3,600 of vital support.

Allison was an avid hiker and outdoor enthusiast who often brought home a bag of trash from her hikes, leaving an area better than she found it. Allison will be missed, and we thank her family for supporting the mission of GAFW while honoring her memory.

Plastic Pollution Lunch and Learn

The Georgia Water Coalition's Plastic Committee is hosting a webinar on Wednesday, August 31st from 12-1pm about policy solutions to Georgia's single-use plastic pollution problem.

We'd love you to join us virtually to hear from pubic health experts and the advocates who have advanced solutions in other states. Click here to register for the event.

Retreat Lunch

Unfortunately, the feedback we received from last year's retreat regarding lunch was less than positive, and we heard you loud and clear. We are excited to have a new food provider this year.

Participants will enjoy breakfast treats and lunch from G&G Bakery and Cafe at this year's retreat. G&G is local to Blairsville, GA, and offers freshly baked pastries, breads, homemade soups, sandwiches, and salads. Fall Retreat attendees will enjoy donuts, fresh fruit, granola bars, and coffee to kick off the morning presentations.

Lunch will include homemade pasta salad, fresh sandwiches (veggie, vegan, and gluten-free are available upon request), and a variety of beverages, including sparkling water, tea, and coffee.

Please consider becoming a sponsor of GAFW's 19th Annual Retreat (individuals or businesses/organizations) and save the date for September 1, 2022, when our retreat registration page goes live.

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

Volunteers needed to help with Wilderness Monitoring

We are seeking volunteers to provide valuable data to the US Forest Service (USFS) about Wilderness areas in Georgia.

Volunteer

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.

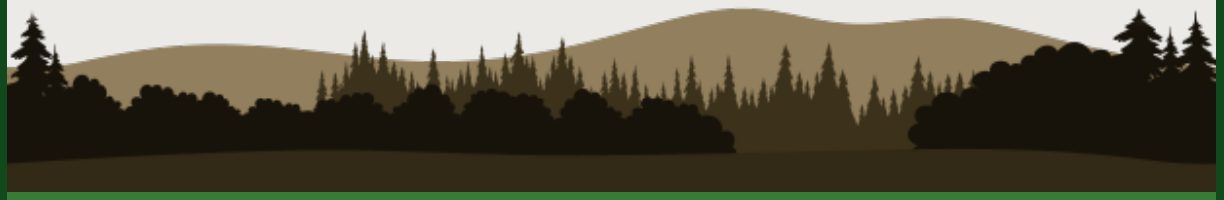
Please support our mission by ensuring your membership is up to date and providing additional support as you are able.

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.



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