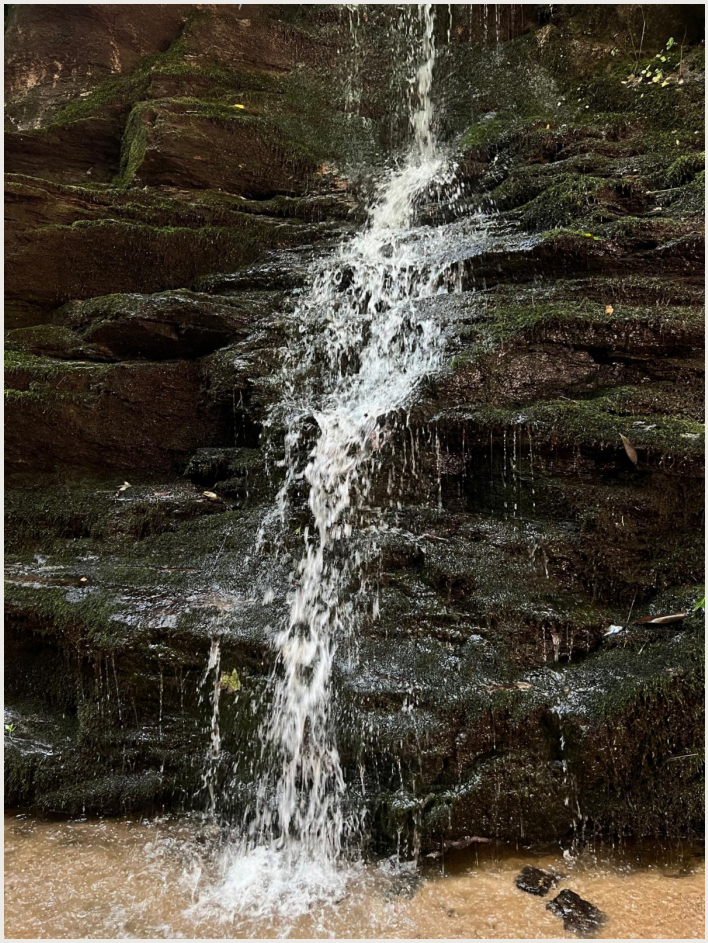
GEORGIA FORESTWATCH
PRESERVE PROTECT RESTORE GAFW.ORG

September 6, 2022

FORESTWATCH JOURNAL

Volume 1, Issue 13



Special Use Permits (SUP)

Use Your Voice

In a recent ForestWatch Journal, you may recall our request to our members and community to assist GAFW in composing our position on the Chattooga River Ranger District's (CRRD) current slate of Special Use Permits (SUP).

All fee & commercial activity, as well as large organized groups, within a national forest, require a Special-use Permit (SUP) Application that must go through a public comment process.

Our policy is to fully support recreational use, including

commercially, within the CONF if the activities do not have a negative impact on the ecology or natural balance of the forest or other users or beneficiaries.

Thank you to the many members of our community who contributed to GAFW's comments in response to the current SUP applications for recreational activities in the CRRD. We have finalized and submitted our comments using your input and GAFW staff and volunteer time to conduct site visits to the proposed locations.

Using your input, along with GAFW staff and volunteer time, to conduct site visits on the proposed locations we have finalized and submitted our comments.

Now we ask you to please use your voice to provide additional comments on both concerns with specific applications and the process overall.

USFS asks that you please submit your email comments to the following address SM.FS.CRRD@usda.gov **(Attn: August 2022 Special Use Proposals Project) by midnight September 20th, 2022.**

Below are some suggested points to consider in your comments but feel free to use our full submitted comments to draft your input. The most effective comments will be personalized and rephrased using your voice and experiences.

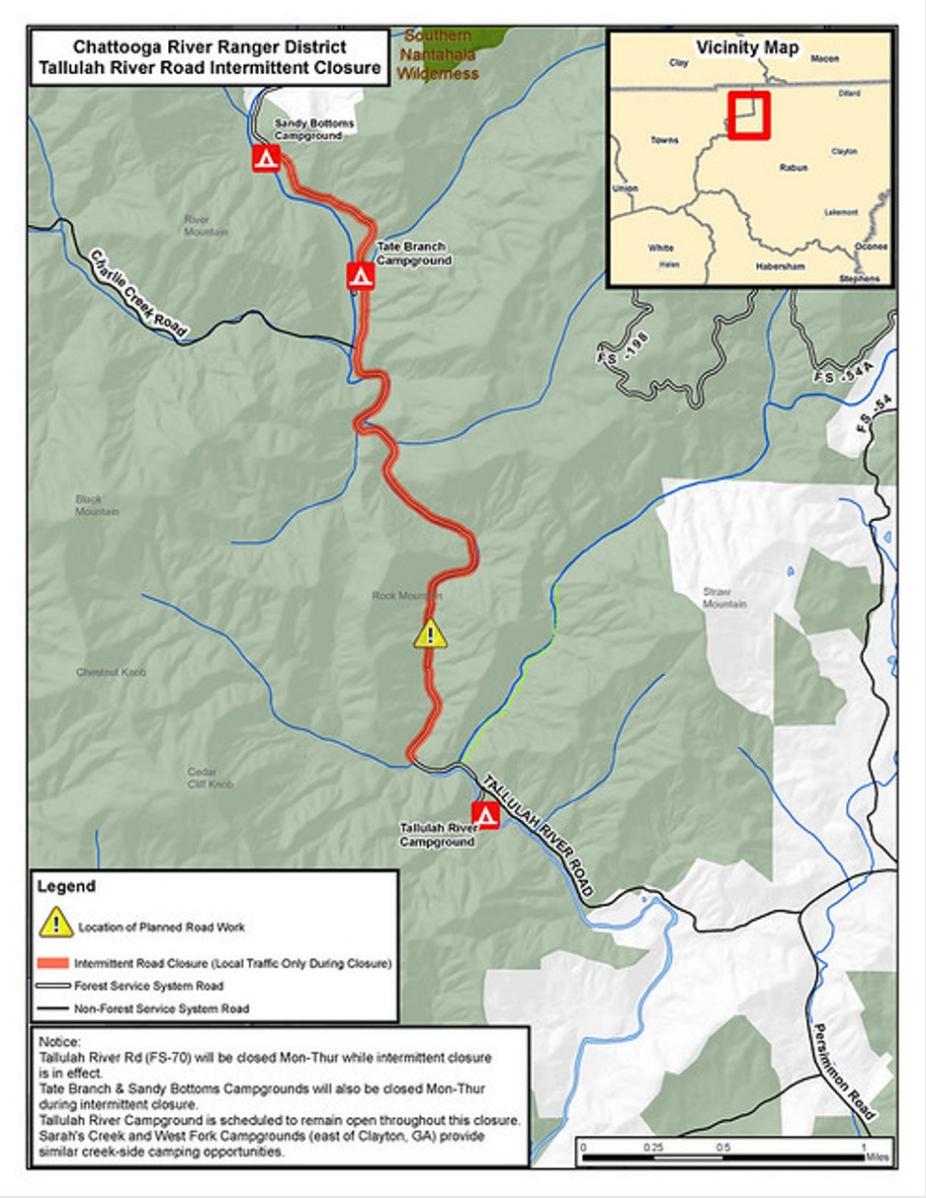
Encourage the USFS to:

- Future scoping notifications should include a copy of, or link to, each applicant's full SUP application. Without the full SUP application, it is difficult to gauge the full scope of the request.
- Recreational SUP applications should include the exact proposed course requested, including maps, and made available in the scoping notification.
- I have concerns about the overall increase in commercial recreation use within the CONF. Anecdotally it appears that commercial recreation has increased significantly over the past few years. Please make publicly available a comprehensive and searchable list of active SUPs on the CONF website.
- Several applicants are proposing events and activities near Lake Russell and Nancytown. Several roads and

sections of roads in this area need maintenance. Without an exact course route, it is impossible to identify and comment on which stretches of the course are cause for concern. Without this information, I cannot support the proposed applications.

- I oppose approving the requested SUP to locate two apiaries within the CONF. Our national forests should be a refuge for native flora and fauna and not be forced to compete with an introduced, non-native species. While honey bees provide a valuable agricultural commodity and are generic pollinators, it has been shown that introduced honey bees outcompete native bees and other pollinators.

Tallulah River Road Construction Begins



The Tallulah River Road (FS 70) stretches north from the top of Lake Burton into North Carolina. It is a popular road due to its profound beauty, stellar trout fishing, three campgrounds, and the bustling metropolis of Tate City, GA.

The road (5.7 miles from where the pavement ends) starts in Rabun County. It travels through Towns County before dead ending in Clay County, NC, and the Southern Nantahala Wilderness within the Nantahala National Forest. The residents who live on the NC side are the most remote citizens of the state, and if you have spent any time back there, you know it just feels like wilderness.

Tate City sprang up around a ruby mine that once attracted more than 1,000 residents (now less than 1/20th of that in year-round residents) and later switched to logging. (A man named Tate owned the biggest logging camp, hence the name.) After the loggers stripped Tate City of its forests, they moved on, and the sleepy town

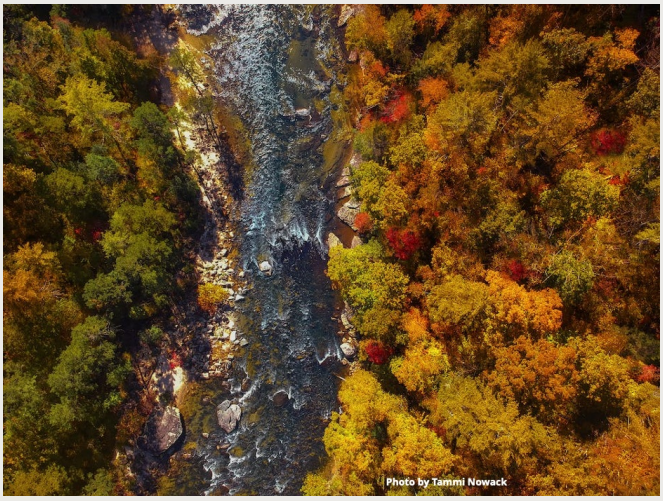
didn't get electricity until the early 1970s. Thankfully the forest has recovered from intensive logging and the 2016 wildfires that threatened the community.

Now the road, running parallel to the river, is well traveled by campers, hikers, and fishermen and is due for some much-needed maintenance following the rains of 2019. While the USFS is conducting these repairs, road closures will occur from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. and 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Thursday each week until October. Tate Branch and Sandy Bottoms campgrounds will be closed Monday through Thursday but will be open to visitor use Friday through Sunday.

While this is understandably frustrating to Tate City residents and those who like to sneak out to go fishing during the work week (like GAFW staff), sedimentation from poorly maintained or damaged roads is one of the most significant and chronic issues facing our national forests.

GAFW applauds and fully supports the USFS in prioritizing road and trail maintenance, especially those roads and trails adjacent to clear, clean mountain streams such as the Tallulah River. GAFW especially thanks District Ranger Ryan Foote for ensuring the dirt and gravel from our roads does not end up in our rivers.

Old Growth and Mature



Thank you to everyone who submitted comments regarding the U.S. Forest Service's requests to provide parameters for the definition of old growth & mature forests. In addition to the comments submitted by GAFW, our organization signed on with dozens of other groups

nationally on a letter to USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack and USDOI Secretary Deb Haaland.

The letter states that "conserving mature and old-growth forests on (public lands) offers one of the most straightforward, cost-effective ways to protect existing carbon stores while allowing these forests and trees to continue to pull vast amounts of carbon from the atmosphere." You can view all submissions here.

The Most Important Thing

The single most important act you can do to ensure the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests remain healthy for future generations is voting, and now is the time to prepare.

At GAFW, we have worked tirelessly for 38 years *to enhance the health of Georgia's national forest lands by protecting our forests and streams, advocating for natural processes, and identifying opportunities to improve forest management.*

The success of our grassroots work relies on raising the voices of our membership and community.

Go here to check your registration and register.

- Decide if you are going to vote absentee, in advance, or on election day, and **make a plan or schedule now** for how you intend to vote. Remember to prepare for hiccups and not wait until election day afternoon to start the process.
- **Print your sample ballot.** Go to your registration page and look for the blue button "View Sample Ballot" on the right-hand side of the page under your contact information.
    - If you receive an error message for your sample ballot, reach out to your County Election Supervisor and request it.
- Once you have your printed sample ballot, it is time to do your homework. **Research each candidate and ballot measure** and make your decision **BEFORE** you vote. Take your printed ballot with you with your

decisions already marked. This process is an open-book test, and there is no need to make your decisions while standing at the ballot box.
    - Check state and local Candidates' Campaign Expenses and Donations – Governor and down
    - Check federal Candidates' Campaign Expenses and Donations – U.S. Senate and House
- **Reach out to your candidates** to let them know you are a voter concerned about climate change and the health of our national forests. Tell them you only support candidates who favor aggressively addressing climate change and increasing long-term protections of our public lands, including the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests.
- If you support a candidate financially, **request a meeting** with the candidate or their staff and hand-deliver the check while expressing your concerns about climate change and the long-term protections of our public lands.
- Reach out to your neighbors and ask if they need a ride to the polls. Join a group of co-workers and carpool to your polling location on a quiet afternoon. Forward this email, check in with your social circle and ask if you can do anything to assist them in voting. Share your sample ballot. Call your adult children and make sure they have voted. If you are a supervisor at work, give your employees time off to vote. Remember finding time to vote is not easy for everyone.
- **Consider becoming a poll worker** for your district. You can become a poll worker by contacting your county elections office.

Upcoming Key Election Dates

- August 22, 2022 - Earliest day to apply for an absentee ballot for November General Election
    - In Georgia, you do not need an excuse to vote by absentee ballot. If you are interested in doing so, you can request your ballot now. Go here for more information.
- October 10, 2022 - Earliest day to mail a regular absentee ballot for the November General Election.
    - While you may request your absentee ballot today, you cannot mail it until this date. Please do not submit your ballot early, as it can be used as an excuse not to count your vote. Remember, you can both mail your absentee ballot and

drop it off. Each county must have at least one ballot drop box, but unfortunately, it may only be available during business hours. Plan accordingly.

- October 11, 2022 - Last Day for a person to register and be eligible to vote in the November General Election and Runoff Election.
    - Double-check to ensure your voter registration is active and your personal information is accurate before this day. Or, if you are not already registered, please do not wait until this day to do so. Get it done now. Go here to check your registration and register.
- October 17, 2022 - Advanced Voting begins for the November General Election.
    - While the daily and weekly schedule for all counties is slightly different, every county must have an advanced voting location open by this date. Go to your county election office to determine the location and times your county provides early voting.
- October 22, 2022 - Mandatory Saturday Voting for the November General Election.
    - All counties must have a location open for early voting on this day.
- October 23, 2022 - Optional Sunday Voting for the November General Election.
    - While not required, your county may have a location open for early voting on this day. If your county is not offering Sunday voting, contact your County Election Supervisor and encourage them to schedule it.
- October 28, 2022 - Last day to submit absentee ballot application for the November General Election
    - If you have chosen to vote using your absentee ballot, please ensure it is mailed or deposited no later than this day. Preferably you have already submitted it.
- October 29, 2022 - Mandatory Saturday Voting for the November General Election.
- October 30, 2022 - Optional Sunday Voting for the November General Election.
- November 8, 2022 - Election Day. Hopefully, you have voted already, but if not, please set aside ample time to ensure your vote is counted. Remember, if you are in line at 7:00 p.m. on election day, the polling location

must allow you to vote…no matter how long the polling location must stay open.

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 closed! Join our wait list today.

Saturday, October 22–Tickets Now Available! Wurst Festival GAFW fundraiser at Fannin Brewing Company

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

We Need Volunteers

Wilderness Monitoring Volunteers Needed

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

Volunteer

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.

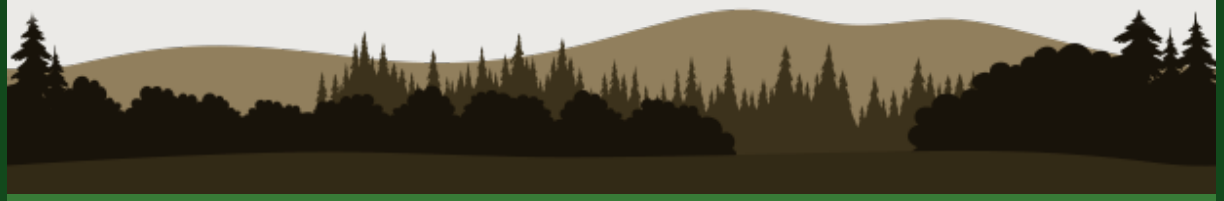
Please support our mission by ensuring your membership is up to date and providing additional support as you are able.

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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