GEORGIA FORESTWATCH
PRESERVE PROTECT RESTORE GAFW.ORG

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FORESTWATCH JOURNAL

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Artwork from Wild & Scenic Film Festival

Wild & Scenic Film Festival

Get your tickets today!

Join us at the Wild & Scenic Film Festival on Saturday, June 11, 2022 at 7 p.m. EST at the Brenau University Charles D. Walters Theatre. Online viewing will be available through June 17.

Attendees can see award-winning family-friendly films about nature, community activism, adventure, conservation, water, energy, climate change, wildlife, environmental justice, agriculture, and more! We do our best to choose a variety of films – some with local interest, some "feel good" films, some "call-to-action" films, and some that make us feel

connected as a global community.

Chattahoochee Riverkeeper staff and other special guests will be introducing the films, providing updates to our watershed, and sharing about the important work you support. Last year's event in 2021, more than 180 households tuned in online to watch 14 carefully curated films raising $16,000 to support a healthy Chattahoochee.

Please Give Generously

You are reading our ForestWatch Journal because you love Georgia's national forests and want them to be well-managed and healthy for future generations.

Georgia ForestWatch (GAFW) exists solely because of our members' support and passion for ecologically sound forest management. In 2021 72% of our budget was composed of member and individual donations. While we are strategically researching additional funding sources, GAFW will always be primarily a member and donor-based organization.

Now, during our spring fundraising drive, please ensure yourmembership is up to date, and on behalf of GAFW and the entire Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests, please give generously. Without your magnanimous support, there is no Georgia ForestWatch, and without GAFW, no one is watching out for our state's national forests.

Updates from GAFW

GAFW signed on to a national letter led by the Center for Biological Diversity, Defenders of Wildlife, and the Western Environmental Law Center to Oppose Sen. Daines' Bill to Weaken Endangered Species Act.

GAFW signed on to a national letter led by the Natural Resources Defense Council to ask the Home Depot CEO to establish primary forest and human rights safeguards in its Wood Purchasing Policy. We also sent a request to Georgia Water Coalition members to sign on. GA-based organizations must lead in addressing concerns with GA-based companies.

GAFW signed on to this comment letter addressing concerns regarding building yet another pelletized lumber production facility in south Georgia.

News You Can Use

An outdoor burn ban has been issued by the Georgia Forestry Commission until September 30 in 54 Georgia counties, primarily in those close or adjacent to our national forests.

Residents are asked to refrain from burning yard and land clearing debris, whose smoke can negatively impact the state's air quality during the hot summer months by contributing to high ozone levels. These conditions

have been linked to lung and heart disease in humans.

"These restrictions are required by the state Environmental Protection Division, so less particulate matter is released into the air," said Georgia Forestry Commission Protection Chief Frank Sorrells. "The risk of wildfire is also high at this time, and the Georgia Forestry Commission will be closely monitoring fire activity to keep Georgians and their property safe."

For more information about annual summer burn restrictions, burn permits, and services of the Georgia Forestry Commission, visit GaTrees.org.

In the Media

Recently, Georgia ForestWatch ecology consultant Jess Riddle presented to the Friends of White's Woods. Learn more about the webinar and natural forest management.

GAFW Partners

GAFW works closely with multiple partners who share similar views on the environmental health of Georgia, the U.S., and the globe. Recently our partner, the Chattooga Conservancy, took the lead in addressing concerns over the commercial use of the Chattooga River Ranger District (CRRD).

The following is from the Chattooga Conservancy - On April 9th, 2022, we learned of a plan for a commercial ultra-running race event using trails inside national forest lands, including the Chattooga Wild & Scenic River Corridor, Ellicott Rock Wilderness Area, Overflow Wilderness Study Area, and the Ellicott Rock Recommended Wilderness Study Area. The event was being marketed online with race registrations selling for $300 apiece and was scheduled for April 23rd.

Immediately we contacted the Forest Service for information and were extremely disappointed to discover that national forest managers had, for some time, been working behind the scenes on permitting this major event. No public disclosure or "scoping" notice had been provided to citizens and other stakeholders.
In addition, the Forest Service had not yet issued a commercial special use permit for the ultra-running race event. Following are relevant facts regarding the proposed ultra trail race.

- "Scoping" (public notice) is legally required for all Forest Service proposed actions. 36 CFR 220.4(e). Scoping should disclose plans and proposals and provide opportunities for public comments about issues and concerns.
- The event, as proposed initially, could not lawfully be approved because it would have intruded on the congressionally designated Ellicott Rock Wilderness Area.
- The commercial race event, as initially proposed, could not lawfully be approved because it would have intruded on the congressionally designated Overflow Wilderness Study Area. It would have also

intruded into the Recommended Ellicott Rock Wilderness Study Area and be inconsistent with the purposes for which it is managed.
- The commercial race event as initially proposed could not be approved because it is inconsistent with the purposes for which the Wild & Scenic Chattooga River Corridor is to be managed.

We are glad to report that after reviewing this information and the proposed trail race map, the USFS declined the race permit as originally proposed. They worked with the racing company to approve a route that did not intrude on the sensitive areas mentioned above. While we are grateful that this precedent-setting commercial race did not occur in the river corridor, the more significant issue of commercial special use permitting and the Forest Service's failure to publicly scope such proposed uses remains a concern.

GAFW reached out to CRRD District Ranger Ryan Foote regarding this concern but did not receive a response. GAFW fully supports recreational use within the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests if the activities do not have a negative impact on the ecology or natural balance of the forest or other users or beneficiaries. Our organization appreciates the Chattooga Conservancy taking the lead in addressing this important matter.

GAFW Outings

May Mountain Madness

LESSER KNOWN NATIONAL FOREST PEAKS CHALLENGE
*Summit all three with us and receive a Membership!

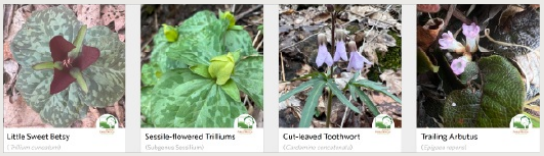
May 2022 Fridays @ 10 am

- May 20th – Wolfpen Ridge 4,561 ft. 5th Highest Peak in GA
- May 27th – Dick's Knob 4,600 ft. 3rd Highest Peak in GA

A variety of forest management areas and lesser known trails will be explored including Wilderness, old-growth, Wildlife Management Areas, Georgia's Mountain Treasure areas, Scenic Areas, and more!
Space is limited. Registration is required.

Photos! Recent Outings

iNaturalist @gaforestwatch
Community Science and species identification!



Upcoming Events

Tuesday-Friday, May 24-27, 2022–Southern Blue Ridge Fire Learning Network & Consortium for Appalachian Fire Managers and Scientists, Dillard, GA.

Thursday, May 26–Environmental Health & Climate Protection Conference, Macon, GA.

Saturday, June 4–National Trails Day. GAFW participating in GATC led event @ Vogel State Park.

Thursday, June 9–2022 GPFC Meeting for North Georgia @ Chattahoochee Technical College in Jasper, GA.

Saturday, June 11–Wild and Scenic Film Festival, Gainesville, GA.

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

Ways to Help GAFW

Lead or Organize an Outing

Last year GAFW partnered with community leaders to coordinate 37 Outings and had over 450 people participate. Still, we have set a goal to increase outings, workdays, and public presentations to provide enriching educational opportunities reaching 500 individuals in 2022.

Each opportunity will teach an aspect of our natural world to the attendees and educate new forest advocates to use their voices to preserve, protect, and restore our public forests to a level of maturity and health vital for everyone.

If you have an idea for an outing, have specialized knowledge about our Forests you want to share, or simply want to lead a hike to your favorite location, please send an email to Outreach Coordinator Andrew Linker at alinker@gafw.org.

Need a Camp Reservation?

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 Lake Winfield Scott or Vogel State Park.

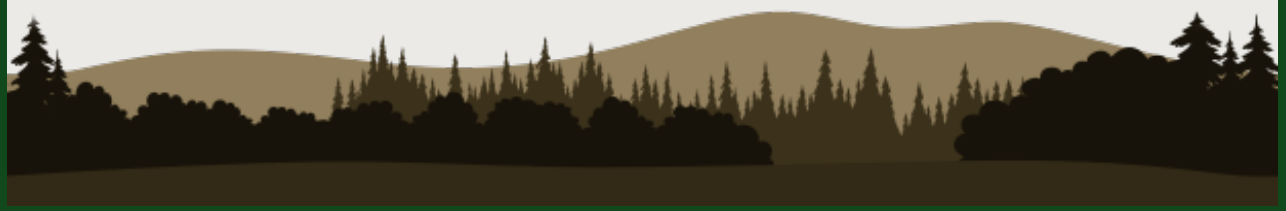
Thank You

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.

Connect with us

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.