GEORGIA FORESTWATCH
PRESERVE PROTECT RESTORE GAFW.ORG

August 3, 2022

FORESTWATCH JOURNAL

Volume 1, Issue 9

Participate in the Great Georgia Pollinator Census

The Fourth Annual Great Georgia Pollinator Census is a citizen science project created by the University of Georgia and will take place on August 19th and 20th, 2022. This project is designed for everyone to participate and make a difference in pollinator conservation.

Did you know that there are over 3,500 different species of native bees in North America, and over 540 have been documented in Georgia, including some crop specialists, like the southeastern blueberry bees and squash bees?

Pollinators spread pollen so that fruits, nuts, vegetables, and seeds can develop and are estimated to pollinate 35% of our global food supply.

Use Your Voice

As 2023 approaches, the House Agriculture Committee is working toward

the next Farm Bill.

Every five years, this legislation shapes all aspects of agricultural and forestry policy, including the priorities of the U.S. Forest Service. It is critical that those who support the forest make themselves heard, including what is working and what can be improved. Please take a moment to provide feedback here and if needed, feel free to use the following guidelines when submitting.

*Please DO NOT indicate that you are representing GAFW. If you are representing yourself, please write *"self."* GAFW will submit comments from the organization separately.

*Most of our comments fall best under *Title II, Conservation,* and *Title VIII, Forestry.*

* *Which programs in the 2018 Farm Bill do you think are performing well?*

- Programs such as the Source Water Protection Program (SWPP) are designed to protect surface and groundwater used as drinking water. Without Georgia's national forests, there would not be enough drinking water for the population of the Atlanta metro area. Please protect our headwaters.
- Georgia's national forests support our food system and protect our communities from natural disasters like flooding. Please ensure our national forests are protected from over-management by the U.S. Forest Service.

* *Which programs included in the 2018 Farm Bill do you think could be improved upon or should be reconsidered?*

- Climate change is the most pressing threat humans have ever faced. All aspects of agriculture and forestry should be reviewed against their impact on climate change, and policies should be enacted at all levels to decrease our carbon output.
- I support increasing the Forest Service budget to provide increased law enforcement, road/trail maintenance and a reduction in timber harvesting.
- Logging accounts for 85% of emissions from U.S. forests, more than five times the emissions from conversion, fire, wind, insects, and tree mortality combined. Please stop the Forest Service from logging healthy and intact forests.

* *Are there any new programs or ideas you or the organization you represent would like to see considered for the 2023 Farm Bill?*

- Old-growth forests are vital for carbon sequestration, thriving wildlife, and sustaining our existing tree canopy. Please ensure our mature and old-growth forests are allowed to flourish.
- Standing forests are one of our best defenses against climate change. Please protect our national forestland.
- Mature and old-growth forests sequester more carbon than younger forests. Please stop the Forest Service from cutting our most needed national treasures.

* *Please include any additional information you feel is beneficial to your*

submission.

- There is no solution to climate change that does not include a healthy, standing national forest.
- Commercial logging in our national forests can be destructive, unneeded, and unnecessary. Please introduce legislation excluding our mature and old-growth forests from logging.
- The mission of the Forest Service is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. Please remove "productivity" from the Forest Service's mission.

The Forest is Growing

One of the many goals of both GAFW and the USFS is the continued acquisition of land to the Chattahoochee Oconee National Forests.

Recently, with the support of GAFW, a 272-acre tract of land located along the Etowah River, approximately 10 miles northwest of our office in Dahlonega, was added to the forest including 1.2 miles of riverfront to consolidate the Upper Etowah watershed further.

Watershed resiliency is a main priority and function of our national forest. This portion of this critical watershed added to our public lands is a win for every Georgian who appreciates the clean water from their tap.

Flatland Road

Within the Chattahoochee National Forest in Suches, GA bordered on the north and south ends by private property, you may have heard of Flatland Road and its extensive use by specialized high clearance vehicles.

At only 1.7 miles, this former pioneer road now resides in the national forest, but its use by off-road vehicles is more vandalism than recreation.

Our concerns with the heavy and unapproved use of this stretch of Flatland Road are twofold:

1. Sedimentation flowing into streams is one of the most significant issues within the Chattahoochee National Forest. This stretch of Flatland Road is one of the most egregious examples of this concern. Stream sedimentation occurs when poorly designed or maintained gravel/dirt roads wash into nearby streams and rivers, profoundly negatively affects fish and other wildlife. A portion of this stretch of Flatlands Road is not only directly next to Suches Creek but runs through the creek itself.
2. This section of Flatland Road is not approved for vehicles, including off-road use, by the USFS and should be properly closed. If the USFS formally "opens" this road in the future, they should regularly grade, gravel, and maintain this stretch to ensure sedimentation is properly reduced or eliminated. Properly closing this section of road will also

eliminate the convoys of oversized vehicles and motorbikes that travel through leaving trash and diminishing the land and water quality.

GAFW has made closing Flatland Road a priority for almost a decade and has recently spoken with property owners adjacent to the area of concern who fully support the road's closure. Additionally, we are communicating with the USFS Blue Ridge Ranger District, which has been very responsive to our request to properly close the road.

GAFW, on behalf of our members, will stay on this concern and is cautiously optimistic that we will be successful in our efforts to close this road permanently.

Staff Training: Wilderness First Aid

Thanks to funding through The Chattahoochee Oconee Forests Interpretive Fund at the North Georgia Community Foundation, GAFW Outreach Coordinator Andrew Linker acquired the most up-to-date Wilderness First Aid training and resources in July of 2022.

Andrew states, "As Georgia ForestWatch Outreach Coordinator, safety will continue to be our top priority as we coordinate educational programming and experiences in our national forests. Wilderness First Aid training not only helps us continue to prioritize safety, but it also helps us better plan Outings and might even empower others with life-saving techniques. The goal is to stay prepared, but hope we never have to use these skills."

GAFW Responds

GAFW responded to the U.S. Forest Service's (USFS) Blue Ridge Ranger District (BRRD) Special Use Proposals (SUP) Project. As with all commercial use of our national forests, vendors must apply for a permit from the USFS and go through a public comment process.

The applicants included in this proposal include a mountain bike race, tubing on the Toccoa River, a running race, and an equipment provider on Lake Blue Ridge.

GAFW fully supports recreational use, including commercially, within the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests (CONF) if the activities do not harm the ecology or natural balance of the forest or other users or beneficiaries. You can view our submitted comments here.

There's Still Time

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.

In the Media

Here's an article by Peter McIntosh in this month's *Laurel of Northeast Georgia* magazine about the Clayton AT designation. The article has a brief mention of GAFW.

GAFW Outings

We are seeking 5 hi-viz hats and vests to outfit volunteers this year to support our new Wilderness Monitoring Program!

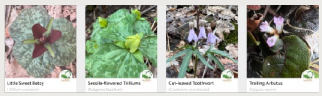
Consider browsing our Amazon wish list to donate these items.

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

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

State Legislative Update

If you are concerned about how the Georgia State Parks reservation system allows users to reserve campsites and then regularly not show preventing others from enjoying the site, then visit the petition for Making Changes to Georgia State Park Reservations.

Ways to Help GAFW

Donate items to our annual retreat auction fundraiser.

GAFW's annual membership retreat is scheduled for October 15, 2022, at Lake Winfield Scott near Suches, GA. As part of our retreat each year, we host an online fundraising auction. We are searching for donated items such as art, crafts, or outdoor gear, and vacation stays such as mountain cabins, gift cards from businesses, or recreational activities such as rafting, fishing, biking, or exploring. Please contact us at info@gafw.org for more information, and thank you.

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

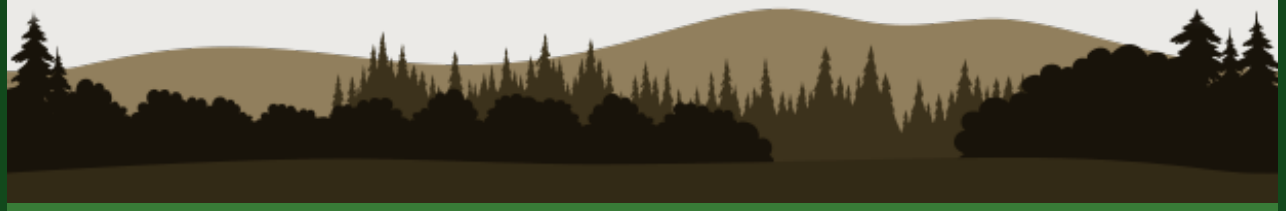
Georgia ForestWatch is the only nonprofit organization with a mission solely dedicated to ensuring the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests remain healthy and available for future generations, and we can only pursue our mission with the support of the community.

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.

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