GEORGIA FORESTWATCH
PRESERVE PROTECT RESTORE GAFW.ORG

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Today is International Day of Forests

Today is the **International Day of Forests**. The United Nations General Assembly **proclaimed** March 21 as the International Day of Forests in 2012 to celebrate and raise awareness of the importance of all types of forests. Each year more than 32 million acres of forests are lost globally, an area roughly the size of Louisiana. In addition to providing 80% of all terrestrial biodiversity, forests play a critical role in climate change. Deforestation results in up to 18% of the world's carbon emissions – almost equal to all the CO2 from the global transportation sector. Equally crucial, healthy forests are one of the world's primary carbon sinks, with virgin, old-growth, and mature forests sequestering the lion's share.

Forests are a vital source of food and nutrition.
Nearly one billion people globally depend on harvesting wild food such as herbs, fruits, nuts, meat, and insects for nutritious diets. In some remote tropical areas, the consumption of wild meat is estimated to cover between 60 - 80 percent of daily protein needs.

Forests are natural pharmacies.
Around 50,000 plant species – many of which grow in forests – have medicinal value. Local communities use forest-derived medicines for a wide array of ailments. Many common pharmaceutical medicines are derived from forest plants, including cancer-treating drugs from the Madagascar periwinkle and malaria medication quinine from cinchona trees.

Healthy forests protect us from diseases.

Forests have traditionally served as a natural barrier to disease transmission between animals and humans, but as deforestation continues, the risk of diseases spilling over from animals to people is rising. Over 30% of new diseases reported since 1960 are attributed to land-use change, including deforestation.

Forests boost our mental and physical health.
Spending time in forests increases positive emotions and decreases stress, blood pressure, depression, fatigue, anxiety, and tension. Trees in cities also absorb pollutant gases from traffic and industry and filter fine particulates such as dust, dirt, and smoke, which help shield urban populations from respiratory diseases.

Forests play a central role in combating humanity's biggest health threat: climate change.
Healthy forests help keep global warming in check: forests contain 662 billion tons of carbon, more than half the global carbon stock in soils and vegetation. Forests and trees also help buffer exposure to heat and extreme weather events caused by climate change, which poses a major global health challenge. For example, trees properly placed around buildings cool the air and can cut air conditioning needs by up to 30%, also saving energy.

Forests are under threat and need our help.
Ten million hectares – roughly the equivalent of 14 million football pitches – of forest were lost per year to deforestation between 2015 and 2020. Forest insects damage around 35 million hectares of forest annually. Fire affected approximately 98 million hectares of forest globally in 2015. We can protect our planet and health through forest-friendly policies and increased investment in forests and trees.

Use Your Voice. National Forest White House Call In

Following up on our request last week to **sign the petition by our partners at Climate Forests,** we ask you to call the White House today. We want as many folks calling the White House as possible urging fast and meaningful action to protect our critical climate forests.

America's forests are incredibly valuable. They are home to **wildlife** like birds, salamanders, voles, bats, wolves, bears, and more. Our forests filter drinking water for millions of Americans. And our forests help us fight climate change, absorbing and storing carbon. Unfortunately, our mature and old-growth forests are threatened by logging. Millions of acres are not protected, and more than 300,000 acres are already included in proposed logging projects nationally. You can help protect our forests from logging by making a quick phone call today.

We've been calling on the Biden administration to protect our oldest and most

valuable trees for a year, and we've been making progress. Last April, President Biden issued an **executive order** directing the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management to address threats to mature and old-growth forests. We're coming up on the first anniversary of the President's order and expecting to see some announcements soon. We need to make sure that the Biden administration takes the strongest possible action to keep these forests standing, and we need your help. Today we are asking people across the country to call the White House and let them know that our older forests are worth more standing than they are as timber.

Please make a phone call, and thank you for taking action.

White House comment line: 202-456-1111. The comment line is open from 11:00 am to 3:00 pm eastern Tue, Wed, and Thu. You may need to wait on the line to reach someone to make your comment. If you get a busy signal, please call back.

Phone Script:
"My name is _____, and I'm from _____. I'm calling today about mature and old-growth trees and forests on federal land. Our older trees are incredibly valuable. They are habitats for hundreds of species, filter water that millions of Americans depend on for drinking water, and absorb and store tons of carbon. Millions of acres of mature and old-growth trees are not protected from logging, and as a result, hundreds of thousands of acres are threatened by logging projects and timber sales. I'm calling to thank President Biden for his executive order directing the conservation of mature and old-growth forests and to ask the President to take the next step by adopting a national rule to protect these trees from logging and other threats. Thank you."

You can modify this script to include personal information about how you've been affected by climate change, a wildlife species you care about, or a particular old forest you love.

Sinkhole Sedimentation into Lake Burton

In Rabun County, close to where the Tallulah River flows into Lake Burton, a sinkhole was reported to GAFW by residents on Lake Burton in the Fall of 2022. Reports of

significant sedimentation flowing from a GA Department of Transportation (GA DOT) project on U.S. Route 76 (US 76) just west of Popcorn Overlook had resulted in the sedimentation of Popcorn Creek and further downstream into the lake.

GAFW inspected the site in December 2022 and found an attempt had been made to begin filling the sinkhole. The rerouting of water from both rainfall and naturally occurring springs on the uphill side of the road had been re-channeled, reducing the ongoing erosion. While US 76 is a federal route and the project lead is GA DOT, the uphill and downhill adjacent lands outside the easement are within the boundaries of the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests (CONF).

GAFW reported this to the Chattooga River Ranger District (CRRD) Ranger Ryan Foote, who was recently made aware of the concern and immediately began a conversation with GA DOT to find a resolution. Ranger Foote and GA DOT started partnering to identify the full scope of the concern and outline a plan to address the situation permanently.

Ranger Foote and GAFW visited the site together this month to discuss the solutions and were pleased to find that GA DOT had begun staging the heavy equipment needed to fill the sinkhole permanently (see photo above). Ranger Foote has signed an agreement to allow GA DOT to work beyond the easement, which will result in some additional forest land disturbance in the short term but is necessary to solve the problem.

GAFW thanks Ranger Foote and the GA DOT for working together to resolve this concern and the GAFW members who brought this concern to our attention. If you are aware of concerns like this within, or directly adjacent to, the CONF, please do not hesitate to report it to us at **report@gafw.org**.

Donate to GAFW Today

Upcoming GAFW Outings

Wednesday, April 5 - Tour the Chattahoochee Forest National Fish Hatchery, Suches, GA. 10:00 am.

Saturday, April 8 - Private Hike & Tour - **Lula Lake Land Trust with Debbie**, Lookout Mountain, GA. 11:00 am.

Thursday, April 13 - **Raven Cliffs Falls Restorative Hike with Jessica & Maria** , Helen, GA. 11 am.

Saturday, April 22 - Wildflowers & Waterfall Hike at Mount Airy Creek with Jess, Dahlonega, GA. 10 am.

Thursday, April 27 - **Keown Falls & Johns Mountain with Bill & Leslie,** NW GA, near Resaca, GA. 10:00 am.

Saturday, May 6 - **Cooper's Creek-Old Growth "Valley of the Giants" with Melanie & Cliff**, 10:00 am.

Thursday, May 11 - **Cradle of Forestry Guided Tour** , Pisgah Forest, NC. 1 pm.

Saturday, October 14 - Save the Date! GAFW Annual Retreat at Red Top Mountain.

Interested in leading a hike or other outing for GAFW? We are searching for additional leaders who are willing to share their favorite parts of the forest. Let us know at **outreach@gafw.org**.

GAFW Outings on Meetup

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

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Thank You

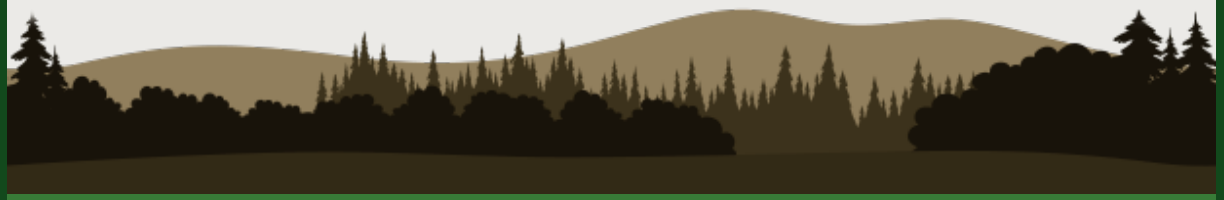
Georgia ForestWatch is the only nonprofit organization with a mission solely dedicated to ensuring the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests remain healthy and available for future generations, and we can only pursue our mission with the support of the community.

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.



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