GEORGIA FORESTWATCH
PRESERVE PROTECT RESTORE GAFW.ORG

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Sedimentation Concerns Resolved

You have probably noticed increased intensity and frequency of storms in recent years. Thunderstorms and tornados, once extremely rare during the winter months, are now common. **Climate change** is changing our world more rapidly than anticipated and, in the meantime, creating daily problems such as increased sedimentation flowing into our clean streams.

GAFW observed, reported, and confirmed the resolution of two significant sedimentation concerns this past week. The first was along the Soque River in Habersham County, bordering the national forest. While raining, GAFW observed significant sedimentation from an overflowing Shoal Branch creek pouring across the road into the Soque (see above photo). GAFW reported the concern to the **Soque River Watershed Association** (SRWA), the USFS, and GA EPD. We are happy to report that our partner SRWA tracked down the source of the pollution and is working with the landowner to resolve the issue before the next rainstorm.

Later in the week, GAFW received a report from members concerned about the sedimentation resulting from construction at **Amicalola Falls State Park**. At several points along the drainage into the Amicalola River, a state-designated trout stream, the silt fencing and hay bales erected to eliminate sedimentation were worn or missing allowing for pollution to run into the streams feeding the river. After receiving the report, GAFW conducted a site visit, documented the concerns, and reported them to GA State Park leadership, GA EPD, and Dawson County code enforcement. Dawson County promptly responded and addressed the concern with the construction contractors and the state park.

GAFW remains steadfast in our position that sedimentation resulting from poorly constructed and unmaintained roads within the national forest is second only to climate change as the highest concern within our state's public lands.

If you observe any type of runoff sedimentation flowing into our streams, rivers, and lakes, please take photos, save the location (**a dropped pin on google maps works great**), and email your observation to **report@gafw.org** with a brief description of the concern. GAFW will validate the observation and, if warranted, report the concern to the proper authorities. Priority will be given to concerns within the boundaries or adjacent to our national forest lands. With your help, GAFW can work towards reducing the amount of sedimentation polluting our waterways.

Join Us for Earth Day

Earth Day is upon us, and GAFW's work will be on full display at several events over the next week. Please join us in diversifying, educating, and activating the environmental movement in Georgia and pursuing our vision of ***a future where people enjoy forests that have reached their majesty and where intact natural processes support healthy ecosystems and thriving biodiversity for all.***

Please come out to support Earth Day at the following events.

- Wednesday, 4/19 **UNG Earth Day** - Gainesville Campus from 11 am to 1:30 pm.
- Saturday, 4/22 **Bowen Center for the Arts Earth Day** in Dawsonville from 10 am - 2 pm.
- Saturday, 4/22 **Decatur Every Day is Earth Day** event from 1 - 4 pm.
- Saturday, 4/22 **Avondale Earth Day** from 2 - 5 pm.
- Saturday, 4/29 **Sautee Nacoochee Center** from 3 - 6 pm.

Updates from Around the State

Georgia Water Coalition
GAFW is a proud member of the **Georgia Water Coalition** (GWC). If your organization, business, or club (no individual memberships) is interested in learning more about the work of the GWC, **please consider becoming a member.** Members are invited to the 2023 Spring Membership Meeting on May 3, 2023, from 10:30 am - 4:00 pm at the Alcovy Conservation Center in Covington, GA & Virtually via Zoom. GWC members can find **more information and register for the meeting here**.

You can also see GWC's **2023 Legislative Session Summary here**, view **Key Georgia Legislation**, and **sign up for alerts from GWC's Protect Georgia**.

Turkey Hunting Season
The **statewide turkey season** opened with stormy weather Saturday, April 1. Just over 1,700 birds were reported on opening day and nearly 3,000 for the entire weekend, all from private lands across the state. In Georgia, hunters are allowed one turkey per day and only two turkeys for the full season. The public land turkey season kicked off on April 7, but the opening day was wet, rainy, and unsuitable for turkey hunters. The season will run through May 15, and **if you plan to visit a public turkey hunting location, you can stay safe by not hiking at sunrise or sunset, staying on established trails, and wearing visible orange clothing**.

Rabun County Community Wildfire Protection Plan
The Chestatee-Chattahoochee Resource Conservation and Development Council was recently awarded $190,440 by the U.S. Forest Service to create a comprehensive **Community Wildfire Defense Grant Program** for Rabun County. It will identify and rank the entire county as to the wildfire risk within the county and provide sensible mitigation practices to help reduce those risks, especially those communities within the wildland-urban interface.

I do not have to outrun the bear. I only have to outrun you.
We all know the joke, but this is the wrong way to avoid a bear attack. The National Park Service semi-jokingly released the following message recently: "If you come across a bear, never push a slower friend down…even if you feel the friendship has run its course." Seeing a bear in the wild is a notable event, and even if you can trip your friend and get away, you just shouldn't.

The NPS offers **additional guidance here**, including specific guidance for the only type of bear we have in Georgia. *Black Bears: If a black bear attacks you, DO NOT PLAY DEAD. Try to escape to a secure place such as a car or building. If escape is impossible, try to fight back using any available object. Concentrate your kicks and blows on the bear's face and muzzle.* And remember climbing a tree is not an option, as black bears can climb better than you.

Do Not Drink and Fly
Speaking of dangers in the forest, do we now have to worry about drunk birds? **GA DNR has warned us** that this time of year, fruit-eating birds such as **cedar waxwings** and **American robins** often eat fruit that has started to rot and ferment. A byproduct of fermentation is the production of alcohol.

The consumption of these fermented fruits can cause the birds to lose much of their coordination and capacity to fly. This can cause them to crash into windows and other obstacles. Sadly, they can also die directly from alcohol poisoning if they ingest enough of the fermented fruit. Another possible cause for drunken flying is that the birds have eaten **Nandina** (sacred bamboo) berries. This exotic invasive plant is used in landscaping and draws cyanide from the soil, depositing often lethal doses in its bright red fruit.

Upcoming GAFW Outings

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,** NW GA, near Resaca, GA. 10:00 am.

Thursday, April 27 - GAFW Book Club Meeting, Zoom, 7:00 pm.

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

A reminder

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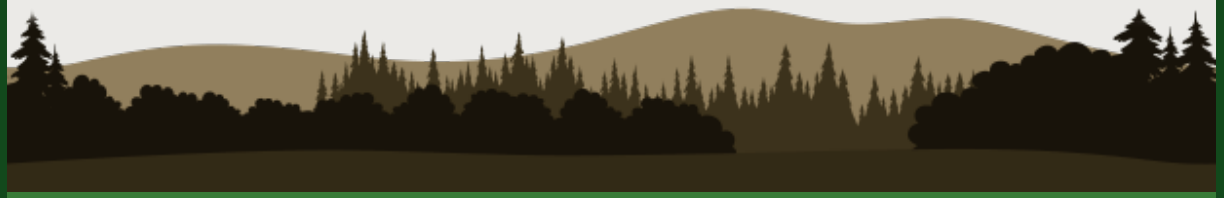
Thank You

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.

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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