GEORGIA FORESTWATCH
PRESERVE PROTECT RESTORE GAFW.ORG

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# FORESTWATCH JOURNAL

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## GAFW 2.0

This year is the 38th Anniversary of GAFW's founding and will be our 20th Annual Retreat. As you may recognize already, we are in a period of growth to expand the influence of GAFW and do everything possible to achieve our mission and vision.

The challenging news is that we have so much to do to alleviate and reverse the impacts and sources of climate change. The good news is that GAFW and the local USFS leadership are (at least) 80% in agreement on what the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest needs to remain standing and healthy for future generations. GAFW & USFS CONF agreement points include the need for additional funding to address poorly built and maintained roads and trails, more resources to ensure the forest is not "loved to death" by recreational enthusiasts, expanding upon the diversity of those who appreciate our forests and ensuring they are welcome and safe when visiting, and increasing the resources for law enforcement to protect both visitors and the forest.

The remaining 20% mostly focuses on commercial timbering, embracing the forest as a complex ecosystem, including the carbon cost of "managing" the forest as a primary decision factor and making a "hands off" approach to forest management the default instead of the exception. In this next chapter of GAFW's progress, we will focus on strengthening and supporting where we and the USFS agree while still maintaining our role as an honest broker representing an important constituency that believes in allowing the forest to regrow into mature and old growth while not repeating the mistakes of the past.

# Our Mission, Vision, and Values

Georgia ForestWatch's mission statement has been updated to be more concise, compelling, and memorable.

Mission: **To preserve and protect our national forests.**

Our mission is the "purpose" statement guiding our ultimate goals for the organization or what we hope to see if we successfully implement our mission. If successful in pursuing our mission, our vision is the "what" that comes to fruition.

Vision: **Georgia ForestWatch envisions a future where people enjoy forests that have reached their majesty and where intact natural processes support healthy ecosystems and thriving biodiversity for all.**

Our values guide our approach to pursuing our mission and achieving our vision. These are the guardrails that maintain our integrity and in maintaining our "honest broker" reputation.

**Values:**

• **Natural Processes** - In most cases, we support a hands-off approach to public land management.

• **Protection** - Achieving our vision requires protecting and appreciating our national forests and the watersheds, native plants, and wildlife that call these forests home.

• **Relationships** – We strive for a positive, non-adversarial partnership with the USFS. We support the goals and missions of our partners and membership coalitions and believe the only way to have good partners is to be a good partner.

• **Science** - Climate change is the defining issue of our time, and we are at a defining moment. We adhere to data and facts derived from the peer-reviewed scientific process to guide our positions.

• **Input** – We support the **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)** and the voice it gives stakeholders in managing our public lands. We oppose all attempts to weaken NEPA or reduce the voice of stakeholders.

• **Collaboration** – We partner with a broad diversity of individuals, government agencies, legislators, and organizations and are stronger and more effective when working together.

• **Equity and Inclusion** – We support the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and that increasing the diversity of engaged public land stakeholders and supporters is vital to achieving our mission. As an inclusive organization representing diverse views, interests, and opinions on public land policy and

management, we welcome all who support our mission, vision, and values.
• **Access** - We support equitable, safe access for all that does not negatively impact public land.
• **History** - Humans have inhabited North America for at least 10,000 years, and our public lands are the rightful ancestral homelands of Indigenous peoples.
• **Stewardship** – We will reduce our ecological impact on the earth by reducing, reusing, and recycling at every opportunity.

With our updated mission, vision, and values along with our updated website (see below), professional staff, community support, and optimism for the future, GAFW is well-positioned to be the effective organization the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest needs to remain healthy and standing, for our children's children.

## New Website

Rolled out in conjunction with our updated mission, vision, and values, we have an updated website (same address, **www.gafw.org**). Please take a moment to peruse the new site and let us know what you think at **communications@gafw.org**.

If you find any errors, broken links, etc... please also let us know at **communications@gafw.org**.

## 2023 Spring Appeal

Today we are kicking off our Spring Fundraising Appeal. GAFW understands you prefer to read updates and insights primarily focused on the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest and the U.S. Forest Service (as do we), but as an independent community-supported nonprofit, we only exist with the support of you - our members and donors.

To respect your time, our organization only comes to you with three appeals annually. This one, the year-end appeal and the request for sponsorships in support of our annual retreat (Save the Date: October 14, 2023, at **Red Top Mountain State Park**).

In the past year, you may have noticed increased activity from GAFW. After years of focusing our very limited resources on primary external functions, we, as is common with nonprofits, neglected to invest in ourselves. In 2021 the GAFW board of directors changed that approach by hiring a new Executive Director and providing him with their vision of expansion. The new Director, in turn, created and filled the Communications & Development Coordinator positions and transitioned the Outreach Coordinator position to full-time. This investment in our future is now providing dividends through this **weekly digital newsletter**, the *ForestWatch Journal*, increased quality of our quarterly **mailed** newsletter, *ForestNews*, sent to members, more Outings with a focus on expanding the **types of Outings** to accommodate a diversity of abilities and interests, an increase in foundation grant submissions, and a new **book club** all while maintaining our role in providing science-based comments to proposed USFS CONF projects advocating for a focus on "natural processes."

We, as we hope you are also, are optimistic about the future of Georgia's national forests. With your support, we can continue to build upon our role of identifying and advocating ways to increase your voice in managing our public lands.

If you are already a member, thank you, and please consider an **additional gift to GAFW today**. If you are not already a member, please become a **member** today.

On behalf of the entire Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest and your children's children, Georgia ForestWatch thanks you for your support.

Donate to GAFW Today

## Upcoming GAFW Outings

**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.

Share This Email | Share This Email | Share This Email

## Thank You

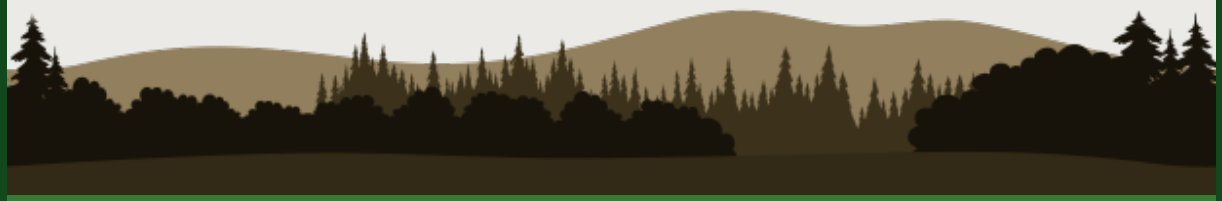
Georgia ForestWatch is the only nonprofit organization with a mission solely dedicated to ensuring the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests remain healthy and available for future generations, and we can only pursue our mission with the support of the community.

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 preserve and protect our national forests.



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