GEORGIA FORESTWATCH
PRESERVE PROTECT RESTORE GAFW.ORG

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Motorized Off-Road Vehicles

Motorized vehicle recreational use has dramatically increased in the past two decades. Our public lands are the primary destination for off-highway (OHV) and all-terrain (ATV) vehicles.

The Chattahoochee Oconee National Forest (CONF) has approximately 95 miles of dedicated OHV trails across all four ranger districts.

- **Blue Ridge Ranger District**
  - **Beasley Knob OHV Trails** – 13.4 miles
  - **Davenport Mountain OHV Trails** – 5.9 miles
  - **Whissenhunt OHV Trails** – 11.2 miles
- **Chattooga River District**
  - **Oakey Mountain OHV Trails** – 9.2 miles
- **Conasauga Ranger District**
  - **Houston Valley OHV Trails** – 25 miles
  - **Rock Creek ORV Trail** – 4.7 miles
  - **Tatum Lead ORV Trail** – 5.5 miles
  - **Windy Gap, Milma Creek, and Tibbs OHV Trails** – 4.1 miles
- **Oconee Ranger District**

- **Roberts Bike Camp OHV Trails** – 8 miles
- **Town Creek OHV Trails** – 8 miles

According to a **2019 analysis from the Sierra Club**, "about 30 percent of all motor vehicle use is for social and recreational purposes." It burns "approximately 36.8 billion gallons of gasoline annually "or about 20 percent of total US carbon emissions from motor vehicles." The Environmental Protection Agency **(EPA) states** ATVs "have very high emission rates," and a "two-stroke ATV or motorcycle can emit as much pollution in one hour as over 30 automobiles operating for one hour." Additionally, the **OHV industry is actively lobbying** against disusing PFAS or "forever chemicals" used heavily in producing OHV parts.

GAFW is very concerned with motorized recreation's long-term environmental impact but has primarily been a leading voice in the overuse and abuse of OHVs on USFS roads and trails. **GAFW has long fought against** the miscategorization of OHVs as "street legal," allowing them to be titled and registered in Georgia. Due to the high level of OHV misuse seen in Georgia's national forests, red flags are raised from any attempt to provide tags to any type of OHV under state law.

CONF rules state:

- Vehicles cannot be operated "in violation of state law."
- "OHVs that are ***not street legal*** must remain on designated trails marked specifically for OHV use," and "you can only ride on trails designated for the purpose of off-road."
- "Anyone operating an OHV on a Forest Service Road (including dirt/gravel roads) must follow all State vehicle laws and must have a valid driver's license."

During the 2022 GA General Assembly, **HB121** was passed and signed into law by the Governor. The bill's misleading title suggests it is focused on watercraft (it is the law requiring anything being pulled behind a speedboat to stay 200ft offshore), but the majority of the bill cracks open the door to registering OHVs. If an OHV clears such hurdles as complying with federal emission standards, has four or more wheels, steering wheel, non-straddle seat, headlights, brake lights, taillights, rearview mirrors, and seatbelts (many do not, but more of the newer models have begun including these) can if registered, be operated on county roads with speed limits up to 35 mph.

Thankfully the limitations placed on acquiring these tags are such that OHV use on non-OHV USFS roads remains illegal. However,

unauthorized, inappropriate, and damaging use of OHVs on CONF roads remains a challenge as most of those who are already tearing up the roads and trails with motorized vehicles are less concerned with adhering to the law in the first place. Motorized misuse of CONF unpaved roads is Georgia's leading source of sediment pollution.

GAFW will continue to monitor this important concern and recommends that if you observe illegal motorized vehicle use within the CONF, you call 911 to report it. Additionally, **ONLY IF YOU CAN STAY SAFE WHILE DOING SO AND PLEASE DO NOT INTERVENE OR CONFRONT ANYONE IN ANY CAPACITY**, take a picture or video of the vehicle(s) activity and along with an approximate location, date, and time email to **report@gafw.org**. GAFW will pass along reports to USFS Law Enforcement.

GAFW Retreat Business Sponsorship Opportunities

SPONSORSHIP LEVELS	Majestic Old-Growth Presenting Sponsor $5,000 (limited opportunity)	LONG LEAF PINE $2,500	SAPLING $1,000	SEEDLING $500	SPROUT $275
Company name/logo on event promotions					
Retreat tickets w/shirts & 1 window shirts	4 tickets + 4 shirts	4 tickets + 4 shirts	2 tickets + 2 shirts	2 tickets + 2 shirts	2 tickets + 2 shirts
Listing on the GAFW Web Business Partner Page					
Logo on Retreat T-shirt	As a presenting sponsor				
Promotional materials displayed at retreat					
Feature in our digital newsletter, *ForestWatch Journal*					
Ad space in our print publication, *Forest News*	Back cover	Inside front cover			

We're getting excited about our **20th annual Fall Retreat, on Saturday, October 14, at Red Top Mountain State Park.**

Sponsoring our Fall Retreat is your opportunity to demonstrate your business' support for GAFW's important work while enjoying benefits, including tabling opportunities, digital and print marketing, tickets to

the retreat, and more.

Attendees will enjoy a day of educational talks and activities, a catered lunch, and opportunities to meet and socialize with fellow GAFW community members.

You'll reach like-minded forest lovers with your business name, logo, and contact information while helping GAFW continue our important work.

We're proud to see the event grow as we get the opportunity to engage more forest supporters in our mission.

Sponsor Now

GAFW Joins the Georgia State Charitable Contributions Program (GASCCP)

Great news for Georgia State employees & GAFW—

We have been approved for the **2023-2024 Georgia State Charitable Contributions Program (GACCP)** campaign. This is the Georgia State employee workplace giving program. We're grateful for the trust the State of Georgia demonstrated by adding Georgia ForestWatch to the GASCCP.

Soon state employees can elect to support Georgia ForestWatch as an automatic payroll deduction. The GASCCP campaign runs from September 16, 2023, through November 16, 2023.

Thank you for supporting our work in preserving and protecting our national forest.

Donate to GAFW Today

Upcoming GAFW Outings

Thursday, July 27 - **GAFW Book Club Meeting**, Zoom (*Wild Spectacle* by Janisse Ray)

Friday, August 11 - **Museum of the Cherokee Indian**, Cherokee, NC.

Thursday, August 30 - **GAFW Book Club Meeting**, Zoom (*The Changing Blue Ridge Mountains* by Brent Martin)

Thursday, September 28- **GAFW Book Club Meeting**, Zoom (*Deliverance*, by James Dickey)

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

Friday, October 20 - Lula Lake Land Trust - Details will be posted soon.

Saturday, October 21 - **The Second Wurst Festival Ever**, Fannin Brewing Company, Blue Ridge, GA (Tickets on sale soon)

Thursday, October 26 - **GAFW Book Club Meeting**, Zoom (*Haints on Black Mountain* by Ann Hite)

Thursday, November 30 - **GAFW Book Club Meeting**, Zoom (*Literary Field Guide to Southern Appalachia,* Edited by Rose McLarney, Laura-Gray Street, and L. L. Gaddy)

Thursday, December 28 - GAFW Book Club Meeting, Zoom (*The Lost Book of Eleanor Dare* by Kimberly Brock)

GAFW Outings on Meetup

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

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Thank You

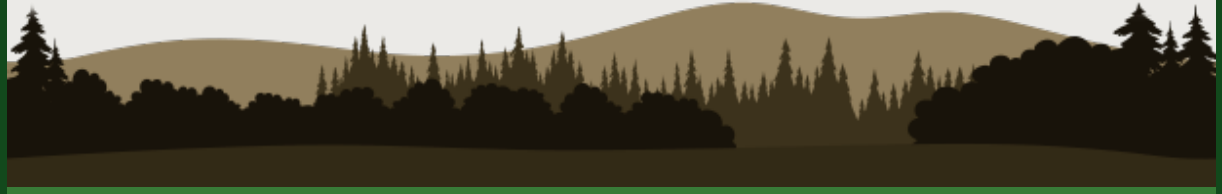
Georgia ForestWatch is the only nonprofit organization with a mission solely dedicated to ensuring the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests remain healthy and available for future generations, and we can only pursue our mission with the support of the community.

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 preserve and protect our national forests.



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