GEORGIA FORESTWATCH
PRESERVE PROTECT RESTORE GAFW.ORG

September 19, 2023

FORESTWATCH JOURNAL

Volume 2, Issue 33

Member Only ForestWatch Journal

This week's ForestWatch Journal newsletter is for members only. In addition to the informative updates below, ticket sales are now open to members only for our annual retreat.

While GAFW is primarily focused on ensuring the Chattahoochee Oconee National Forest (CONF) is ecologically healthy (and standing) for future generations we also monitor the activities and policies of the **U.S. Forest Service** nationally, the national forests in neighboring states (**Cherokee** NF, **Nantahala** NF, **Sumter** NF, **Osceola** NF, **Talladega** NF) and other federal and state public lands in our home state such as the **Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge**. Staying informed allows the organization to follow important trends, compose nuanced positions on complex policies, and prioritize urgent matters that may not appear to have a direct or imminent impact on the CONF.

For example, we inspected a proposed timber sale in the Andrew Pickens Ranger District in neighboring South Carolina's Sumter NF last week. Why, you ask? Good question. The timber sale in question includes the banks and tributaries of the **Chauga River**, which flows into **Lake Hartwell**, the downstream impoundment of the Chattooga River (**join GAFW on our rafting trip later this month**), and the upstream impoundment of the **Savannah River**. Arguably one of the most important

watersheds in Georgia. This timber sale will cut 3,985 CCF. A CCF is a unit of volume measurement equal to 100 cubic feet of volume. In a “perfect” example, imagine a block of wood that is 12" tall by 12" inches wide by 12" deep.

At first glance, GAFW was skeptical of this (as with all) timber sale, but after visiting the site and meeting directly with district staff, we determined this was an appropriate project designed to remove residual commercial plantation plantings and replace them with native short leaf pine and oaks. Putting this section of our forest back on the path to a proper ecological mixed forest.

Keeping up with the wide variety of activities potentially impacting the forest, analyzing the complexities of both bureaucracy and forest science, and keeping all stakeholders informed would be impossible without the resources provided by our supporters. On behalf of GAFW and our national forests, we cannot thank you enough.

Annual Retreat Ticket Sales Open

Thank you for your membership and support. Our organization is 100% financially supported by our members and private foundation partners. As a thanks to our members, you are invited to purchase your tickets to the GAFW Annual Retreat before tickets go on sale to the community.

Our Annual Retreat last year sold out almost immediately, so to accommodate the growing success of GAFW over the past few years, we have moved our event to the **large group shelter** at **Red Top Mountain State Park** . This location will allow us to accommodate up to 250 attendees and is also a convenient day trip from the metro area.

Highlights of this year’s Annual Retreat include:

- Award-winning author, Naturalist, and Environmental Activist **Janisse Ray** is our Keynote Speaker.
- Presentations by Keith Ray, Southeastern Trust for Parks & Land, April Lipscomb, SELC, & J.D. McCrary, GAFW
- Activities including Plants of the Cherokee Walk, Mark Warren, Medicine Bow, What’s in the soil? Interactive table, Mac A. Callaham, Jr., PhD, USFS, Invasive Species Carrie Allen, UNG Professor, Mindful Slow Flow Yoga, Sara Diaz, GAFW Outreach Coordinator, & More (Activity offerings may change)
- 2023 event unique T-Shirts
- Food catered by **Hungry Hippo Eats**
- Raffles, Door Prizes, and Silent Auction items

Need a place to stay? Each ticket also allows you to tent camp with fellow attendees at the Red Top Mountain State Park Pioneer group campground on Friday night, 10/13, and Saturday night, 10/14. No hookups or trailers allowed. Tent only. Come and go as you please. There are also a few cabins and private full hookup campsites at Red Top Mountain State Park available for both nights. If you want camping, a cabin, or a full hookup site, please reserve your space **here**.

Purchase your tickets today, and thank you again for your support. Ticket sales will open to the public on Tuesday September 26.

Retreat Tickets

Carpool to the Retreat

Do you live in North Georgia and plan to attend the Georgia ForestWatch fall retreat? Why not consider carpooling?

You could ride with someone who knows the area around Red Top Mountain State Park. Carpooling also saves energy and lowers emissions. Sharing a ride also gives you a chance to spend some extra time with other GAFW members.

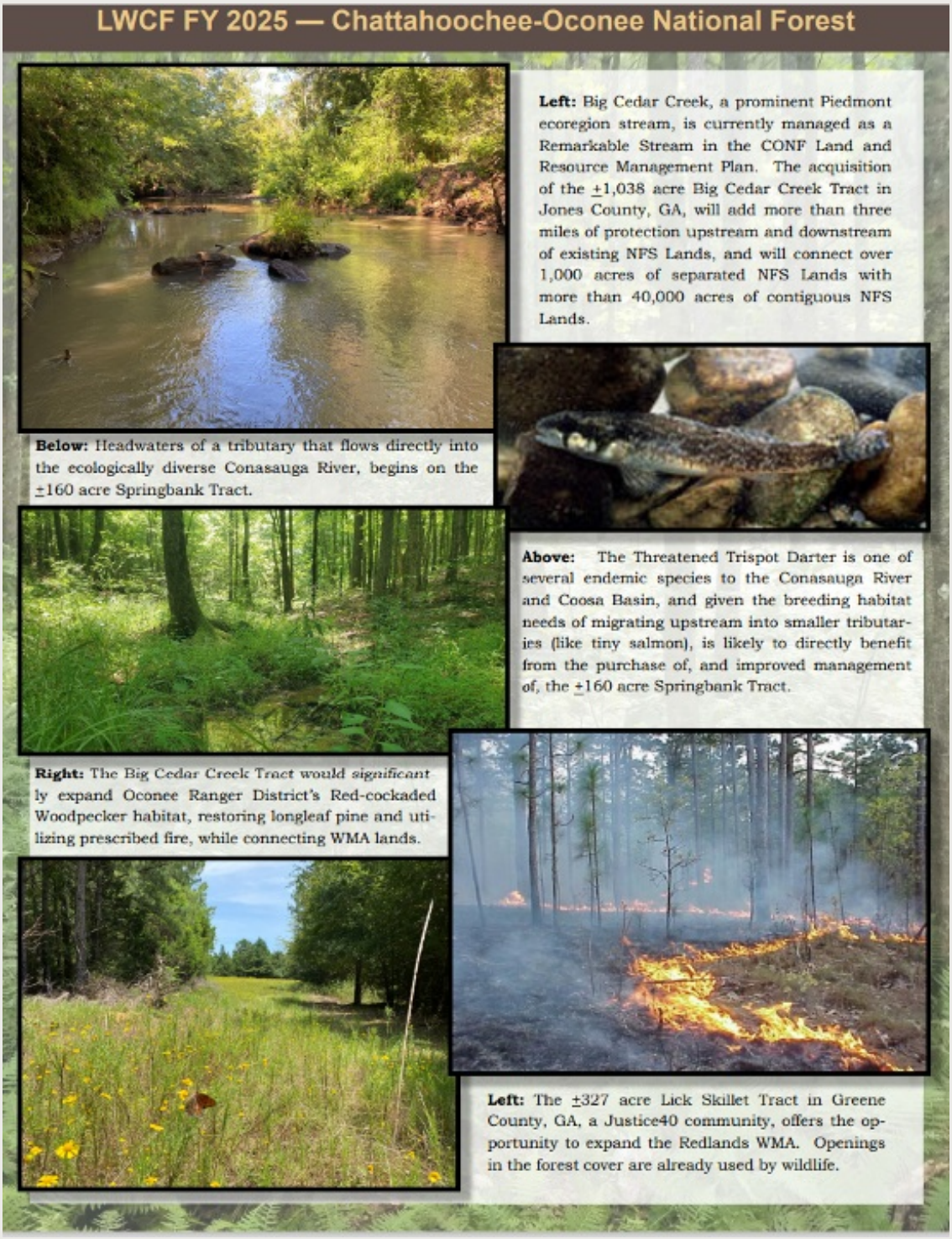
Ted Doll has volunteered to coordinate rides and riders if you're interested. You can text or call him at 706-892-9207 or **email** him. Let us know if you want a ride or drive and take others. See you at the retreat!

Volunteers Needed for the GAFW Retreat

Attending the Retreat and want to volunteer? We need your help. Sign up on the **Volunteer Form**.

Donate to GAFW Today

Support for Land Acquisitions



GAFW supports increasing the geographic footprint of the Chattahoochee Oconee National Forest. Also known as land acquisitions, the USFS annually identifies properties to be ranked internally for funding from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) for purchase.

Since its authorization by Congress in 1965, the LWCF has helped to provide support for and protection of our public lands. Funded by the revenue from federal offshore oil and gas leases, the LWCF provides grants to State and local governments and is used to acquire federal lands, waters, and interests therein necessary to achieve the

natural, cultural, wildlife, and recreation management objectives of federal land management agencies. **See projects funded by the LWCF here**.

The internal USFS process for funding begins with each forest identifying potential acquisitions through available real estate, focusing on properties adjacent to the forest and those with unique ecological or recreational characteristics. The forest's list then goes to a regional panel, where they are further vetted until the final list is approved by USFS national leadership. A key component of high-ranking submissions is the support provided by partner groups such as GAFW.

Recent updates from USFS land acquisitions include:

- 2022 - Closed on a +272-acre Etowah Tract protecting over one mile of the Etowah River.
- 2023 - Closed on the Gryder and Keener Tracts in Murray County. The combined +240 acres are located within the Cohutta WMA, near Jigger Creek. Including these two tracts goes a long way toward reducing forest fragmentation.
- Closing soon – The Cohen and Barrow Tracts in Towns and Gilmer Counties combined at +100 acres, and the Mays Tracts combined at +241.6 acres on Stekoa Creek in Rabun County.
- In preliminary steps on closing 968 acres from the Oxford (Walker County), Bosshardt (Chattooga County), and Nimblewill (Lumpkin County) tracts using FY23 funding.

Current submissions (for FY2025) supported by GAFW include four tracts totaling ±1,644 acres valued at $6,155,600. The tracts are located in both the mountain and piedmont areas of our Forest and create a wide opportunity for public and conservation benefits, including protecting watersheds, improving habitat, and increasing public access. **Read our letter of support here.**

Upcoming GAFW Outings & Outreach

Saturday, September 23 - Come see us at **Patagonia Beltline**, 10 am - 2 pm

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

Friday, September 29 - Outing! Chattooga River Rafting. Reservation cut off 9/22.

Saturday, September 30 - **Outing! Project Chimps Private Group Tour**

Friday, October 6 - **Members Only** - **Outing! Coopers Creek - Old Growth "Valley of the Giants" with Cliff**

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

Saturday, October 21 - **The Second Wurst Festival Ever**, Fannin Brewing Company, Blue Ridge, GA **Tickets are on sale now!**

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

Friday, October 27 - Outing! Core Preserve at Lula Lake Land Trust

Wednesday, November 15th - **Outing! Geology Hike to Ravens Cliffs Falls with Bill**

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 14th - **Outing! Geology Hike along Johns Mountain to Keown Falls**

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

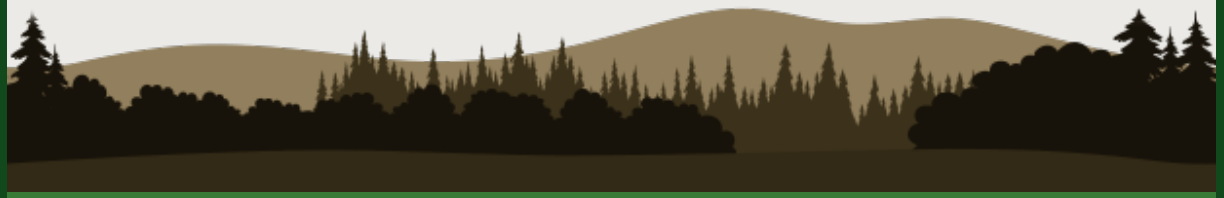
Georgia ForestWatch is the only nonprofit organization with a mission solely dedicated to ensuring the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests remain healthy and available for future generations, and we can only pursue our mission with the support of the community.

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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Georgia Forestwatch | 81 Crown Mtn Place, Building C, Suite 200, Dahlonega, GA 30533

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