GEORGIA FORESTWATCH
PRESERVE PROTECT RESTORE GAFW.ORG

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# FORESTWATCH JOURNAL

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## Ticket Sales Open to All for Our Annual Retreat

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. **Sponsorships of the event are also still available .**

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

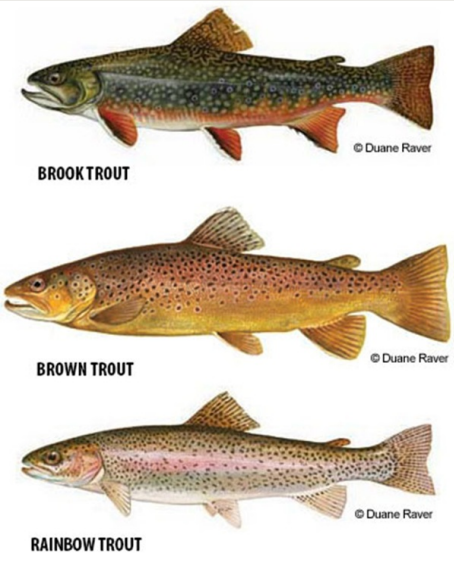
Need a place to stay? Each ticket also allows you to tent camp with fellow attendees at the Red Top Mountain State Park Pioneer group campground on Friday night, 10/13, and Saturday night, 10/14. No hookups or trailers allowed. Tent only. Come and go as you please. There are also a few cabins and private 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.

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

Retreat Tickets

## Your Input Requested




The **Chattooga River Ranger District** (CRRD) of the Chattahoochee Oconee National Forest is seeking public input for the renewal of a 10-year commercial special use permit for **Second Nature Blue Ridge LLC**, doing business as (dba) **Blue Ridge Therapeutic Wilderness** (BRTW). **See the full proposal here.**

BRTW is proposing up to 55 clients per month with group sizes ranging from six to eleven students with two to four field instructors, depending on group size. Field Instructors are with students to guide them through therapy while the group is backpacking and camping throughout the CRRD. All activities would be restricted to authorized trails and camping areas. Permitted activities would adhere to **Leave No Trace Principles** (LNT), USFS dispersed camping guidelines, and occupy given campsites no longer than two consecutive nights. Permitted campsites would be prohibited from being located within 300 feet of a trail, road, established wildlife opening, and/or within the Chattooga River Wild and Scenic Corridor. Additionally, campsites would be prohibited within 100 feet of a perennial and/or seasonal stream channel and 25 feet from an ephemeral stream channel. No activities will take place within Designated Wilderness or Wilderness Study Areas.

GAFW will submit comments by the 10/16/23 due date, and a surface analysis of the ecological impact appears to be reasonable, although GAFW does support limiting special use permits to a maximum of five years. GAFW is not an authority on "wilderness therapy" or any mental health services; however, it has discovered mixed feedback of BRTW programs (See a sample of these **here**, **here**, & **here**). Without any direct evidence of how BRTW programs impact the land, we can only infer from their treatment of patients how closely they follow LNT principles. GAFW will continue to investigate this applicant and welcomes your input.

The second opportunity for public input is an out-of-state proposal from the **Pisgah Ranger District**. The National Forests in North Carolina are seeking public feedback on the proposed renovations by the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission of the 44-acre Setzer Fish Hatchery, located near Brevard, NC. **See the full proposal here.**

Major renovations are proposed for the Davidson River intake, Grogan Creek intake, hatchery building, storage garage, brood stock raceways, production raceways, equalization basin, raceway effluent waste treatment system, public restrooms, parking lots/roadways, and the stormwater pond. This hatchery stocks catchable rainbow, brown, and native brook trout in public mountain trout waters of 15 counties in western NC. Trout are distributed among approximately 80 different streams and lakes annually, completing more than 200 stocking trips and covering more than 36,000 miles.

GAFW may or may not submit comments on this project as it is outside our primary geographic scope, but it welcomes your input to assist us in deciding. In line with **Trout Unlimited's (TU) policy**, GAFW has concerns regarding the production and distribution of non-native trout (rainbow & brown) at the expense of native brook trout. Following our guidelines of supporting "natural processes," GAFW opposes stocking to protect native populations by working to eliminate non-native stocking.

If you have any input, insight, or opinion of either of these proposals, please let us know at **report@gafw.org**

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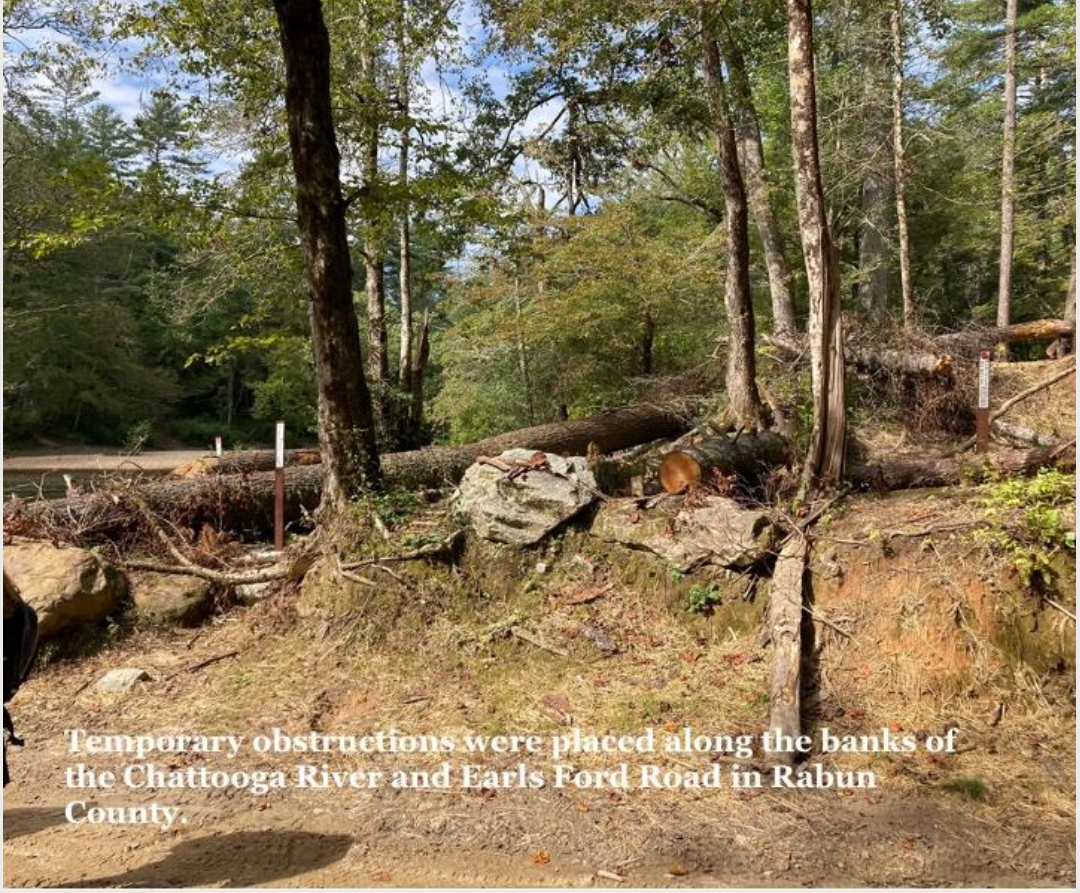
Donate to GAFW Today

## Around the Forest




- It is the perfect time of year in north Georgia. The heat of summer is over, but the swimming holes are still warm(ish), the nights are cool enough to enjoy camping, the kids are back in school, and the leaves have not turned yet, so the weekend watchers are not crowding the overlooks. It is a great time to get out and have your favorite trail or campsite all to yourself. Join us in enjoying your public lands.
- The Blue Ridge Ranger District advises visitors and campers staying at **Lake Winfield Scott Recreation Area** that all water service is discontinued. The water storage tank developed a large leak that precluded water storage for drinking, cooking, and bathhouses. Repairs are expected to be complete before spring. This is an example of the funding needed by the USFS. If you have not done so, **please let our federal representatives know** this is unacceptable and that USFS deferred maintenance and recreation should be fully funded.
- The USFS Chattahoochee National Forest Foothills Landscape Project (FLP) Annual Stakeholder Meeting. Scheduled for Thursday, October 5, 2023, from 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. at the **Lumpkin County Community Center** in Dahlonega and remotely on Teams (the link for the event will be posted to the **FLP website** immediately before the meeting). The USFS will propose plans for the upcoming year and learn what activities stakeholders want to see accomplished in 2025 and beyond. Cannot make it? Let GAFW know your thoughts regarding FLP at **report@gafw.org**.
- As a member of the FLP Collaborative, GAFW recently attended a site visit to the **intersection of Earls Ford Road and the Chattooga River** in Rabun County. A long-time problem area with off-roaders, the concern begins with crossing **Warwoman Creek** and continues into the Chattooga's Wild and Scenic corridor. At the banks of the Chattooga, the off-roaders have made a muddy mess (see **here**, **here**, & **here**), but thankfully, the USFS has temporarily blocked the problem area (see photo above) and has plans to erect permanent barriers at this location. GAFW fully supports blocking this

area but proposes that **the barriers be placed before the Warwoman crossing**—more on this to come.

- The USFS is always in need of great people. From entry-level to District Ranger at locations across Georgia, you can support and protect our public lands. These permanent, full-time positions have built-in opportunities to advance. **See jobs here** and **learn more here**.
- Globally, carbon dioxide, methane, air and sea temperatures, and sea levels are at their highest ever recorded levels and rising. Sea ice and glaciers are shrinking at alarming rates. There is unequivocal **evidence** that Earth is warming at an unprecedented rate and that **human activity is the principal cause**. The science is settled, and our children face the most significant existential threat since humans first stepped foot in North America. Thankfully, the federal government launched two new actions to address climate, clean energy, conservation, and environmental justice. First, the launch of the **American Climate Corps**, a new workforce training and service initiative that will mobilize more than 20,000 Americans to work conserving and restoring our lands and waters, bolstering community resilience, and deploying clean energy. **Learn more here.** Additionally, $4.6 billion in grants is being made available through the **Climate Pollution Reduction Grants** program to fund programs and policies that cut climate pollution, advance environmental justice, and deploy clean energy solutions nationwide.

## Support Us While You Shop at Walmart

When you shop on Walmart.com or in the Walmart app, you can choose to round up your totals to the nearest dollar and have the change donated to GAFW through Walmart's Spark Good program. **From now until October 13th, your Round Up donations will be matched 2:1.**

How to get started—

1: Visit **walmart.com/sparkgood** and sign in to your Walmart.com account
2: Search for GAFW
3: Go to the Round Up box and click "Select this Charity."
4: Start rounding up to this charity every time you shop.

## Upcoming GAFW Outings & Outreach

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

**Friday, September 29 - Outing! Chattooga River Rafting**.

**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** - **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

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

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## Thank You

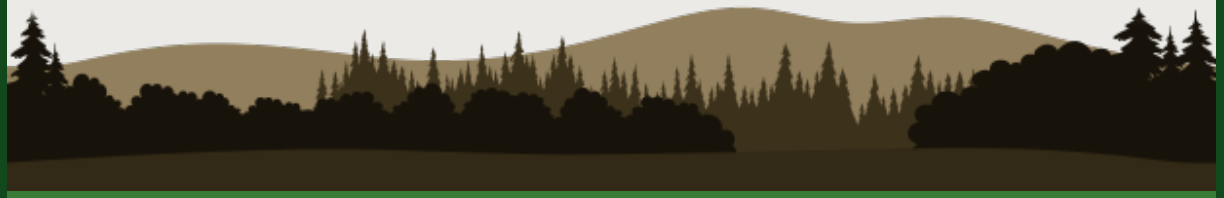
Georgia ForestWatch is the only nonprofit organization with a mission solely dedicated to ensuring the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests remain healthy and available for future generations, and we can only pursue our mission with the support of the community.

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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