GEORGIA FORESTWATCH
PRESERVE PROTECT RESTORE GAFW.ORG

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Crisis Averted. Our Public Lands Remain Funded (for now)

After an 11th-hour reprieve on Saturday evening, our federal government chose to remain open in support of all federal employees and agencies. While many federal agencies are vital to our well-being, GAFW focuses on the **U.S. Forest Service** (USFS). While our campgrounds and favorite trails remain open for now, another deadline is looming as the government is only funded until 11/17/23 at insufficient 2023 levels.

Our national forests are our public lands, belonging to us all, and we must come together to support the federal agency responsible for overseeing the health and safety of our national forests and those who visit these precious places. The mission of the USFS is to ***sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations.*** Similar to GAFW's ***to preserve and protect our national forests.***

GAFW believes the USFS should emphasize "health" and "diversity" (excellent recent articles on diversity **here** and **here**, albeit not the USFS meaning) over "productivity" (stop the commodification of our public lands) and focus less on "present" generations as opposed to "future generations" which, when prioritized, almost universally leads to better outcomes for all.

While we do not always agree, most of the concerns GAFW identifies regarding our national forests are the same ones supported by the Chattahoochee Oconee National Forest (CONF). We are all on the same page that Georgia's national forests should be healthy and well-supported. The CONF does not like waterway

sedimentation and trashed campgrounds any more than GAFW does. GAFW approaches its mission by not just pointing out what we disagree with but also by advocating for the resources the USFS needs to support the priorities with which we do agree.

GAFW will continue to defend a "natural processes" approach to public land administration. We wholeheartedly support the idea that Mother Nature knows more about forest management than any human and needs more permanent land protections like **wilderness** to do her thing. But we also need to use our voice to fund what we need from the USFS.

Please take a moment today to contact our two Georgia Senators (or, if out of state, your two senators) …

- Senator Reverend Raphael Warnock - **Email** and 202 224 3643
- Senator Jon Ossoff - **Email** and 202 224 3521

And **your Congressperson**

- District 1 Congressperson Buddy Carter - **Email** and 202 225 5831
- District 2 Congressperson Sanford Bishop - **Email** and 202 225 3631
- District 3 Congressperson Drew Ferguson - **Email** and 202 225 5901
- District 4 Congressperson Hank Johnson - **Email** and 202 225 1605
- District 5 Congressperson Nikema Williams - **Email** and 202 225 3801
- District 6 Congressperson Rich McCormick - **Email** and 202 225 4272
- District 7 Congressperson Lucy McBath - **Email** and 202 225 4501
- District 8 Congressperson Austin Scott - **Email** and 202 225 6531
- District 9 Congressperson Andrew Clyde - **Email** and 202 225 9893
- District 10 Congressperson Mike Collins - **Email** and 202 225 4101
- District 11 Congressperson Barry Loudermilk - **Email** and 202 225 2931
- District 12 Congressperson Rick Allen - **Email** and 202 225 2823
- District 13 Congressperson David Scott - **Email** and 202 225 2939
- District 14 Congressperson Marjorie Taylor Greene - **Email** and 202 225 5211

… to let them know you support an increased USFS budget to address the following concerns:

- Poorly designed and maintained roads and trails are the largest waterway sediment contributors. The USFS needs additional funding for road and trail maintenance or should permanently close unmaintained roads.
- Deferred maintenance is scheduled maintenance that doesn't get done and has grown to $6 billion nationally. Please fully fund USFS identified deferred maintenance needs.
- USFS gates and other road obstructions are routinely vandalized and destroyed by those who feel they have the right to drive their vehicles over fragile ecosystems. Please provide the USFS with the funding needed to maintain and enforce road closures within the national forest.
- National forest recreation is a huge economic benefit to our communities, and visitation is growing rapidly. Please fully fund all USFS-requested non-OHV recreational funding.
- USFS law enforcement is vital to the safety of our forest and our communities and visitors. Please support an increase in USFS law enforcement funding.
- Climate change is the most pressing crisis facing humanity. Standing trees are the most valuable solution available to us until we eliminate all carbon pollution. The USFS should calculate the carbon cost for all commercial timber sales and halt them if the project has a net positive carbon release.

It is imperative that we use our voice to direct the priorities of the USFS and Congress's role in funding those priorities. This is the only solution to every concern GAFW has identified over our almost 40-year history. The USFS can only do what Congress has funded it to do under its current mission, and if we want our national forests to be well "managed," we need to let our congressional representation know our priorities.

Your Thoughts on Local Projects Needed

Thank you to those who provided input on renewing 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.** As well as the neighboring proposal from the **Pisgah Ranger District** 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.**

Since last week, another project within the **Conasauga Ranger District** (CRD) of the Chattahoochee Oconee National Forest (CONF) surfaced, entitled **Armuchee Ridges 2 Thinning and Restoration Project**. The comments on this project are due to the USFS by Monday, 10/23/23, but GAFW has concerns that this project (as of 10/3/23 a.m.) has not been posted publicly on the **CONF project page** as required and should be pushed back by 30 days from the date it is posted.

This project includes thousands of acres of timbering. In the project, the USFS uses terms such as restoration, thinning, midstory treatment, wildlife improvements and expansions, and daylighting roads synonymously for clearcutting. However, not all clearcuts are equal, and it appears that several acres in this project are residual plantations (commercialized loblolly planted in rows) that GAFW supports timbering as a reset to natural ecology. GAFW will be closely examining this project and welcomes your insight.

If you have input on any of the above projects, please let us know your thoughts at **report@gafw.org**.

Donate to GAFW Today

Get Your Retreat Tickets Today

Hurry! In previous years we would already be sold out! Get your tickets to the GAFW 20th Annual Retreat today. This year the we will be at the **large group shelter** at **Red Top Mountain State Park**.

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 Native Americans, Mark Warren, Medicine Bow, What's in the Soil? Interactive table, Mac A. Callaham, Jr., PhD, USFS, Invasive Species of Trees, Carrie Allen, UNG Professor, Mindful Slow Flow Yoga, Sara Diaz, GAFW Outreach Coordinator, Clean-Up Hike, Em Klouda, Volunteer, & More
- 2023 event unique T-Shirts
- Food catered by **Hungry Hippo Eats**
- Raffles, Door Prizes, and Silent Auction items

Retreat Tickets

Upcoming GAFW Outings & Outreach

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

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

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Thank You

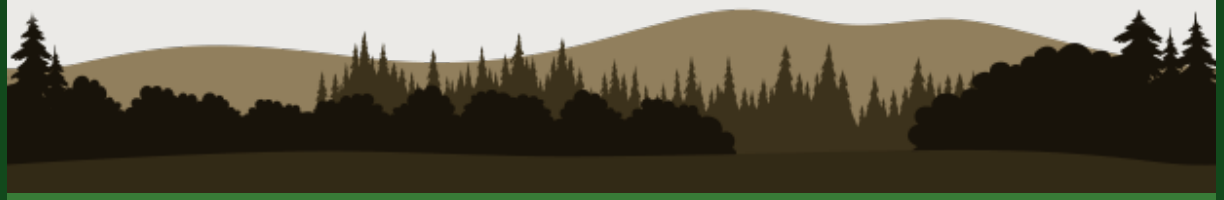
Georgia ForestWatch is the only nonprofit organization with a mission solely dedicated to ensuring the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests remain healthy and available for future generations, and we can only pursue our mission with the support of the community.

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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