GEORGIA FORESTWATCH
PRESERVE PROTECT RESTORE GAFW.ORG

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What do you love about our National Forest in Georgia?

- The spreading mountain vistas that feed our souls?
- The flowing rivers that provide clean waters for us all?
- Opportunities to play in the Forest, whether hiking, biking, paddling, climbing, hunting, or fishing?
- The richness of large and small wildlife that live in and fly above forestlands and streams?
- The amazing diversity of trees and plants that fill our forests?

Whatever you value most, **Georgia ForestWatch** has been deeply involved in protecting these treasures.

Georgia ForestWatch has been vital in safeguarding Georgia's National Forests for the past thirty-eight years. Together, we have advocated for ecologically sound land management, provided necessary input for keeping the U.S. Forest Service accountable, and supported vibrant forests for future generations.

While our community needs Georgia ForestWatch, we need the community to ensure we are a healthy and vibrant organization. Our mission addresses the escalating needs of our encroaching modern world.

Our American forests have always been a vital part of our landscape, but commercializing and exploiting these natural landscapes are a continual threat. Georgia ForestWatch is at the forefront of voicing the environmental concerns of land management practices. We need your support so we can support our forests.

Please give generously today.

Success - More Forests. Less Vehicles.

Left: North Gate Right: South Gate

GAFW pursues our vision of intact, healthy ecosystems by specifically addressing the sedimentation resulting from unauthorized and/or poorly designed dirt roads, over and inappropriate use by off-road vehicles, and lack of funding for ongoing maintenance within the boundaries of our state's national forest lands. In doing so, we identify the worst offenders and advocate for remediation, ongoing maintenance, and/or closure.

One road at the the top of our list of concerns for over a decade has been a 1.4 mile section of **Flatlands Road** in the Blue Ridge Ranger District (BRRD) in Suches, GA (Union County). Off-road enthusiasts have long identified it as **a road without rules** where you can drive through the creek itself and test the limits of your vehicle. The resulting sedimentation from Flowers Cove Branch Creek runs into Suches Creek and downstream to the Toccoa River before draining into Blue Ridge Lake.

GAFW has advocated with the USFS to improve and maintain this road or close it. Last week, the BRRD installed two gates at the north and south ends of Flatland Road, permanently closing this section. In the coming months, the BRRD will install erosion control features allowing the land to heal and a third gate to allow landowners to access private property.

GAFW thanks both **Trout Unlimited** for providing the funding needed for this project and Blue Ridge District Ranger Steverson Moffat for addressing this longstanding concern. In advocating for this resolution, GAFW recognizes that our organization and the USFS have long been on the same page in identifying Flatlands as a priority. Unfortunately, the USFS is chronically underfunded by the U.S. Congress for basic road and trail maintenance**.** The USFS was as much, or more,

concerned about Flatland and other roads in similar conditions as GAFW; however, as a government agency, they can only do what their budget allows. This is why GAFW prioritizes partnering with the USFS in identifying and resolving concerns and advocating to Congress and USFS national leadership to ensure our District Rangers have the resources they need to keep our forest healthy.

Warwoman WMA Outing!

Recently GAFW member Clayton Webster led an Outing! in the Warwoman WMA in Rabun County to three different waterfalls. The group also explored the Holcomb Narrows and was amazed at the Swiss cheese swirl holes carved out of solid rock by the roaring water. The three waterfalls, all at less than full flow due to our extended drought, were still spectacular.

Holcomb Narrows was three miles from the waterfall hike. It involveda hike on the Three Forks Trail through a beautiful winter forest dominated by lots of green from the many, many rhododendrons, mountain laurels, tall white pines, hemlock trees, hundreds of Christmas ferns, carpets of partridge berries and trailing arbutus, wild ginger, running cedar, and lots of bright moss. After returning to the trailhead on Overflow Road, continued to the three-waterfall hike.

After a quick lunch, the group hiked a challenging quarter mile from Holcomb Creek Falls to Ammons Falls. There was some steep uphill to conquer and a few fresh blowdowns with no option but to go over, through, and under to get past them. This portion of the hike is also where they saw the biggest trees. Downstream and not too far above the Holcomb Narrows, Holcomb Creek, and Ammons Creek merges to form Holcomb Creek.

Upcoming GAFW Outings & Outreach

Thursday, December 14 - **Outing! Geology Hike along Johns Mountain to Keown Falls**

Monday, December 18 – **Outing! Tour of Chattahoochee National Forest Fish Hatchery**

Wednesday, December 20 - **Outing! Indian Seats Loop at Sawnee Mountain Preserve**

Thursday, December 28th – **Outing! Kennesaw Mountain Trail**

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

Have you signed our outing waiver? If not, use this link: **Outing Waiver.**

GAFW Outings on Meetup

Donate to GAFW Today

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

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Thank You

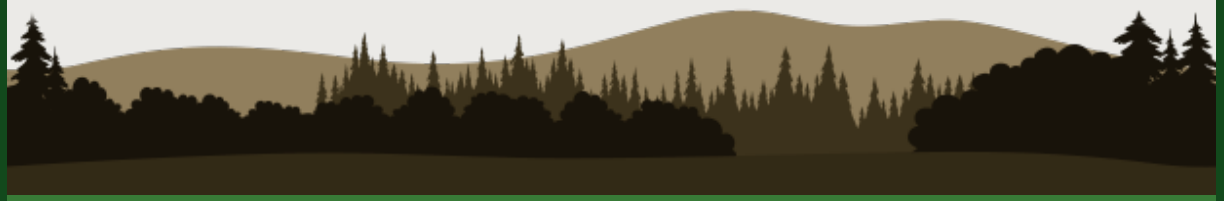
Georgia ForestWatch is the only nonprofit organization with a mission solely dedicated to ensuring the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests remain healthy and available for future generations, and we can only pursue our mission with the support of the community.

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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