GEORGIA FORESTWATCH
PRESERVE PROTECT RESTORE GAFW.ORG

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Become a Sustaining Donor before you Disappear for the Winter

Thank you to all who have graciously donated towards our year-end appeal thus far. If you have not done so, please consider becoming a recurring donor. While we are eternally thankful for any support, a recurring monthly donation allows GAFW to budget for smoother operations and avoid the fluctuations stemming from month-to-month fundraising. Becoming a sustaining donor is easy – simply go to our **donation page** **and check the "Monthly" box.** Then rest easy knowing that you are making a difference in how our forests are sustainably managed and that your membership with GAFW is always up-to-date and active.

Chestnut Update

The American chestnut (Castanea dentata) is a large, fast-growing deciduous tree of the beech family native to eastern North America. It is one of the most important forest trees in the southern Appalachians.

During the early to mid-20th century, American chestnut trees were devastated by chestnut blight, a fungal disease from Japanese chestnut trees introduced into North America from Japan. It is estimated that the blight killed between 3 and 4 billion American chestnut trees in the first half of the 20th century, beginning in 1904. Few mature American chestnuts exist within its former range, although many stumps and root systems continue to send up saplings. Most of these saplings get infected by chestnut blight, which girdles and kills them before maturity. American chestnuts are also susceptible to ink disease, particularly in the southern part of their native range, and this has likely contributed to the devastation of the species. Today, this iconic species rarely reproduces in the wild and is therefore considered functionally extinct.

In 2015, The American Chestnut Research and Restoration Project at the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry created the first line of transgenic American chestnut trees and named it after an early supporter of the project, Herb Darling. Deeming it a promising path toward American chestnut restoration, The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF) began formally supporting TACRRP's work in 2015 through significant funding and research support.

The Darling line of trees aimed to confer blight tolerance by inserting a gene from wheat that detoxifies oxalic acid produced by the chestnut blight fungus and could hypothetically prevent lethal cankers on the tree. Initial laboratory and greenhouse tests on Darling trees showed that high disease tolerance was being conferred. Extensive safety tests showed no significant difference in the Darling chestnut's interactions with other organisms compared to the American chestnut. The Darling was poised to play a significant role in American chestnut restoration.

As a result, TACRRP submitted petitions with the goal that the Darling tree could eventually be used in the wild to restore American chestnut populations. Based on these results and its ongoing support for biotech research, TACF extensively supported the research efforts and the petitions for deregulation.

Unfortunately, TACF recently announced that it will discontinue its development of the Darling American chestnut due to significant performance limitations that, from

TACF's perspective, make it unsuitable as a restoration tree. Likewise, TACF is withdrawing its support for several pending regulatory petitions that would authorize the distribution of transgenic Darling trees outside permitted research plots. **Read the full story here.**

Georgia Water Coalition is Seeking Nominations for the 2024 Dirty Dozen Report

Do you know of a local pollution issue representing a broader problem for Georgia's water resources? **Begin your nomination** now. This report does not serve as a list of the most polluted places in Georgia. Rather, it aims to highlight the politics, policies, and issues that threaten the health of Georgia's water and the well-being of 11 million Georgians. Since 2011, this report has helped local communities attract statewide attention to their water issues. The Dirty Dozen Report frequently serves as the catalyst that brings stakeholders together to resolve these water quality, quantity, and equity issues.

The deadline to **submit your nomination** **is February 2, 2024,** so get started on yours today! As a reminder, the Georgia Water Coalition now alternates between Dirty Dozen and Clean 13 yearly, so this is your last chance to highlight your priority issues until 2026!

Upcoming GAFW Outings & Outreach

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

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

Thursday, January 25 (New Date!)–- **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

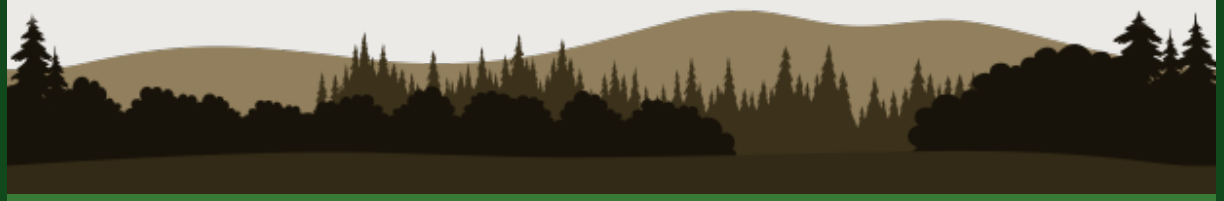
Georgia ForestWatch is the only nonprofit organization with a mission solely dedicated to ensuring the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests remain healthy and available for future generations, and we can only pursue our mission with the support of the community.

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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