GEORGIA FORESTWATCH
PRESERVE PROTECT RESTORE GAFW.ORG

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The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) is accepting comments through January 2, 2024, on **their proposed rule** to give carbon capture and storage (CCS) companies a right to *permanently use and occupy* national forests and grasslands. This proposed rule is a giveaway to fossil fuel and other polluting industries to abuse federal lands for their own gain and profit. CO2 pipelines and injection wells on Forest System lands could result in severe (and potentially deadly) harm to people and wildlife.

Currently, when private companies seek to use national forests and grasslands, they can do so only if their project **does not lead to a permanent use or occupancy of federal lands**. The USFS wants to change that for CCS companies. This giveaway to fossil fuel and other dirty industries will keep those polluters alive, lead to more CO2 pipelines and injection wells, destroy natural landscapes, and pose serious threats to people and ecosystems.

GAFW has joined **The Center for Biological Diversity**, **CURE**, **Partnership for Policy Integrity**, **Better Path Coalition**, and **Food and Water Watch** in a sign-on letter asking the USFS to stop this dangerous proposal in its tracks. Our comment letter outlines policy, scientific, and legal concerns with the Proposed Rule. It is also noteworthy that the Proposed Rule represents an unexplained change in position for the agency. The USFS previously determined in a separate rulemaking that granting perpetual and exclusive use via special use permits, as proposed here, would counter congressional and executive intent. Ultimately, we urge the Forest Service to decline to finalize the Proposed Rule.

Read the full letter here and feel free to share this comment letter sign-on far and wide, and if you can, submit **your comment here**.

Other Ways to Financially Support GAFW

In addition to **becoming a member**, giving an additional **donation** or a **gift membership**, and becoming a recurring donor, you may not have considered other ways to give to GAFW.

- **Give appreciated stock.** When you give appreciated stock, we'll sell it, and you'll eliminate all the capital gains tax you would have paid had you sold it. Your gift will be deductible at full fair market value (assuming you have held it for over one year).

- **Make a gift from your IRA.** If you are 70½ or older, you can transfer any amount up to $100,000 annually directly from your IRA. The transfer doesn't generate taxable income or a tax deduction, so you benefit even if you do not itemize your tax deductions.

- **Make a planned giving bequest.** Simply include the following language into your will: "I give (_____ dollars or _____ percent of the residue of my estate) to Georgia ForestWatch Tax ID 58-2188475, a Dahlonega, Georgia charitable corporation for its general purpose use."

- **Host a Facebook Fundraiser.** Go to **https://www.facebook.com/fundraisers/** and follow the prompts to choose GAFW as a recipient. Facebook makes hosting easy, and 100% of donations go directly to GAFW.

Update from the Georgia Forestry Commission

Welcome rainfall arrived in late November and is forecast to continue through February 2024, following a busy couple of wildfire months in October and November. Prolonged drought and seasonal leaf fall sparked 671 wildfires and claimed 3,285 acres during the two-month period. (Five-year average is 373 wildfires on 1,170 acres.) Many fires occurred in northwest Georgia on steep, remote terrain, challenging wildland fire suppression operations. Improving conditions are ushering in better weather for prescribed burns, which help reduce the threats of wildfire and improve wildlife habitat and forest health.

The 2024 Georgia Legislative Session

The **Georgia General Assembly** returns for a Regular Session on January 8, 2024, the second of a two-year biennial cycle. The Georgia Water Coalition (GWC), with GAFW as a proud member, will be there to continue work on our legislative priorities.

- Securing permanent protection from mining for the **Okefenokee** region.
- Ensuring the Georgia Department of Agriculture can protect communities from **industrial sludge** (“soil amendments”).
- Advocating for Coal Ash Cleanups. Since 2016, the GWC has advocated for legislative and regulatory remedies to protect communities and clean water from Georgia’s toxic coal ash. Nearly eight years later, GWC members continue working at the forefront of this issue to ensure all coal ash waste is

properly stored out of contact with surface water and groundwater, the waste's impacts are monitored, and Georgians receive advance public notification when coal ash waste threatens their community. In light of recent **federal** action in Alabama and **state** action in Northwest Georgia regarding coal ash storage, GWC will continue looking for opportunities to advance the Coalition's agenda.

- On alert for "roll-backs," or laws designed to weaken existing protections for clean water and Georgia's natural resources.

Stay on top of legislation with this **bill tracker** and the **Protect Georgia action alert system.**

Upcoming GAFW Outings & Outreach

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

Monday, January 1 – **Outing! First Day Hike & Potluck**

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

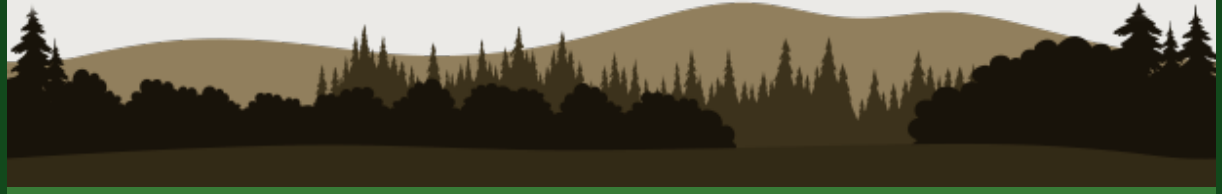
Georgia ForestWatch is the only nonprofit organization with a mission solely dedicated to ensuring the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests remain healthy and available for future generations, and we can only pursue our mission with the support of the community.

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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