

Cherokee National Forest

2017 Round UP

Following are highlights of a few of the many worthwhile projects and activities that took place in Cherokee National Forest during 2017.



2017 Tennessee—Kentucky Wildland Fire Academy: In January, the 15th annual Tennessee—Kentucky Wildland Fire Academy was held in Bell Buckle, Tennessee. This year 540 students from 24 states and the District of Columbia attended the two-week session. The academy provided 29 fire management courses, delivering cost-effective training for firefighters and other incident personnel from across the country. Three federal agencies - Forest Service, National Park Service, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service collaborate with the Kentucky Division of Forestry and Tennessee Division of Forestry to make the academy a true interagency success.



National Award: The *Southern Appalachian Public Lands – OUTDOOR RECREATION MAP* displays national forests, national parks and state parks in east Tennessee and western North Carolina. This popular map provides an overview of public land areas where visitors can enjoy the great outdoors. For leading the effort to develop this map the *Partners of Cherokee National Forest* received a prestigious award from The Public Lands Alliance for "Outstanding Public Engagement". The award recognizes exemplary products created in partnership by a nonprofit organization and a land management agency that advances meaningful and sustainable connections between individuals and America's public lands.

The award recognizes exemplary products created in partnership by a nonprofit organization and a land management agency that advances meaningful and sustainable connections between individuals and America's public lands. The Partners worked with the Forest Service, National Park Service and several state agencies and nonprofit organizations to develop the map.

Kid's Fishing Day: Each year the Forest Service conducts special fishing events for kids in the Cherokee National Forest. These events offer the opportunity for children and their families to spend time together in the great outdoors. This year more than 700 kids attended six fishing day events in various locations.



Cherokee National Forest

2017 Round UP

ECO Days: in June, the tenth annual Tellico Eco Days event was held at Indian Boundary Recreation Area. Each year fifth grade students from throughout the Monroe County School System attend the outdoor classroom setting to learn about conservation and nature. Eco Days is kids in the outdoors on a school day having fun and learning at the same time. The event involves three days of conservation education for more than 400 Monroe County students. The event was hosted by the Forest Service and the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency with contributions from Partners of Cherokee National Forest, Tennessee Division of Forestry, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Fort Loudoun Electric Cooperative, and Tellico Plains High School.



Solar Eclipse: On August 21, tens of thousands of people from near and far visited the Cherokee National Forest to witness a unique natural event—a total solar eclipse. The Forest Service worked closely with local and state agencies to ensure national forest visitors had a safe and memorable experience. Areas such as the Cherohala Skyway and Whigg Meadow in Monroe County and Buck Bald and the Ocoee Whitewater Center in Polk County were popular viewing sites.

Aquatic Organism Passages: In partnership with Trout Unlimited, Tennessee Valley Authority, The Nature Conservancy, American Rivers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency the Forest Service replaced old culverts with new aquatic organism passages (AOP) in the Unaka Ranger District. AOP's are designed to provide unimpeded passage of aquatic species under roads. AOP's installed in Briar Creek and Clarks Creek—Sill Branch are part of the Nolichucky River-Clarks Creek priority watershed restoration effort to address erosion, water quality and stream habitat issues in this area. The AOP's are part of on-going brook trout restoration efforts in Tennessee.



Cherokee National Forest

2017 Round UP



Volunteer Trail Service Days : Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards (SAWS) Wilderness Rangers worked to connect volunteer groups with wilderness areas in Cherokee National Forest through conducting trail service days. During August volunteers from East Tennessee State University and the Backcountry Horsemen of East Tennessee worked several days in the Sampson Mountain Wilderness and the Unaka Mountain Wilderness brushing trails and removing debris and downed trees.



Ocoee Whitewater Center (OWC): It was another busy season at the OWC. This facility receives approximately 300,000 visitors annually. The OWC offers a variety of recreation opportunities such as hiking, biking, water play, picnicking and just relaxing next to the Ocoee River. *Winter schedule:* From November 1—March 31 the visitor center will be closed. The trails and day-use areas at the complex will remain open.

Endangered Species Habitat Enhancement: In late October, 250 red spruce trees were planted at Whigg Meadow in the Tellico Ranger District to improve habitat for the federally listed endangered Carolina northern flying squirrel. (CNFS). Recovery efforts have been in effect for several years. Artificial nest boxes were installed and monitoring of the area is conducted regularly. The recent red spruce planting is a significant step towards improving habitat for the CNFS at Whigg Meadow. Red spruce trees not only provide denning habitat for the CNFS but they also provide *mycorrhizal fungi* (i.e., *truffles*), an important habitat component for the squirrel and substantial portion of its diet. The trees need *mycorrhizal fungi* to grow and *mycorrhizal fungi* need the CNFS to disperse their spores—the perfect symbiotic relationship. Partners with this project are Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency ,US Fish and Wildlife Service, University of Tennessee, Knoxville and the U.S. Forest Service.



Cherokee National Forest

