



File Code: 1500

Date: October 1, 2008

Dear Friend of the Forest:

I want to invite you to join me on two field trips to the Oconee National Forest coming up in October and November. I realize that fall is a busy time for all of us with hunting season, football, and school activities, however, I hope you can take a few hours away from your hectic schedule to join us for these informative tours. We are planning to share information about the history of the national forest, what the range of ecosystems on the Oconee National Forest looks like today, and some of the challenges we face and opportunities we have in achieving and maintaining a healthy, vibrant forest.

These field trips are a continuation of an effort we talked about back in June when we met at Rock Eagle for a public meeting concerning the health of the Oconee National Forest. My desire is to involve anyone and everyone interested in the Oconee National Forest in this process of planning activities for the future to help ensure that the forest is as healthy and resilient in the face of continued threats from drought, southern pine beetle, and severe storm systems.

Each trip will begin at 10 a.m. and conclude at 3 p.m. and will involve multiple stops in and around the Oconee National Forest. We are planning on going on the field trips regardless of the weather. We will provide maps and lead the way on these trips, however, because of our regulations we are not allowed to take people in our Forest Service vehicles. Therefore, each individual will be required to provide their own transportation. Carpooling is encouraged. Also be aware that we will be driving on dirt/gravel roads at several points along the way. We will eat lunch at one of the field trip stops so please bring your lunch and something to drink.

The first trip will occur on October 25th and will begin at the Hitchiti Experimental Forest Office near Juliette, Georgia. The topics which will be covered at the four field trip stops on this trip are:

- ✚ a look at land use history,
- ✚ what habitat does a young forest provide
- ✚ challenges and benefits of establishing a longleaf pine forest
- ✚ challenges and benefits of prescribed burning
- ✚ responsibilities of managing habitat for the threatened and endangered red-cockaded woodpecker
- ✚ the impacts and control efforts for the southern pine beetle



The second field trip on November 15th will begin at the Redlands Boat Ramp off of Highway 278 about 9 miles east of Madison, Georgia. The topics which will be covered on this field trip are:

- ✚ a look at land use history,
- ✚ gulley restoration
- ✚ challenges and benefits of hardwood restoration
- ✚ managing for shortleaf pine
- ✚ dealing with exotic invasive species
- ✚ the importance of establishing rookeries
- ✚ a visit to Dyar Pasture, a designated waterfowl habitat area

If you would like additional information on the field trips and what we will be discussing along with maps, and other related items, please log on to our Forest website at www.fs.fed.us/conf. If you plan on attending one or both of these field trips, please RSVP to Jeff McDonald at (706) 485-7110 (ext 101) or email jmcdonald@fs.fed.us.

In the meantime, if you have specific questions about these two field trips, contact me at (706) 485-3180 (102) or Karen McKenzie, Public Affairs Staff Officer, located in Gainesville at (770) 297-3061. I look forward to seeing you on October 25th and/or November 15th. I appreciate your continued interest in our beautiful Oconee National Forest.

Sincerely,

/s/ Erin M. Bronk
ERIN M. BRONK
District Ranger