



Trail Talk

May & June

2014

May and June is the start of the summer season. With warmer temperatures and folks having more free time, activity of both visitors and Volunteers increased significantly. During this period we had many Volunteer events. We celebrated National Trails Day® with two events. Team Conasauga had a great workday and a working weekend. The Dry Creek Volunteers had a successful workday. We hosted an awesome Boy Scout who coordinated an Eagle Scout project with his troop. A horseback rider did some terrific work in the Cohutta Wilderness. We saw the return of our volunteer Wilderness Ranger and welcomed a seasonal Wilderness Ranger.

With this being the kickoff of our busiest time of year on the Conasauga Ranger District, I would like to first and foremost thank everyone for their contributions. I hope we can keep this momentum going for the rest of the year. Please enjoy the read and hope to see everyone on the trail and/or at the upcoming events.



> > > > **May** < < < <



May started off with **Team Conasauga's 72nd Working Weekend**. The event was held on May 2nd and 3rd. Our plan was to hike into the Cohutta Wilderness via the Beech Bottom trail, up the Jacks River to the Rough Ridge trail, and work the lower section of the Rough Ridge Trail. Just a few participants came for this great weekend but we still got a lot of work done. **Joe Connell**, a second time Volunteer, was the only person who backpacked in and camped at Rough Creek. We were also joined on Friday by **Larry Thomas, and Troy and**

Wanda Brown. Since they were only doing a day trip, they had a full day cutting blow downs on the Beech Bottom trail, which included cutting a monster hemlock tree that fell about a mile from the river. Meanwhile Joe and I hiked into Rough Ridge where we cut and cleared several trees on the first few miles of the Rough Ridge Trail before we called it a day and set up camp on the beautiful Jacks River. On Saturday Joe and I packed up and headed down to Beech Bottoms and completed some campsite maintenance inside the closure area. This included bucking up and removing some of the sitting logs from the old Beech Bottom campsite. It was a great Working Weekend, we got a lot of work done, and I can't wait for the next one in August. Thank you so much.



Back in March I was contacted by a young man named **Caleb Broussard** with Troop #402 out of Ellijay, GA, who was looking to complete his Eagle Scout project on the District. This was my first experience being involved with an Eagle Scout project and I wasn't sure how it would go. Wow, I was so amazed at the superior job he did and for any future Boy Scouts with Eagle Scout Projects, Caleb set the bar very high. Caleb came to me with the plan to blaze Bear Creek Trail and we

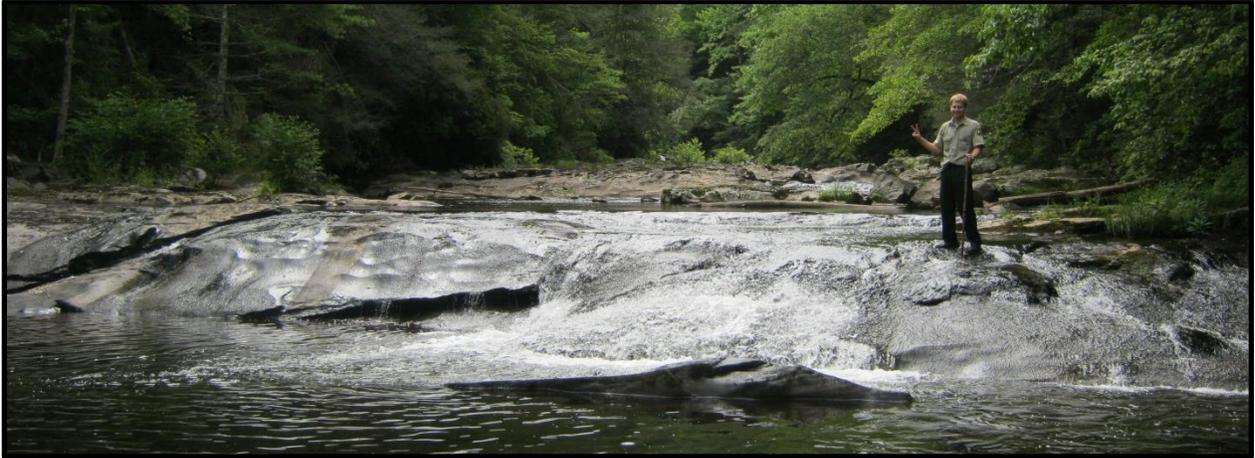
set the date for May 10th. Independently Caleb made a materials list, produced a safety packet, walked the trail ahead of the event and flagged the trees where the blazes were to go, recruited a large group of his fellow scouts to participate, and gave the safety and morning briefing the day of the event. Awesome Job!! Caleb's fellow Boy Scouts who participated were: Noel Crew, Trevor Bradley, Nicholas Bradley, Jared Drullinger, Stephen Sheahan, Zachary Grizzle, Matthew Lopez, Nate Mooney, Daniel Benitez, Brandon Adams, Chris Adams, and Kenneth Withrow. Once the rain cleared out, they all did a great job and completed the much needed blazing of the Bear Creek Trail. They had a really fun time doing the project, as the pictures show. I would also like to thank Angel and Dwight Broussard, Caleb's parents, who played an important role in the success of this event, as well as the rest of the parents and troop leaders who attended: Bobby Grizzle, John Adams, Summer Adams, and Maria Lopez. Thanks so much for your stewardship and the pizza.



The last project in May was a small but important mission accomplished by **Martha Fillingham, Tommy Burke and Linda Richards**. During the Team Conasauga Working Weekend, I ran into some hikers who gave me a report of an abandoned lawn cart on Rough Ridge trail close to Crooked Dogwood Gap. I was scratching my head on how to get this thing out of the wilderness and then I met Martha on the Jacks River trail. I explained to her the report I had received and she was more than happy to help. On May 23rd, Martha, Tommy, Linda, and their mule Pearl rode out the Rough Ridge trail and removed the lawn cart. Apparently one of the wheels fell off and the individuals abandoned it. Hopefully they had plenty of stuff on the cart that they were forced to carry. Thank you so much for your stewardship of the Cohutta Wilderness.



> > > > **June** < < < <



June brought us more than National Trails Day events; this month brought more stewardship and a seasonal Wilderness Ranger. At the beginning of the month the Conasauga welcomed our new seasonal Wilderness Ranger, Alex Winsch. He graduated from University of Kentucky in May and will be helping Cohutta Wilderness through the summer season. We received the grant money for his employment through the 10 year Wilderness Stewardship Challenge that is finishing this year with the 50th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act. Be sure to welcome him at the next volunteer event.



On June 4th, **Larry Wheat** with the Back Country Horsemen of Northwest Georgia (BCHNWG) invited Forest Service employees from the Supervisor's Office in Gainesville to ride at Dry Creek Trail System. During the ride we talked about the successes and the challenges for the future of the trail system. Joining the ride from BCHNWG were **Martha Fillingham, Carrie Daugherty, Jim McGarvey,** and **Cindy McGarvey.** **Larry Vanden Bosch** of Northwest Georgia SORBA group also came to ride. **John Campbell and Judy Toppins** came from Gainesville and I was along for my first horseback ride. We all had a great day riding and let me tell you that the future looks great for the Dry Creek Trail System. Thanks for inviting me along.



On June 7th we celebrated National Trails Day[®] with two amazing events. One event was Team Conasauga's workday on the lower end of Emery Creek Trail. **Charlie Crider, Gail Milner, Amos Burrell, Larry Thomas, Robert Edmondson, Deede Edmondson, and Wanda Brown** participated on this beautiful day. The group started at the lower trailhead off of Holly Creek road and



made their way upstream towards the Emery Creek Falls trimming back the overgrown rhododendron along the trail. I drove up a gated Forest Service road hauling a chainsaw to the waterfall to cut out a large oak tree that had fallen, blocking the view and access to the top of the falls. We ate lunch at the falls and then tackled the tree; fortunately it looked worse than it really was. After clearing the tree the group worked their way back downstream installing blazes as they went. We had a fun filled day of trail work, and Amos managed to keep his sandals for the creek crossings dry but did get his boots soaked. Afterwards we had our usual community snacks to wrap up a wonderful day. Thanks for all the hard work.

The second event held in honor of National Trails Day was at the Dry Creek Trail system lead by **Larry Wheat**. The trail Volunteers at Dry Creek do a lot of work and for this event they focused on mowing and staining the facility. **Kathy and Eddie Henson, Kathy Hansen, Joe Schoech, David Roguemore, Dave Caldwell, Kimi Gregg, Larry Altman, and Marty Dominy** were in attendance for the event. Also four volunteers with SORBA, **Steve Harrell, Gennie Dasinger, Marcus Moore, and David Smith**, gave their time on June 4th trimming vegetation on the trails. Thank you for all that you do! The next collaborative workday at the Dry Creek Trail system is July 19th. If you are interested in reading the entire write up of the June workday and/or want more information on July's workday, contact Larry Wheat at L.Wheat@mindspring.com.





During our ride on Dry Creek earlier in the month, I mentioned to **Martha Fillingham** that I needed to reinstall a sign at the junction of Penitentiary Branch trail and the Jacks River trail. The challenge for the project was getting the new locust post down to the river. Once again Martha volunteered her mule Pearl and we set the date for June 20th. Alex and I met Martha along with her husband **Tommy Burke** and daughter **Reba Burke** at the Dally Gap parking lot. We loaded up the post, sign, post-hole diggers, and a rock bar onto the mule and headed into the Wilderness. It was a beautiful day to ride all the way down to the river. We installed the sign with no problems at all and had lunch. Then the thunder started. We quickly loaded the tools on the mule and started up the mountain. We didn't make it far before the torrential downpour started. It continued all the way until we topped out on Hemp Top trail. Then the skies cleared and the sun dried most of us out by the time we got back to the trailhead. Thank you for your help, and I cannot wait to go riding again.



The last but not least Volunteer that I would like to mention is **Mark Voykovic**, a volunteer Wilderness Ranger. He did his first summer season patrol of the Wilderness on June 22nd down to the Beech Bottoms / Jacks River Falls Closure Area. Mark focuses on visitor contacts, Leave No Trace education, and maintenance of the area. He hopes to be back in the Wilderness soon making more patrols. Thank you for your stewardship. If anyone else is interested in helping the Cohutta Wilderness as a volunteer Wilderness Ranger either on the trails or at the trailheads, please contact me at kvasalinda@fs.fed.us.

Dates for the Rest of 2014



- July 19** Rice Camp trail *trimming (tornado), waterbars, and campsites*
- August 16-17** Jacks River trail *weed whipping between Horseshoe Bend and Rice Camp*
(Working Weekend #73)
- September 20** Chestnut Lead trail *weed whipping and campsites*
(National Public Lands Day, Wilderness 50th Celebration)
- October 4** East Cowpen trail *water bars in from Rice Camp trail*
- October 25** Volunteer Appreciation Picnic @ Pocket Picnic Shelter
- Nov14-15** Beech Bottom Campsite Maintenance
(Working Weekend #74)
- December 2** Annual Board Meeting *6p.m. @ Conasauga District Office*
- December 13** **TBA** *open for now*



For more information on activities and events happening on the Conasauga Ranger District, please check out the following links to the various associations who are committed to helping us provide safe, enjoyable trail experiences for our forest users....

Benton MacKaye Trail Association (BMTA): www.bmta.org

Backcountry Horsemen of Northwest Georgia (BCHNWG): www.bchnwg.org

Backcountry Horsemen of North Georgia (BCHNG): www.bchng.org

Northwest Georgia Southern Off-Road Bike Association (NWGA SORBA): www.nwgasorba.org

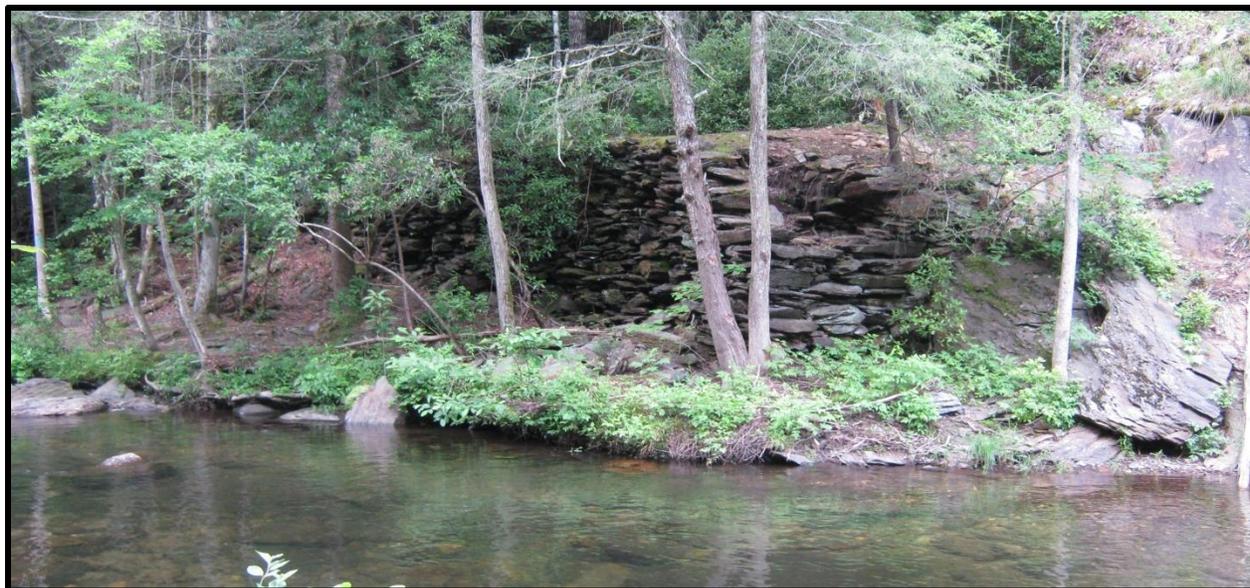
Georgia Pinhoti Trail Association: www.pinhoti.info

Appalachian Trail Association (GATC): www.georgia-atclub.org

Elijay Mountain Biking Association (EMBA): www.elijaymountainbike.org

Southern Off-Road Bike Association (SORBA): www.sorba.org or www.ngwasorba.org

Co-Trails: www.cotrails.org



Any interested Volunteers, please contact me at kvasalinda@fs.fed.us.
Thanks and see you next time.

~Kevin~