Trail Talk

Conasauga Ranger District

February – March 2010

"A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain."

- *Wilderness Act of 1964 (as written by Howard Zahniser)*

Spring has returned to the north Georgia Mountains and the forest is alive with wildflowers. What better time to enjoy nature's beauty? Grab your gloves and hardhat and join Team Conasauga on a trail workday and "give something back" at the same time. You'll be glad you did!

February – Troy and Wanda Brown took their crosscutting skills to Rice Camp Trail to clear out blowdowns to the 3rd creek crossing…**Larry Wheat** of BCHNG helped district personnel reflag and repaint the new multi-use trail system in the Dry Creek area…**Fred Pilcher** made sure the grounds looked good at the Chestnut Mountain Shooting Range, Keown Falls Recreation Area and the Pocket Picnic Area… Working Weekend #55 saw a change of plans as we were originally scheduled to tackle the waterbars on Beech Bottom Trail but the road leading to the trailhead was very icy and dangerous. Car camping was done at the Cottonwood Patch Campground and a good time was had by all… With that said, for day one, our devoted volunteers of **Jim Bishop, Tom and Tannis Blackwell, Chuck Brock, Amos Burrell, Jim Leatherwood, Nicole Warren-Miller and Larry Wheat** set out to complete all the waterbar maintenance on Horseshoe Bend Trail down to the overlook…on day two, more volunteers joined us and set out on different trails…**Chuck Brock, Amos Burrell and Jim Leatherwood** took on the diligent task of crosscutting out the blowdowns on Hickory Creek Trail while **Jeff Krivo, Jody Officer, Tom Owens, Wayne Pattillo, Kim Smith, and Nicole Warren-Miller** performed the hard work of waterbar maintenance on the Hickory Creek Trail down to Stink Creek…**Charlie Crider and Gail Milner** jumped on their horses to cut out the blowdowns on the Iron Mountain Trail and at the same time, **Helen Chamberlain and Al Sanders** took their horses to crosscut the blowdowns from East Cowpen down to Hickory Ridge Trail…**Hugh McArthur** put in a lot of time at Hickey Gap Campground working on general cleanup maintenance of the area as well as repairing one of our trailhead bulletin boards at Sumac Creek Trail…**Jim Bishop, Tom and Tannis Blackwell, Amos Burrell, Jim Leatherwood and Tom Owens** dedicated another one of their weekend days to help on a volunteer recruitment drive at the REI store in Atlanta…**Richard and Linda Norton** rounded out the month removing the blowdowns on Sumac Creek Trail…all told, volunteers accumulated **299.5 hours** this month to the cause of giving back!!! Thanks TEAM for the dedication and support!!!

Jim Bishop and Larry Wheat put the finishing touches on a water dip on the Horseshoe Bend Trail

Nicole Warren-Miller puts her back into it on this Horseshoe Bend Trail water dip

March 2010 **– The Benton MacKaye Trail Association** kicked things off working on the McKenny Gap section of the Benton MacKaye Trail accomplishing much needed tread work…**Troy and Wanda Brown** hit the Rice Camp Trail again doing recon work and removing limbs and debris from the trail…**Fred Pilcher** made his rounds picking up the trash at Keown Falls, Johns Mountain Overlook , Pocket Picnic Area and Chestnut Mountain Shooting Range keeping the grounds in tip-top shape…**Leeland O'Bryant** gave Forest Service personnel a big helping hand with his time and expertise running backhoe on the Johns Creek project…**Wanda Brown** provided her services to keep up the volunteer spreadsheet/database inputting volunteer names, hours worked and work projects done…Twenty members of **SORBA Ellijay** sweated over trail maintenance tasks on Bear Creek Trail such as trimming brush , clearing blowdowns, and cleaning waterbars …**Amos Burrell** put his firefighting skills into practice helping the district on a prescribed burn over on East Cowpen and coming out and passing the arduous firefighter pack test …**Troy and Wanda Brown** struck out on the Hickory Ridge and East Cowpen Trails for several days doing what they love to do which is clearing blowdowns with their crosscut saw…Twenty seven members of **Trout Unlimited** came out one day to give of their time at the Johns Creek project setting barrier posts and constructing a tent campsite…**Ben Shelby, Eric Shelby, Jim Leatherwood, David Tanner, Scott Jordan, Janet Jordan, Zack Jordan, Kim Smith, Tom Owens, Jim McGarvey, Wanda Brown, Troy Brown, Tannis Blackwell, Tom Blackwell, and Amos Burrell** all came out and supported the volunteer workday for March maintaining fifty-eight waterbars on Hickory Ridge Trail…an astounding **640 hours** were collected for the month and just goes to show you that the Conasauga District Trail Volunteers are the Best of the Best of the Best!!! Thanks for all your continued hard work!!!

Amos Burrell assisted the district on a prescribed burn near Horseshoe Bend Trailhead

We all like to recreate in the North Georgia woods whether it's backpacking, hiking, camping, or hunting. But we also share the woods with a creature that makes its home here and that's the black bear. Here is some good information and tips to help keep you safe should you have an encounter. Remember to always be conscious of your surroundings while out and about in the forest and to become bear aware.

Bears Are Most Dangerous When:

- The sow is with cubs
- They feel threatened
- You are obstructing their path
- You encounter their den or feeding area
- You are carrying food that has a smell that might attract them

Surprising Bears:

- Never approach bears…not even to take a photo!
- Make noises…most bears will avoid people and leave the area when people are present…making noises allows the bear to move away before a confrontation occurs
- Safety in numbers…travel with someone else
- Most bear attacks are caused when a bear is startled

High Bear Use Areas:

- Bears like you travel on saddles, ridges, game trails and along water
- They often rest in cool, dark, thick forests
- In Spring they are often found at lower elevations along rivers feeding on spawning fish
- In Summer bears can be found at higher elevations in open like areas and places like campgrounds

Running From A Bear:

- Running away from a bear may stimulate its instinct to chase
- You cannot outrun a bear…instead, stand and face the animal…make eye contact without staring
- Give the bear plenty of room so that it can avoid you

Bear Approaches:

- Try to demonstrate to the bear that you may be a danger to it
- Make yourself appear larger, stand up, raise your arms
- Yell at the bear, bang pots and pans or create general commotion

Bear Attacks:

- Black bear behavior is quite variable
- Research indicates that bear attacks have been avoided or injuries reduced when the victims fought back using any means available
- Throwing rocks, striking the bear with branches or camping equipment have shown to be effective

THINK SAFETY FIRST AND FOREMOST!

Laughter is Good for You

A genuine belly laugh can be priceless medicine for life's everyday stresses. And you don't have to worry about any side effects – except, maybe, a case of the giggles. When appropriate, make an effort to relax and let yourself laugh. Rotary International offers these suggestions:

- Instead of worrying about the souring economy or complaining about your work day, ask friends or family to tell a funny story.
- Surround yourself with people who laugh, smile, and who are just plain playful and fun.
- Start smiling more. Make a conscious effort to smile, think about pleasant things and feel happy.
- Make a list of all the things you have to be happy about and thankful for. When you're feeling sad, pull out the list.
- Gravitate toward laughter. When you see a group of friends or coworkers having a good laugh, join in the conversation and treat yourself to a laugh too.

(Source: www.healthday.com, Health Day News)

LEAVE NO TRACE

For more Leave No Trace information visit: www.lnt.org

- **PLAN AHEAD AND PREPARE**
- **TRAVEL AND CAMP ON DURABLE SURFACES**
- **DISPOSE OF WASTE PROPERLY**
- **LEAVE WHAT YOU FIND**
- **MINIMIZE CAMPFIRE IMPACTS**
- **RESPECT WILDLIFE**
- **BE CONSIDERATE OF OTHER VISITORS**

We've discussed the first two principles. Let's examine Principle #3:

DISPOSE OF WASTE PROPERLY

- Pack it in, pack it out. Inspect your campsite and rest areas for trash and spilled food. Pack out all trash, leftover food, and litter.
- Deposit solid human waste in catholes dug 6 to 8 inches deep and at least 200 feet from water, camp, and trails. Cover and disguise the cathole when finished.
- Pack out toilet paper and hygiene products. This practice leaves the least impact. Otherwise, use as little toilet paper as possible and bury it deeply in the cathole. Always pack out feminine hygiene products; they decompose slowly and attract animals.

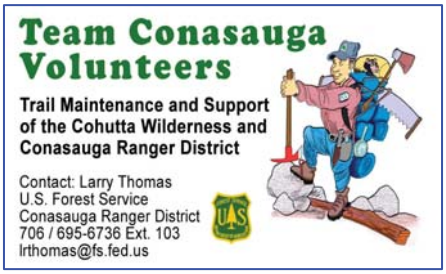
- To wash yourself or your dishes, carry water 200 feet away from streams or rivers and use small amounts of biodegradable soap. Scatter strained dishwater.

License plate seen on a volunteer's vehicle. Atta Boy Amos!

Volunteer Recruitment is Vital

Over the many years that the Team Conasauga volunteer program has existed, we have seen many volunteers come and go…people move away, take on added responsibilities, and lives change. It is expected. In order to keep our numbers strong, we are constantly working to recruit new volunteers to our ranks. This is vital to our continued existence. We have employed many methods to achieve this: media contacts, newspaper articles, postings on storefront and trailhead information boards, through our forest website, presentations to outdoor oriented organizations and at outdoor gear stores such as REI, and other ways. Certainly the most successful method employed has been by word-of-mouth, specifically <u>your</u> contacts with family, friends, and the public while out on the trail. Please continue to "get the word out" to forest visitors you may encounter about the valuable service Team Conasauga performs. Carry some Volunteer Recruitment Cards in your pack to handout to interested individuals.

Tom Owens, Tannis Blackwell, Jim Bishop, and Amos Burrell (Tom Blackwell & Jim Leatherwood not pictured) staff a volunteer recruitment table at REI



Volunteer Recruitment Card

National Trails Day 2010

The Conasauga Ranger District will be hosting its 18th annual National Trails Day event on June 5th. The Bear Creek Trail will be the site of this year's trail maintenance extravaganza. This popular hiking and mountain biking trail is one of the most heavily used trails on the district and it is in dire need of Team Conasauga's TLC (trail loving care). We will be maintaining water dips, trimming, and resetting signs. This is always one of our biggest trail events of the year. Join us and be part of something great. We will be meeting at 9 AM at the intersection of the Gates Chapel county road and the Bear Creek road (FDR 241).

The Backcountry Horsemen of North Georgia (BCHNG) will again be hosting an alternative event on the Conasauga District. Volunteers will be maintaining the South Fork Trail and the connecting Pinhoti Trail and tackling all the maintenance tasks needed at the Jacks River Fields Campground and Horse Camp. This is a great event for equestrians and other interested volunteers. The BCHNG have made this an awesome, fun-filled day for everyone with food and music at the campground following the workday. Plan to meet at the campground by 9 AM.

Conasauga Bits and Pieces

- **Hemlock Wooly Adelgid Update.** The Hemlock Wooly Adelgid non-native insect (see November 2008 – January 2009 newsletter issue) that is attacking and killing Eastern Hemlock trees down through the Appalachian mountain range has essentially spread across the Cohutta's. Several small stands of hemlocks are being treated by chemical and natural Adelgid predator beetle releases across the district to protect the species viability. Within the Cohutta Wilderness, hemlock stands are being treated in the upper Jacks River, middle Conasauga River, Chestnut Lead and Betty Gap areas this spring.
- **Forest Health Thinning Project Proposed.** The Conasauga Ranger District is seeking comments on a proposal to commercially thin about 51 acres of overstocked loblolly pine stands in the Narrows area along Taylor's Ridge.
- **Turkey Hunting Season Continues.** Turkey season is open statewide until May 15th including both the Cohutta and John's Mountain Wildlife Management Areas.
- **Boy Scout Eagle Projects.** Three great Eagle Scout projects will be accomplished soon on the district. Scout troops will tackle rehab of the Barnes Creek Picnic Area on FS 68, placement of benches on the Lake Trail at Lake Conasauga and the construction of fence and steps on the Bear Creek Trail to protect the old growth Gennett Poplar.

Mark Your Calendars…

- **May 14-15** — **REVISED Working Weekend #56, Hickory Creek Trail – waterbar/dip maintenance. Backpacking to Brayfield. Equestrians needed.**
- **June 5** — **National Trails Day. Bear Creek Trail – water dip maintenance, & trimming. South Fork Trail – water dip maintenance, trimming.**
- **July 17** — **Hickory Ridge (multi-use) Trail – trimming & slingblading. Equestrians needed.**
- **August 13-14** — **Working Weekend #57, Hemptop & Penitentiary Branch (multi-use) Trails – slingblading & trimming. Car camping at the Jacks River Fields Campground. Equestrians needed.**
- **September 18** — **Rough Ridge (multi-use) Trail – slingblading & water bar maintenance. Equestrians needed.**

Note: In addition to these scheduled workdays, we are trying to find some volunteers who are interested in working independently or with a small group to tackle smaller projects.

If you are interested, please contact Ed at 706-695-6736 x 118 or e-mail elang@fs.fed.us.

It's a family affair when Chuck Brock and father-in-law Jim Leatherwood team up on this Hickory Creek Trail blowdown

Tom and Tanis Blackwell are all smiles on Hickory Ridge Trail

Ben and Eric Shelby gave us a helping hand on the March workday

Janet, Scott and Zack Jordan knock out maintenance on yet another Hickory Ridge Trail waterdip

Amos Burrell and Gail Milner removed one of many blowdowns on Beech Bottom Trail

Celebrate Arbor Day

ARBOR DAY

Trees... a joy forever

April 30, 2010