

Trail Talk



**Conasauga Ranger
District**

Late Winter Edition

2013

2013 had a bit of a slippery start when we had to cancel Friday's work and the planned Cottonwood campout of our January work weekend due to flood waters and ice. But even Old Man Winter couldn't totally put the chill on our dedicated Team Conasauga volunteers and we had quite a turn-out on Saturday when we began to tackle the completion of the Beech Bottoms re-route project. This complex re-route was begun back in July of 2012 by the Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards (SAWS) "Yonkers" crew, but there is still a ton of work ahead, including some heavy-duty rock cribbing needed to tie in the new trail with the existing one. This is going to be a long multi-weekend project, requiring large turnouts each time and boy did we get started on the right foot! We had twenty-nine Volunteers representing three different groups: Team Conasauga, Backcountry Horsemen and SAWS, as well as two Forest Service Employees for a total of thirty-one all met at the Beech Bottom trailhead that frosty Saturday morning. Team Conasauga was represented by **Jim Leatherwood, Chuck Brock, Jim Bishop, Larry Thomas, Troy Brown, Wanda Brown, Amos Burrell, Michael Richter, Tom Owens, Nicole Warren-Miller, Kim Smith, Jeff Krivo, Robert Edmondson, Deede Edmondson, Robbie Edmondson, and David Tanner**. Representing the Backcountry Horsemen were **Carlos Martel, Kathleen Corcoran, and Nancy Tarrant**. The members of the SAWS crew were **Bill Hodge, Cara Stoney, Christopher Beck, James Lautzenheiser, Bobby Mitchell, Peter Reber, Aaron Sanford, and Mike Stacks**. The SAWS crew stayed in the wilderness Saturday night and continued the work on Sunday.

This area was hit again with another Team Conasauga workday in February. In the unplanned absence of any Forest Service staff, newly-certified Crew Leaders **Jim Leatherwood** and **Chuck Brock** stepped up to the plate and led a crew of 21 workers on this trip. They did a great job, along with Team Conasauga volunteers **Troy Brown, Wanda Brown, Jim Bishop, Amos Burrell, Charlie Crider, John Franetic, Jim Harris, Nicole Warren-Miller, Gail Milner, Bobby Mitchell, Tom Owen, Wayne Patillo, Charlie Tanner, David Tanner**, and SAWS crew members **Bill Hodge and Aaron Sanford**. They even recruited two day-hikers they met along the way, **Darla and Mike McFather** into joining the fun! Way to go guys! The work accomplished included clearing

the trail corridor, removing a few downed trees, and cutting a full bench trail bed. These tasks were very hard physical work, and we appreciate all the participation during these work weekends and the ones yet to come to complete this project!

A special thanks goes out this edition to Team Conasauga's Vice President **Robert Edmondson** for the many hours he spent designing and creating display boards and a powerpoint presentation which provided lots of information to potential volunteers at programs and booths he presented at REI stores throughout the metro-Atlanta area and also at the Co-Trails Annual Meeting in January. Robert's efforts have resulted in numerous new inquiries about our volunteer program and we're sure that some of these folks will end up at our workdays ahead!



January's
Mud-Fest
on the
Beech Bottom
Re-Route!



On Groundhog Day, a group of 19 volunteers braved the inclement weather and came out of their dens to give their brains a workout by attending the Crew Leader Training provided by **Don Hicks, David Kuykendall** and **Larry Thomas**. Team Conasauga attendees were **Troy and Wanda Brown, Chuck Brock, Amos Burrell, John Franetic, Jim Leatherwood, Nicole Warren-Miller, Michael Ritcher, and Mark Voykovic**. Backcountry Horseman of Northwest Georgia (BCHNWG) were represented by **Anthony Emanuel, Marlene Hayes, Cindy and Jim McGarvey, Patti Nethery, and Larry Wheat**; and Backcountry Horsemen of North Georgia(BCHNG) by **Jim Holland**. **Bill Hodge, Peter Reber, and Aaron Sanford** from Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards (SAWS) also attended, as did **Terry Palmeri** from the Ellijay Mountain Bike Association(EMBA). These folks all need to be actively leading groups to achieve their full certification so be sure to use them as a resource for your groups future trail activities!

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

Ellijay Mountain Bike Association (EMBA): www.ellijaymountainbike.org

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

Conasauga District Trail Volunteers (CDTA): www.teamconasauga.org



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Announcements!

Congratulations to former Conasauga Ranger District Wilderness Technician (and Assistant Fire Management Officer, and Acting ORA, **and** Acting District Ranger!) **MIKE DAVIS** for his recent promotion to Forest Fire Management Officer (FMO) at the Supervisor's Office in Gainesville. Mike's contact information is madavis@fs.fed.us, or (770) 297-3000 ext. 3080.

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Kevin (left) and Chuck Brock "bonding" on the Beech Bottom Trail re-route project.

I hope by now that most of you have had a chance to meet our new Trails and Wilderness Technician, Kevin Vasalinda. Kevin has been very busy since his arrival back in October, covering an amazing amount of ground so far and balancing the demands of a new job, a new location and a new family addition, Sadie, who was born in the middle of his transition from Alabama to here! Kevin comes with an interesting mix of experiences in his background and if you've met him, I'm sure you'll agree that he definitely livens things up on trail! He's been a great addition to our FS crew and we are slowly but surely handing him over the monumental task of keeping up with all you ambitious volunteers and your exploits! Along those lines, please be sure to keep Kevin in the loop with your volunteer hour reporting and also with any emails that contain information about work needs that you have encountered in your travels. His contact information is kvasalinda@fs.fed.us, and phone (706) 695-6736 ext. 121.

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Co-Trails, in conjunction with the USFS district personnel, is seeking your input on issues and opportunities related to trails on the Forest. As trail maintainers, we are all aware of the countless "social" trails that exist on National Forest lands that are not part of the designated trail system. While some of these trails present access and maintenance problems that must be

addressed, others may be worth considering for inclusion to the FS designated trail system. This is **your** opportunity to bring attention to these user-developed trails so they can be formally assessed. We are currently accepting proposals for new trail addition projects as well as proposals to address “problem” trails that create issues for your users, or you as maintainers. These proposals will all be evaluated using a set of criteria developed by Co-Trails and the USFS. Please call Karen for more information on the process and format for proposals at (706) 695-6736 ext. 103. Proposals are due May 1st, 2013.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!



March 16th: Workday on Hickory Creek Trail – Drain Dips! Meet at Rice Camp trailhead at 9:00 a.m.

Saturday April 13th: Trails 101 Training course at Lake Conasauga. This is a great opportunity for new or potential volunteers to learn the proper techniques for completing a variety of trail maintenance tasks, and for our more seasoned volunteers to share their knowledge, and welcome our newest members! Meet at the Lake Conasauga Overflow Camping area (Songbird Trailhead) at 9:00. Cook-out/pot luck to follow!

Friday and Saturday, May 17th & 18th: Completion of the drainage work on the Hickory Creek trail. Overnight at the Hickey Gap campground.

Saturday June 1st: National Trails Day Event, Jack’s River Trail. Drain dips, vegetation management and campsite work. Bring your swim gear and sandals!

Saturday July 13th: Hickory Ridge – vegetation management.

Note: June 2nd-June 13th: Yonkers SAWS crew is tentatively scheduled to be back to complete the Beech Bottom re-route work. Volunteer support throughout this project would be welcomed! More details to come!



On February 10, 2013 the volunteer community lost someone who was known and dear to many of you. The following is a memorial written by her neighbor and long-time trail partner Jim Holland.

Linda Pringle passed away in Atlanta Hospice on Sunday, February 10th. Linda was a fighter and had survived stage 4 cancer for 4 years. She was a member of The Back Country Horsemen of North Georgia, the Conasauga Volunteers, and a USFS Crosscut Sawyer. She loved hiking and riding the mountains of the National Forest and Wilderness and working on trails with her Arabian horse Wiedy. He was the love of her life and being with him gave her much comfort during the hard times. She worked diligently on trails for many years, even during her illness, to give something back to the land for the benefit of future generations. A few days before she passed away, I visited her, bringing a lock of Wiedy's mane. We talked of trails ridden, our love of Wilderness and horses, and the many experiences and work trips we shared. Linda was cremated along with the lock of Wiedy's mane and her ashes will be carried by Wiedy into the mountains she loved so much and scattered in a place she chose. She asked that in lieu of flowers or donations, her friends plant a tree in remembrance. We are sad at her loss and will miss her greatly, but are glad that her pain and suffering has ended.



May she rest in peace across the Rainbow Bridge.

A personal note: Since arriving on the district I have been awed by how much great work is accomplished by you, our dedicated volunteers! I must admit however, that Kevin and I struggle to keep up with you, your accomplishments and all the paperwork that inevitably follows! Although I would love to acknowledge each and every one of you and your individual efforts on a regular basis, it has become far too large a task to put all of this information into one timely newsletter. I also fear overwhelming everyone's inboxes with a 10 page newsletter, particularly since many of your organizations also create and post a group-specific newsletter of their own. So, I would like to try something different. While we will still try to acknowledge major work that is being accomplished by the groups in this newsletter, we will be requesting that folks follow links to those groups' websites for the more detailed descriptions of work accomplished, people involved, and calendars of planned workdays and events. This newsletter will continue to report in detail on the Forest Service sponsored Team Conasauga workdays and events, since this group is in fact a conglomerate of members from all of your groups. I hope that this will not offend any of you, which is not at all my intent. I am really just in need of reducing my and Kevin's workload, particularly as we are both still "learning the ropes". We both feel dedicated to spending as much quality time on the trails as possible, working with all of you, and getting to know the resources we are all trying to sustain for the generations to come. Thank you for your understanding in this matter, and I welcome any comments.

Happy Trails,

Karen