



# Trail Talk

## Spring 2013

Conasauga Ranger District

### March:

Team Conasauga decided to give the Beech Bottom Trail a break for awhile and headed instead onto the Hickory Creek Trail in March to perform much needed cleaning and repair of the rolling grade dips. Thirteen Team Conasauga volunteers including Robert **Edmondson**, **Gail Milner**, **Amos Burrell**, **Michael Richter**, **Dan Newman**, **Helen Chambers**, **Chuck Brock**, **Jim Leatherwood**, **Tannis Blackwell**, **Tom Blackwell**, **Wanda Brown**, and **Larry Thomas** all made the trek on what was probably the most beautiful day that month. The group was joined by newcomer **Jonathan Currier** and together they completed maintenance along the first four miles of the trail from the Rice Camp parking lot, nearly making it to the infamous "Stink Creek". Since Hickory Creek is a long trail with plenty of grade dips left, the group will be back again for the May work weekend, starting at the Hickory Creek trailhead and working 'til they meet up where they left off.

Benton MacKaye Trail Association headed out to the Dyer Gap area again in March for the final workday on the Benton MacKaye Trail re-route. This time around, twelve folks completed the entrance ramp connecting up the trail re-route, and put the finishing touches, like drain dips and blazes, on the .6 mile re-route. In attendance were **Barry Allen**, **Kyle Atkins**, **Claire Broadwell**, **Darcy Douglas**, **Bill Hamrick**, **Tom Keene**, **Doug Kleiber**, **George Owen**, **Bob Ruby**, **Gerrit Voogt**, and first-timers **Eric Hedden**, and **Russell Johnson**. For the complete details, please follow the link found at the end of the newsletter to the BMTA's website, and then be sure to take advantage of the spring weather and check out the new trail section!

EMBA sponsored an IMBA Mega-workday on March 9<sup>th</sup>, which included 38 volunteers doing mostly drainage dip work on the Bear Creek and Pinhoti 1 & 2 trails. Participants were: **Gail**

and **Todd Lyons, Terry and Mike Palmeri, Ken Knight, Stephanie Beall, Woody Wood, Shaun Allen, Alyce Wellows, Larry Thomas, Larry VanDyke, Kevin and Julie Boyer, Matt Smith, Amanda Bearden, Jon Hudgens, Justin Davenport, Justin Hurd, Larry Crook, Dave Hampton, Andy, Bill Semsrott, Michelle Dilwaith, Sharon Stevens, Amy Larimer, Brian LaFollette, Michael Imbody, Daniel and Deleese Chester, Dan and Natalie Latimer, Barry Gilley, Mitchell Hayes, Chris Davis, and Jim Townsend.** Special thanks to **Bill Hester** for operating the Ditch Witch, to **Terry and Mike Palmeri, Todd Lyons, Jim Huff, Tony Stevens, Linda Sledge,** for performing work in preparation for this big event, and to the staff at Mulberry Gap for logistical support and lunch!

Kirk's Cycle Shop sponsored their annual clean-up day out at the Houston Valley OHV area on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March this year. The weather wasn't very cooperative, but a few hardy souls, **Tammy Kirk, JoAnn Swartz, and Pantaleon Fernandez,** geared up and came out to help FS personnel pick up garbage along the 20 plus miles of ATV/Motorcycle trail in preparation for the system's spring opening on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April. Their donated time counts as much needed "matching" funds required for grant monies obtained from the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, which provides the resources for us to continue to provide this specialized trail opportunity, the largest public OHV trail system in Georgia.

## April – May

In April, Team Conasauga hosted a "Trails 101" course on the Songbird Trail near Lake Conasauga. "First Timers" **Travis and Justin Sanchez, Kyler and Rachael Larsen, and Gordon Griffith,** were joined by regulars **Tom Owens, Kim Smith, Tom and Tannis Blackwell, Troy and Wanda Brown, Jim Leatherwood, Chuck Brock and Michael Richter.** FS personnel **Ryan Farr and Karen Larsen** led the event with demonstrations of the technique for installing rolling grade dips. It was a chilly, windy start to the day, but the sun and the work soon warmed everyone up, and the day ended on a real high note (literally!) pictured below! (Can you guess where we are?)



Northwest Georgia SORBA members **David Wheaton, Rick Moon, Bill Semsrott, Bill Hester, Deborah Hester, Marcus Moore, and Charles Maddox**, along with BCHNG members **Larry Wheat and Kimi Gregg** were all very busy this spring donating over 55 hours of work to keep both the Pinhoti trail and the trails of the Dry Creek trail system drained and free of trees and debris after the numerous storms.

BCHNWG volunteers **Julia Chromiak, Zoey Zardis** and **Jim Holland** did some serious time on the misery whip this spring trying to keep up with blowdowns on the Jack's River trail and Penitentiary Branch. **Ken Jones, Aaron Sanderson, Bill Hodge and Brenda Irrer** from the Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards also lent a hand to help keep on top of the ever-falling trees in this area this spring. In addition, **Jim Holland** also taught both a cross-cut saw class, and a chainsaw class or two so we all should be pretty up to date on our certifications! Thanks Jim!



Volunteer Julia Chromiak, 16, getting re-acquainted with an old friend on Penitentiary Branch. Julia started volunteering when she was 12.

Team Conasauga members **Troy and Wanda Brown, Wayne Patillo, Tom Blackwell, Jim Bishop, Jim Leatherwood, Miles Wise, Larry Thomas, Robert Edmondson, Jeffrey and Michael Heninger**, and newcomer **Meredith Bean** hit the trail again with wilderness technician **Kevin Vaslinda** in May for a weekend of completing rolling grade dip work on the Hickory Creek Trail and a backpack camp-out down by the Conasauga river. They got a ton of trail work done and maybe a little "fish population monitoring" too!

Campground Help:

A big thanks goes out to the following BCHNWG folks who pitch in at Jack's River Field Campground to keep it spruced up and ready for campers during the summer season: **Carol and Carlos Martel, Nanci Tarrant, Bob Goggins, Melinda Wagner, Bob Wagner, Junior Kyle, Kathleen Corcoran, Hanley Rose, Lakota Towe, Jack Cole, Debbie Kramer, and Sharon and Joe Burke.**

On a similar note, thanks goes out to **Amy and Gene Findley** of BCHNG for their efforts taming the grass in the parking lot of the Dry Creek trail system through all of this rain, and for **Fred Pilcher** who does the same at Pilcher Pond!

And of course, our faithful Lake Conasauga campground host **Tim Woody** has also been an ever-present help this spring, putting in over 60 hours doing whatever needed to be done before the campground was open for the season.

## Think Safety!

At this time of the year it's pretty easy to get lost in the beauty and wonder of the emerging earth, and forget that Spring can present some challenging conditions that might catch you unaware! As we've seen the last couple of weeks, it is best to be prepared for rapidly changing conditions. That beautiful spring morning can quickly erode into wet, cold and icy conditions, particularly as you go higher in elevation. Hypothermia is a very real threat this time of year if you get caught in an April Shower and don't have dry clothes to change into when the temperatures plummet with the sunset. Here are some safety tips to remember to keep the "spring" in your step!

Always check the weather forecast before heading out onto trail. Spring storms can be sudden and severe. Be prepared for changing road conditions, particularly if you are heading "up" the mountain. Let folks know what your travel plans are in case you become stranded on icy roads and cannot get cell phone service to alert people of your whereabouts. Drink water even when you don't feel thirsty. Dehydration can sneak up on you when the weather is cooler and you don't "feel" hot or thirsty.

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...

Appalachian Trail Association (GATC): [www.georgia-atclub.org](http://www.georgia-atclub.org)

Backcountry Horsemen of North Georgia (BCHNG): [www.bchng.org](http://www.bchng.org)

Backcountry Horsemen of Northwest Georgia (BCHNWG): [www.bchnwg.org](http://www.bchnwg.org)

Benton MacKaye Trail Association (BMTA): [www.bmta.org](http://www.bmta.org)

Conasauga District Trail Volunteers (CDTA): [www.teamconasauga.org](http://www.teamconasauga.org)

Ellijay Mountain Bike Association (EMBA): [www.ellijaymountainbike.org](http://www.ellijaymountainbike.org)

Georgia Pinhoti Trail Association: [www.pinhoti.info](http://www.pinhoti.info)

Northwest Georgia Southern Off-road Bike Association (NWGA SORBA): [www.nwgasorba.org](http://www.nwgasorba.org)

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



(ChattahoocheeOconee NFs website)

**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 will be due May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013.

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*MARK YOUR CALENDARS!*

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**Saturday April 13<sup>th</sup>:** 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 17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup>:** Completion of the drainage work on the Hickory Creek trail. Overnight at the Hickey Gap campground.

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

**Saturday July 13<sup>th</sup>:** Hickory Ridge – vegetation management.

**Note:** June 2<sup>nd</sup>-June 13<sup>th</sup>: 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!