

# Trail Talk

*Conasauga Ranger District*

*February – March 2007*



Yes you read it correctly! The Armuchee-Cohutta will soon officially become known by its new name the Conasauga Ranger District. To the east the Toccoa and Brasstown Ranger Districts will consolidate into one and be known as the Blue Ridge Ranger District, the Tallulah and Chattooga Ranger Districts will become the Chattooga River Ranger District. This goes into effect in late April.



*“Alternative Spring Breakers”*

Capital University students from Columbus, Ohio spend their spring break working with the Nature Conservancy and the Forest Service. Here they are tackling campsite rehab at the Beech Bottoms area.



January saw **Troy** and **Wanda Brown** start the month out on blowdown removal on the East Cowpen Trail on a Friday... The following day **Troy, Wanda, Bob Korch, Amos Burrell, Jim Cullen** and **Jim Bishop** continued the blowdown removal along East Cowpen and the upper portion of Panther Creek Trail... **Troy** and **Wanda** continued work on East Cowpen the following weekend... **The Browns** continued their efforts along Tearbitches Trail as well. They also did some recon work along Iron Mountain Trail and **Troy** helped with sign placement on the Pinhoti Trail. So **Troy** was able to work seven days during January and **Wanda** put in six... **Larry Wheat** did a recon of the Pinhoti along the Narrows area and **Bob** and **Mary Korch** tackled trail maintenance needs along the Songbird and Lake Conasauga Trail network. Eight Volunteers produced **177** hours of work in January.

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February saw our crosscut sawyers hit the trail again as **Troy** and **Wanda Brown, Amos Burrell,** and **Bob Korch** worked the Hickory Ridge Trail area... **Doug Douthitt, Amos Burrell,** and **Justin Holsomback** participated on a prescribed burning project for a day in the Pocket area... **Troy Brown** did a recon of the Chestnut Lead Trail for a day and then **Troy** and **Wanda** tackled blowdown removal the following day there. Several cold fronts in 2007 have had strong, gusty winds accompany them resulting in trees, limbs, and debris being scattered along a number of our trails. As soon as one area is cleared it seems our Volunteers are going back again. Volunteers contributed **99.5** hours to the cause in February. Our scheduled working weekend in February was cancelled due to inclement weather conditions. We'll try to get back on track soon.



### **Volunteers Do Good Things ...**

Long time Volunteer Doug Douthitt received recognition recently for his work related to Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Doug worked for the Forest Service on an assignment in New Orleans. Congratulations Doug and **“Thanks”** for your efforts.



## ***Meet Our New Ranger***

Our new District Ranger Michele Jones came to us in early December. We asked Michele to share some of her background with you:

*I've worked for the Federal Government for 19 years – 16 with the Forest Service and 3 with the National Wildlife Refuge System (FWS). I started working for the Forest Service during the summers while I was in college on the Umatilla National Forest (Dale, OR) marking timber and fighting wildfires. Once I received a degree in Forest Management from Oregon State University, I was hired on the Idaho Panhandle National Forest (Priest Lake, ID) as a Forester Trainee. My career then took me to the Kootenai National Forest (Libby MT), Oregon Coast National Wildlife Refuge (Newport, OR), and most recently to the Monongahela National Forest (Elkins, WV) where I was the Ecosystems Staff Officer. I've wanted to be a Ranger since the first summer I started marking trees on the Umatilla National Forest and I feel very honored to serve as District Ranger alongside the wonderful folks who work on the Conasauga District. I appreciate all the incredible work our volunteers do for us and look forward to meeting many of them.*



As the weather improves we're beginning to see an increase in forest visitors. This means an increase in vehicles that you'll encounter on forest roads. Many of you drive long distances to reach us from the metro area. It seems we hear more and more about the number of accidents occurring on the interstate around Atlanta. We recently received this through our channels and it is worth sharing with you.

### **“10 Common Driving Mistakes”**

#### ***Failing to pay attention – “zoning out”***

Stay relaxed but totally focused.

Concentrate on your journey not your pending issues.

#### ***Driving while drowsy***

Take breaks frequently or as required.

Make sure to get adequate rest before long trips.

#### ***Becoming distracted inside car (cell phone, radio, passengers)***

Do not use cell phones while driving.

Plan your trip and study your trip prior to commencing.

***Failing to adjust to adverse weather conditions***

- Slow down in rain.
- Allow longer stopping distances.
- Adjust for poor visibility.

***Driving aggressively (tailgating, running red lights, and stop signs, etc.)***

- Allow yourself ample time to make the trip.
- Remain calm and drive with a safety cushion.

***Making assumptions about other drivers intentions***

- Drive defensively.
- Allow cushion for the unexpected
- Make your intentions clear, use turn signals, etc.

***Speeding***

- Obey the traffic signs.
- Remember the speed limit is the legal limit in ideal conditions.

***Changing lanes without checking blind spots***

- Signal, check mirrors, then use quick glance
- Make lane changes gradually

***Driving while upset***

- Avoid this, as it is comparable to driving intoxicated.

***Ignoring essential auto maintenance (brake lights, bald tires, etc)***

- Do daily/weekly/monthly maintenance checks.
- Check brake pads often – nothings more important than your cars ability to stop itself.

**REMEMBER:** It takes 8,460 bolts to assemble an automobile, and one nut to scatter it all over the road. Don't become the nut, drive safe for yourself, the ones you love and everyone around you. Remember the other driver has family and love ones also.



Mark your calendars:



- March 24 - Pinhoti Trail/Hurricane Ridge section
- April 28 - Blowdown removal/overall trail system recon and evaluation
- May 19 - To Be Announced
- June 2 - National Trails Day