

# Trail Talk

*Conasauga Ranger District*

*April - June 2007*



Name this latest installment of “Trail Talk”, the Better-Late-Than-Never issue. Yes, it has been a long time since the last newsletter and for that your new coordinator apologizes. Our newsletter is very important in that it allows us to keep in touch and be informed. It is here to stay! However, for the time being, “Trail Talk” will come to you every two months rather than monthly. Your understanding is appreciated.



*Hurricane – Pinhoti Trail Work Day*



National Trails Day is an annual event set aside for Americans to celebrate our nation’s trails and the natural treasures to which they provide access. The Conasauga Ranger District is proud to have participated in National Trails Day with a special event every year since its inception. Thank you volunteers for 15 successful years of celebrating our trails.



**MARCH - Troy and Wanda Brown** kicked off the month with blowdown removal on the Beech Bottom trail. They were joined by the following “Alternative Spring



Breakers” from Capital University in Columbus, Ohio who performed campsite rehab and cleanup in Beech Bottom: **Chris Wagner, Brynn Lanam, Ellen Cook, Angela Evans, Julie Adams, Chelsea Francis and Kerry Cheesman.** The following Saturday **Troy and Wanda** led another eager group of students from Grand Valley University as they tackled campsite rehab on the Hickory Creek trail including the Brayfield area...the students were **Markus Neuhoff, Christa Skelton, Jean-Marie Galong, Luci Ellavich, Lisa Farr, Casey Otradovec, Lyndsay Israel, Kelly Gauthier, David Faling and Mesah Saxe.** **Amos Burrell** assisted us in a prescribed burn on Muddy Branch that same day. Later in the month **Mark Voykovic** hiked into Beech Bottom on a foot patrol making public contacts. **Bob and Mary Korch and Jim Bishop** maintained waterbars on Chestnut Lead trail after picking up litter on Forest Road 630-B. The Pinhoti trail near Hurricane Creek was the site of our scheduled monthly workday...waterbar maintenance and trimming was accomplished by **Troy and Wanda Brown, Rick Moon, Chris Hohol, Gail Milner, Charlie Crider, Jim Bishop, Tom and Tannis Blackwell, Nathan Dennis, Angie and Ron Dickerson, Jim Harris, Jim Cullen, Scott, Janet and Zack Jordan, Conrad and Shelby Fernandez, and Larry Wheat.** **Amos Burrell** helped us again on another prescribed burn near Iron Mountain. And finally on the last day of the month, **Jim Bishop and Bob and Mary Korch** continued their waterbar maintenance work on the Chestnut Lead trail. Some 41 Volunteers produced an incredible **620** hours of work in March.

---

**APRIL - Larry Wheat** began this month’s projects with a Pinhoti trail recon in the Dry Creek area. **Dexter Blackmon and Daniel Prince** spent a day trimming trail in the Houston Valley ORV area. **Troy and Wanda Brown** had a long, hard day with the crosscut saw clearing blowdowns from the Penitentiary Branch trail. The following week **Jim McGarvey and Larry Wheat** cranked up their chainsaws to remove blowdowns from the Pinhoti trail near Strawberry Mountain. **The Browns** returned to the



Penitentiary Branch trail the next weekend for another long day maintaining waterbars. That same weekend **Bob and Mary Korch** began waterbar maintenance on the Hickory Creek trail. **The Korches** ran into **Dunwoody Boy Scout troop #266** at the Brayfield who were lugging out three large bags of trash they had collected. The last weekend in April was huge for **TEAM CONASAUGA** as we saw volunteers converging on four separate trails. **Charlie Crider and Gail Milner** spent Thursday doing a recon and

trimming on the Iron Mountain trail...then on Friday they cut out blowdowns and did trimming on the Horseshoe Bend trail...finally, on Saturday they returned to Iron Mountain and removed blowdown and continued trimming. **Tom and Tannis Blackwell and Estes Dennis** were busy that weekend too doing a long-distance recon on the entire length of Rough Ridge trail. Last, a crosscut saw team consisting of **Jim Cullen, Amos Burrell, Bob Korch, Justin Teal and Wanda Brown** cut several blowdowns on the stretch of Hickory Creek trail from Rice Camp trailhead to the river, while **Mary Korch** trimmed the same trail to the second culvert. Volunteers contributed **275.5** hours to the cause in April.

---

**MAY** - You all were busy this month. May 1<sup>st</sup> saw **Jim Holland and Linda Pringle** conducting a horseback trail recon from 3-forks trailhead to the Jacks River and then picked up trash on the river for good measure. The next day **Larry Wheat** did a trail condition survey of the Pinhoti trail in the Narrows area. On May 8, the **Back Country Horsemen of North Georgia (BCHNG)** conducted their inaugural cleanup and maintenance of the Jacks River Fields campground...more on this later. BCHNG members consisted of **Jim Holland, Jim McGarvey, Linda Pringle, Junior Kyle and John Lilly**. That same day **Charlie Crider and Gail Milner** accomplished a recon of the East Cowpen-Hickory Ridge-Rice Camp trail loop and removed blowdowns and trimmed brush as they went. The following week **Scott, Janet and Zack Jordan** hiked the Chickamauga Creek trail and reported back on its condition. And, **Bob and Mary Korch and Jim Bishop** returned to the Hickory Creek trail to complete their maintenance of all waterbars between the southern trailhead and the Conasauga river crossing. Then, over the course of two weeks **BCHNG** members **Jim Holland, Melinda Towe and Junior Kyle** maintained the Jacks River Fields campground on four separate occasions. A few days later **Jim Holland and Linda Pringle** first cleared blowdowns on the Jacks River trail between Dally Gap and the first ford, then, removed a blowdown from the Hemptop trail. Several volunteers attended the scheduled May work trip to the Horseshoe Bend trail and removed blowdowns, cleaned waterbars, trimmed brush and swingbladed trailside vegetation from all 3.5 miles putting this beautiful wilderness trail back in top condition...trail volunteers included **Tom and Tannis Blackwell, Scott, Janet and Zack Jordan, Gail Milner, Charlie Crider, Jim Bishop, Amos Burrell, Bob and Mary Korch, and Troy and Wanda Brown**. Twenty volunteers put in **297** tough hours in May.

---

**JUNE** - **Jim McGarvey and Jim Holland** began the month with a recreation service trip to Jacks River Fields campground. Then, on June 2nd, 21 volunteers celebrated National Trails Day (NTD) at five separate sites accomplishing blowdown removal on the Mountaintown Creek and Southfork trails, and trimming, swingblading and clearing two sections of the Pinhoti trail as well as a variety of maintenance jobs at Jacks River Fields, at Pinhoti and Southfork trailhead. NTD volunteers in attendance were **Gail Milner, Charlie Crider, Tom and Tannis Blackwell, Scott, Janet and Zack Jordan, Jim Cullen, Larry Jones, Amos Burrell, Troy and Wanda Brown, Jim Bishop, Marty Dominy, Larry Wheat, Jim Holland, Molly Ford, Robert and Sharon Goggins, and Melinda and Lakota Towe**. The next week, **Jim McGarvey and Dewey Campbell** cleared blowdowns and mowed (bush hogged) the Pinhoti trail north of Buddy Cove gap which also serves as a linear wildlife food plot while **Jim Holland and Molly**

**Ford** serviced Jacks River Fields. **Jim Holland and Joan Tipton** finished sawing blowdowns from the Southfork trail the next day. Then, towards the end of the month **Jim Holland, Joan Tipton, Hanna Futree, Nanci Tarrant, and Melinda and Kelly Towe** completed two successful maintenance days at the Jacks River Fields campground. All told, volunteers put in **288** hours in June.

If you total it up for the March – June period, TEAM CONASAUGA contributed 1,480.5 hours of sweat equity to our outstanding trails and trailheads. What an effort...you all are the greatest!

## Campfire Ban Lifted

One of the driest spring and early summer seasons on record is finally behind us as we slip into the dog days of summer. Weather patterns in the southeast are now typical for this time of year...hot, humid weather with frequent afternoon thunderstorms. Fire danger is back to normal low levels for this time of year. Consequently, the extended ban on campfires in the national forests of North Georgia has been lifted.

However, the proper precautions should always be taken should you choose to build a campfire...

- Build campfires away from overhanging branches, steep slopes, rotten stumps, logs, dry grass and leaves. Scrape away any burnable material within a 10-foot diameter circle. However, save this debris to recover the exposed soil before you leave.
- Keep the campfire small.
- Never leave a campfire unattended, even for a minute. Even a small breeze could quickly cause the fire to spread.
- Be sure your fire is “dead out” before breaking camp or going to bed.
- Drown the fire with water. Stir the remains with dirt, add more water, and stir again.

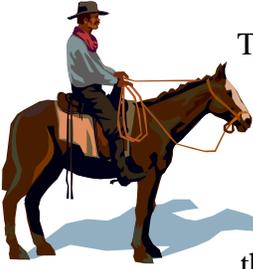


And, remember to minimize campfire impacts through these Leave-No-Trace practices:

- Campfires can cause lasting impacts to the backcountry. As an alternative, consider using a lightweight stove for cooking and enjoy a candle lantern for light.
- Where fires are permitted, use established fire rings, fire pans, or mound fires.
- Keep fires small. Only use sticks from the ground that can be broken by hand.
- Burn all wood and coals to ash, put out campfires completely, then, scatter cool ashes.



## Volunteers on the Cutting Edge



The Back Country Horsemen of North Georgia (BCHNG) volunteer organization has come up with an innovative plan to maintain and enhance conditions at Jacks River Fields, a national forest campground and Pinhoti trailhead on the far east side of the Conasauga Ranger District. Back in late 2006, Jim McGarvey and Jim Holland representing the newly formed BCHNG approached the district with an idea to upgrade the equine facilities at Jacks River Fields while taking over primary responsibility for routine maintenance (mowing and trimming, trash pickup, toilet building servicing) of the campground. On May 2<sup>nd</sup> the BCHNG formally adopted the campground and never looked back. Future improvements at Jacks River Fields will include improved access for horse trailers and construction of one or two pipe corrals. The next time you're in the vicinity, take a drive through Jacks River Fields. It has never looked better. **Thank you BCHNG...your doing a fantastic job!**



Yellowjackets are out in force early this year. In fact, Wanda Brown reported that Troy and Jim Cullen were attacked and stung several times while swingblading Rough Ridge trail this past weekend. While the following text appeared in the July 2006 newsletter, it bears repeating.

### *Did you know?*

- *In late summer through early fall, yellowjackets become troublesome and dangerous. Their food preference switches from proteins (such as other insects) to sweets, and they scavenge at garbage cans and picnic tables, and other places such as your trail-side lunch or snack. This is when workers are more likely to sting, even away from the nest.*
- *Personal Protection Against Yellowjackets - A yellowjacket's sting can cause a life-threatening allergic reaction in some people. If you are allergic to stings, there are some avoidance techniques you can use. You can lessen your attractiveness to yellowjackets if you forego the use of hairspray, perfume, or aftershave and don't wear bright-colored clothing, especially bright yellow, light blue, red, or orange. Good choices are white or light tan fabrics which are unattractive to them. Wear shoes when walking through lawns. Keep car windows closed whenever possible. Be cautious when working in the garden or trimming hedges, and avoid apple orchards. If you do end up in an area where yellowjackets are present, don't swat them. This will only increase your chance of being stung. Try to remain calm and walk away. Never crush a yellowjacket. A dying yellowjacket worker releases an alarm pheromone that alerts its nest mates. In just a few seconds, you could find yourself surrounded by angry wasps.*
- *On the trail – when performing trail maintenance duties or just simply hiking be aware of your surroundings. If you disturb a nest you'll hear the increasing sound of the buzzing that is made by the*



*yellowjackets as they come out of the nest. This is what I call the sound of the "yellow tornado" as they lift off from the nest in large numbers seeking out the threat. While hiking it is not uncommon to see where nests have been dug up especially by bears. This is definitely a watch out situation.*

*Be careful out there, this is a serious threat. It is likely almost all trail workers will encounter a yellowjacket sting (or multiple stings) at some point this season. Will you be prepared for it?*



Mark your calendars:



- July 28 - Hemptop trail swingblading/trimming
- August 25 - Working Weekend #48, upper Jacks River trail
- September 22 - Location to be announced
- October 20 - Tentative date for our 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Volunteer Appreciation Picnic...by invitation only

