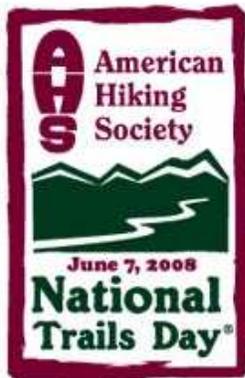


Trail Talk

Conasauga Ranger District

April – June 2008



On June 7th, we celebrated our 16th Annual National Trails Day with trail maintenance projects on both the Jacks River Trail and the South Fork Trail. TEAM Conasauga took this year's NTD slogan, "Join Us on the Trail", to heart as 32 dedicated volunteers pitched in to make the day a complete success. Going strong for over 18 years now, our volunteer program continues to march on year after year. With your help we can continue this amazing story and keep our trails what are recognized as some of the best maintained in the southeast.





April/May – **Larry Wheat** spent three more days in April continuing his flagging efforts on the new trails at Dry Creek. Then at the end of the month he and **Conrad Fernandez** went back to review the trail locations. **Amy & Gene Findley** kept the momentum going by mowing the Dry Creek trailhead parking lot.... **Troy & Wanda Brown** spent a day cutting blowdowns on Rice Camp,

and then **Wanda** did an end-to-end recon and light blowdown removal on East Cowpen. **Troy** and **Wanda** took a short break from wilderness work by cleaning the water bars on the Bear Creek spur trail....**James & Beth Underwood** returned to Lake Conasauga on the opening weekend in April to begin another season as Campground Hosts. The **Underwoods** have continued as the hosts nearly every weekend in April and May since then. **Jackie Homes** served as the Pocket Campground Host for most of the month of May....**Mark Voykovic** spent two days on wilderness patrol and making visitor contacts on Beech Bottom. This visitor education time is very beneficial in our effort to reduce impact in the Beech Bottom area....Work on the Pinhoti continued in April with the recon efforts of **Mike Dillard & Bill Moll**. **Conrad Fernandez** kept up the pace with signage and blazing from Middle Mountain to Stover Creek, then, he returned in May to cut blowdowns on the Middle Mountain section.... Dynamic duo **Rodger Atkins** and **Fred Pilcher** spent several days in April and May on the west side picking up trash from roadsides and emptying trash cans at recreation sites from one end of the district to the other. **Fred** and **Rodger** also spent many hours working on



Fred Pilcher & Rodger Atkins after a busy day at Pilcher Pond

several projects including graffiti removal at John's Mountain Overlook, cleaning up dispersed camping areas, mowing, painting fence at the Hwy 136 Pinhoti trailhead and maintaining the Pocket Recreation Area. **Rodger** and **Adam Hamilton** spent a day removing gravel from the Houston Valley parking lot....Work at the Jacks River Field continued in April and May, with **Jim Holland, Joan Tipton & Melinda Towe** removing trash, cleaning out fire rings and servicing the toilets. **Jim** returned a few days later to mow while **Linda Pringle** used the weed whacker, and **Joan Tipton & Melinda Towe** continued working on the fire rings and trash removal. The work rolled on into May, with **Jim Holland** spending two more days mowing. **Linda Pringle & Junior Kyle** continued the weed whacker work while **Joan Tipton & Melinda Towe** pursued more work on fire rings and trash pickup. Not to be outdone, **Melinda Towe** came back later and took her turn at the mower while **Junior Kyle** used the weed whacker. **Ken Napierowski** also did his part by cleaning fire rings and stacking firewood....Meanwhile, back in the wilderness, **Bob & Mary Korch** spent a day in April cleaning water bars on Beech Bottom. Then in May they enlisted the help of **Jim Bishop, Troy & Wanda Brown, Amos Burrell & Larry Jones** to finish the job. A rattlesnake greeted them on the hike back out to the parking lot. **Jim Holland & Linda Pringle** also spent a day clearing blowdowns on Penitentiary Branch. **Tom & Tannis Blackwell** did a fantastic job trimming & swingblading the Jacks River trail from Beech bottom to Rice Camp....The Pinhoti

work continued as **Justin Beard** spent two days working in the Hurricane area. **Bill Hester & Chris Hohol** cleared blowdowns in the Horn Mountain/Pilchers Pond area, then **Bill** returned with **Philip White** to finish the blowdown removal and do some weedeating....As always, Working Weekend #50 on Hickory Ridge trail was a huge success. When the dust cleared we had reconstructed 62 water bars. **Troy & Wanda Brown** and **Amos Burrell** joined Forest Service employee Larry Thomas for a backpack to the top of Hickory Ridge. **Charlie Crider & Gail Milner** camped at the Cottonwood Patch (along with their trusty horses) and met up with the rest of the crew on Friday morning to get the work day started. **Jim Bishop** also joined them on Friday for the water bar cleaning project. At the end of the workday **Charlie & Gail** returned to the Cottonwood Patch, where they were joined later in the evening by **Bob & Mary Korch**. We hear that for supper they had salmon fillets baked over the fire. The backpackers had to be content with hot dogs roasted over the fire and other stuff that can be boiled in a pot. The backpackers arrived back at camp just as a thunderstorm passed over, so they had time for a short nap in their tents while waiting for the rain to subside. Afterwards, they had a beautiful evening to sit around the fire and fellowship. Saturday morning **Tom & Tannis Blackwell, Bob & Mary Korch, Charlie Crider, and Gail Milner** worked from the lower end of Hickory Ridge while **Troy & Wanda, Amos and Larry** worked from their perch high atop Hickory ridge to finish the water bar work. After the work was finished the crew returned to **Charlie & Gail's** camp at the Cottonwood Patch for a little fellowship and a lot of food. **Bob & Mary Korch** provided some delicious barbeque, and we had some wonderful beef soup courtesy of **Gail Milner**. If you missed this trip, don't despair. We'll be having another working weekend soon, and you are invited....The month of May was closed out with **Troy & Wanda Brown, Bob & Mary Korch, and Amos Burrell** clearing the blowdowns on Hickory Ridge....Our volunteers put in a total of **1,020.5 hours** in April and May, with 34 volunteers participating. Your hard work and can-do spirit is greatly appreciated.

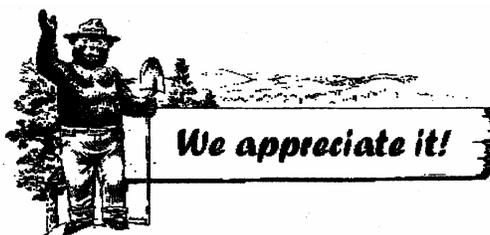
June – Jim Holland, Joan Tipton and Ken Napierkowski kicked off this month with their continuing cleanup and maintenance of the Jacks River Fields campground. And, **Gene and Amy Findley** did their usual fine job mowing the Dry Creek Trailhead parking area....Then,



Ashley Derrick & Linda Pringle put the finishing touches on a South Fork trail dip during NTD 2008

TEAM Conasauga turned it loose for National Trails Day (NTD) 2008 with two outstanding projects: 22 volunteers put in a long day tackling slingblading and trimming tasks on 6 miles of the Jacks River Trail from Rice Camp downstream to the trailhead. Tired but happy volunteers included **Helen Chamberlain, Gail Milner, Charlie Crider, Amos Burrell, Trey Baldwin, Scott, Janet and Zack Jordan, Jim Bishop, Jim Cullen, Troy and Wanda Brown, Larry Jones, Bob and Mary Korch, Laura Sommet, Tom and Wallis Owens, Adam Hamilton, Vanessa Carter, Chris Bolton and Paula Schubert**. The Back Country Horsemen of North GA (BCHNG) hosted a second NTD event on the South Fork Trail. Meeting at Jacks River

Fields, 10 volunteers pitched in to repair some 60 water bars and dips on the entire 2.7-mile horse/bike/hiker trail; they even found time to maintain the campground before they called it a day. This hard-working bunch included **Jim Holland, Joan Tipton, Larry Wheat, Kathy Hansen, Jacqui Derrick, Ashley Derrick, Oscar Gonzalez, Linda Pringle, Molly Ford, and Dewey Campbell**. Finally on this fine day, **Larry Damron** and **Larry Pfeiffer** went up to Harkins Branch on the Pinhoti Trail and cleaned a stopped-up trail culvert....**James** and **Beth Underwood** spent most weekends this month as the Campground Hosts at Lake Conasauga, their home away from home. And, **Jackie Homes** hosted at the Pocket Campground for several more days before moving on....**Troy** and **Wanda Brown** hiked up the East Cowpen Trail one day to saw out some blowdowns they knew about....High school student **Cody Wade**, a new volunteer from Dalton, helped us two days assisting with recreation area clean-up and maintenance and mowing of the Cottonwood Patch Campground.... **Fred Pilcher** spent a long day mowing the Pilcher's Pond area. **Mr. Pilcher** worked four additional days this month rehabbing the John's Mountain Overlook deck from vandalism and assisting with maintenance at the Pocket Recreation Area....SORBA's own **Bill** and **Debra Hester** worked two days doing chainsaw and drainage work on the Pinhoti Trail at John's Mountain. **Bill** worked another day with **Bill Semsrott** removing blowdowns on John's Mountain before the rain finally ran them off. And, A SORBA trail team consisting of **Chris** and **Patrick Hohol, Brent Nelson, Ron Marcus** and **Dan Vickers** worked hard to cut and remove several blowdowns from the Middle Mountain and Hurricane sections of the Pinhoti Trail....The Jacks River Fields Campground has never looked better thanks to the dedicated efforts of our BCHNG volunteers. This month **Danny Payne** used his own equipment to mow and weedeat the popular equestrian campground. **Melinda** and **Lakota Towe** and **Junior Kyle** also spent two more busy days there with site maintenance, mowing and weed wacking. **Melinda** and **Junior** returned the last of the month to service the restrooms and empty the trash bins....**Wanda** and **Troy Brown** spent two days on the Jacks River Trail finishing the slingblading and trimming project we started for National Trails Day. **Bob** and **Mary Korch** joined the **Browns** one day to complete the big job....**Jim Holland** and **Linda Pringle** made short work of several blowdowns to clear the Hemptop and upper Jacks River Trail. And, **Helen Chamberlain** used her horse as packstock to remove a lot of trash from the Jacks River Trail....TEAM Conasauga is proud to log **660.5 hours** of sweat equity for the month of June. Fabulous work everyone!



Ah-h-h, summer in the south. A season for heat, humidity, and **THUNDERSTORMS!** Here are a few tips from the National Wildfire Coordinating Group for at home and on the trail when a thunderstorm arises.



Within a 30-day period from the end of May to the end of June 2008, 10 wildland firefighters were injured after being struck by lightning while conducting fire operations. Two of these firefighters were hit on a prescribed fire in Montana; eight others were struck in North Carolina. Thunderstorms continue to be predicted in most of the west and parts of the southeast.

The mature stage of a storm may be noted by a sudden reverse in wind direction, a noticeable rise in wind speed, and a sharp drop in temperature. Heavy rain, hail, and lightning also occur in the mature stage of a thunderstorm. During a storm:

Observe the 30/30 rule: If you see lightning and hear thunderclaps within 30 seconds of each other, take storm countermeasures. Do not resume work in exposed areas until 30 minutes after storm activity has passed. Other thunder storm countermeasures include:

- Watch water levels along flash flood prone streams and rivers.
- Put down all tools and crouch if in open country.
- Turn off machinery and electric motors.
- Avoid grouping together. Stay at least 15 feet apart.
- Stay in your vehicle or take shelter in vehicles or a building, if possible.
- When there is no shelter, avoid high objects such as lone trees. If only isolated trees are nearby, the best protection is to crouch in the open, keeping a distance of twice the height of the tree away. Keep away from wire fences, telephone lines, and conductive elevated objects.
- Avoid ridge tops, hilltops, wide-open spaces, ledges, rock outcroppings, and exposed shelters.
- Advise crew members that if they feel an electric charge (if their hair stands on end or their skin tingles), lightning may be about to strike them. They must drop to the ground immediately.
- Sit on some insulating material if possible, such as coiled rope, a wooden pack board, a folded sleeping bag, a wool shirt, etc.
- Do not use radios or cell phones.



Team Conasauga Granted Non-profit Status

We have good news to share about the formal organizing of our volunteer group – TEAM Conasauga. The organization was officially incorporated in the State of Georgia as the "Conasauga District Trail Volunteers, Inc." and in May received approval from the Internal Revenue Service for 501(c)(3) non-profit status.

This allows TEAM Conasauga to pursue grants and other donations that will help grow our overall volunteer program and be self-sustaining for the long-term. The organization's initial Board of Directors -- Troy and Wanda Brown, Gail Milner, Jim Bishop and Bob Korch – have been leading these important behind the scenes initiatives in addition to all they do for us on the trails.

If you're not already aware, TEAM Conasauga has a group Web site which was set up through Yahoo Groups. Simply go to: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/TeamConasauga/>

From this Home Page, look for the "Request to join this group" button. You will then be prompted to enter your Yahoo ID and password. If you do not already have a Yahoo ID you

must create one before you can enter the site. Then, await approval of a Site Moderator, which will provide you full access to the group site.

Here are some of the Web site highlights:

- Official copies of the organization's bylaws and articles of incorporation
- Calendar of Events
- File sharing (Wanda Brown regularly uploads a spreadsheet of the volunteers' time)
- Database - Trail Maintenance Needs, etc.
- Photos
- FAQ - Tips on how to use all the features

Conasauga Lore . . .



Ab's Camp. Ab Green (1858 to 1934) was a successful farmer and stockman during the "free range era". He raised cattle and hogs and ranged them throughout the Cohutta Mountains. For a number of years Ab maintained a camp just west of the East Cowpen Trail near Buckeye Mountain in what is now the Cohutta Wilderness. The camp was a one-room log cabin that served as the

central location for the management and roundup of his stock. Adjacent to the cabin was a very small (less than a $\frac{1}{2}$ acre) field where he often planted potatoes. The cabin was unlocked, and other travelers used it, but Ab maintained a locked strongbox to secure his own personal items. Presently there is almost no visible evidence of Ab's Camp, although shards of plates have been found in the past.

* Historical information provided by Shepherd L. Howell



New District Project Proposals

- Proposal to develop approximately 25 miles of new loop trails in the Dry Creek area open to equestrians, mountain bikers and hikers. A grant has been secured that would fund a contract for most of the trail construction. Dry Creek is located about 7 miles west of Villanow, Georgia.
- Proposal to improve recreational access to Mountaintown Creek. Project would involve:
1) construction of a new 1.5-mile angler access (hiking) trail from the Bear Creek

Parking Lot to Mountaintown Creek; 2) rerouting of mountain bikers using the Mountaintown Creek Trail onto the Pinhoti Trail; and 3) closure of the lower 1.8 miles of the Mountaintown Creek Trail (below the Pinhoti Trail junction) to mountain bike use.



Conasauga Bits and Pieces

There is a new volunteer storage cabinet on the grounds of the Ranger District office in Chatsworth for after-hours use. Do you need to pick up some tools or other supplies? Maybe drop off some correspondence? This cabinet will make the handoff much easier. Just contact Larry Thomas to make arrangements. Thanks go out to Mark Voykovic and Home Depot for their generous donation of the storage cabinet.

Mark Your Calendars:

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|------------------------|---|
| July 26 | Annual Hemptop Trail Workday. Trimming and Slingblading. Joint event with the Benton MacKaye Trail Association and BCHNG. Meet at Dally Gap Trailhead at 9:00 am |
| August 23 | Jacks River Trail (Hickory Ridge to Sugar Cove). Trimming and Slingblading |
| September 27-28 | Rough Ridge Trail. Trimming and Slingblading. Working Weekend 51 |
| October 18 | Annual Volunteer Appreciation Picnic. By invitation only |

Note: In addition to these scheduled workdays, we are trying to gather some folks to continue ongoing projects, such as the waterbar work on the Penitentiary Branch Trail and slingblading and trimming on the Tearbitches and East Cowpen Trails. If you are interested, please contact Larry Thomas, phone 706-695-6736 x103 or e-mail lrthomas@fs.fed.us.

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