

# Trail Talk

*Conasauga Ranger District*

*September - October 2008*



## *Congratulations 2008 Award Winners*



***Volunteer of the Year Troy Brown and "Top Guns" Left to Right: Rodger Atkins, Wanda Brown, Troy Brown, Bob Korch, Mary Korch, Larry Wheat & Amos Burrell***

Congratulations to all of our volunteers for a safe and excellent Fiscal Year 2008. We applaud you for a job well done. Some 193 volunteers contributed **5,806.5 hours** to the Conasauga Ranger District this past year. We appreciate your outstanding efforts and we look forward to working with you this coming year.





**September** – **Fred Pilcher** got things started this month mowing around Pilchers Pond and the access road...**Gene and Amy Findley** used their farm tractor to bushhog the Dry Creek Trailhead and access road...**Jim Holland and Linda Pringle** teamed up with the crosscut saw to clear the way for an upcoming workday on Penitentiary Branch Trail...**Back Country Horsemen of North GA**

(BCHNG) members **John Davis, Junior Kyle, Melinda and Lakota Towe, Nancy Tarrant, and Andrew and Danny Wilson** joined forces to knock out the mowing and weed-eating at Jacks River Fields...**Junior Kyle and Melinda Towe** returned to Jacks River Fields the following week to empty the trash bins and clean the restroom...**Cody Wade** performed several maintenance tasks at the Pocket Recreation Area...**Fred Pilcher** cleaned the Chestnut Mountain Range and the Pocket Picnic Area. He returned a few days later to mow the Pilchers Pond area one last time for the season...**Troy and Wanda Brown** improved the waterbars on the Bear Creek Spur Trail...**Oscar Gonzalez, Jim Holland, Joan Tipton and Holly Sloan** of the BCHNG taught horsemanship and Leave-No-Trace principles to **Boy Scout Troop 460** of Morganton, GA and enlisted the scouts help in the cleanup of Jacks River Fields. Boy Scouts included **Hayden Queen, Austin Kimbrough, Aaron and Brendan Jourdan, and D.J. Haymore**...**Jim Holland** assisted in an invasive species survey in the Cohutta Wilderness on 2 separate occasions providing a horse and a riding companion to District Employee Rex



**Jim Holland teaches scouts about trail maintenance.**

Rymer...**Troy and Wanda Brown and Bob and Mary Korch** began the difficult task of clearing several blowdowns from the lower Conasauga River Trail...**Troy Brown** sharpened trail tools for the upcoming volunteer workdays...Working Weekend #51 was a rousing success thanks to the efforts of 18 dedicated volunteers. The Saturday-Sunday project entailed sling-blading about 5.5 miles of the Rough Ridge Trail with a car camp at Jacks River Fields. Multiple encounters of the yellow jacket kind didn't slow down these hard-charging trail crew members: **Wanda and Troy Brown, Amos Burrell, John Coffey, Tom and Tannis Blackwell, Trey Baldwin, Chris Bolton, Paula Schubert, David and Jensen Tanner, Sean McHugh, Gene Miller, Gail Milner, Larry Jones, Bob and Mary Korch, and Jim Holland**. It is notable that **Amos Burrell and Bob Korch** worked both Saturday and Sunday. We are proud to announce that TEAM Conasauga volunteers accomplished **390 hours** in support of district trails and recreation facilities in September.

**October** – **Troy and Wanda Brown** began the month back on the Conasauga River Trail where they continued their blowdown removal project...**Larry Wheat, Kathy Hansen, and Gene and Amy Findley** tackled some much needed blowdown removal on a segment of the Pinhoti Trail at Strawberry Mountain. **Gene and Amy** also bushhogged a roaded section of the Pinhoti Trail for the Strawberry Mountain project...**Junior Kyle, Melinda Towe, and Danny Wilson** handled the regular maintenance and mowed for the final time this year at Jacks River Fields...the following week, **Junior Kyle and Ira Davenport** removed a tree from the South Fork Trail and emptied the trash cans at Jacks River Fields...**Fred Pilcher** accomplished litter cleanup at the Johns Mountain Overlook. **Fred** returned the following day to mow and sand/paint over graffiti

on the overlook deck...**Troy and Wanda Brown** pushed farther up the Conasauga River Trail with their trusty crosscut removing blowdowns...At Jacks River Fields, **Melinda Towe and Junior Kyle** worked on campsite maintenance and cleaned the restroom...**Fred Pilcher** did some more sanding and painting over vandalism at the Johns Mountain Overlook. **Fred** cleaned the parking lot at the Pocket Picnic Area the following day...**Troy and Wanda Brown** were happy to complete the blowdown removal on the final leg of the Conasauga River Trail, a project totaling 7.4 total miles between the southern trailhead at Murrays Lake to the Brayfield...**Junior Kyle and Jeanette Kyle** took care of the routine campground maintenance at Jacks River Fields...And **Fred Pilcher** finished off the month returning over two days to complete the sanding and painting project at Johns Mountain Overlook. Thank you volunteers for **116.5 hours** to the cause in October. You're simply the best!



Larry Jones models the latest in backpacks.



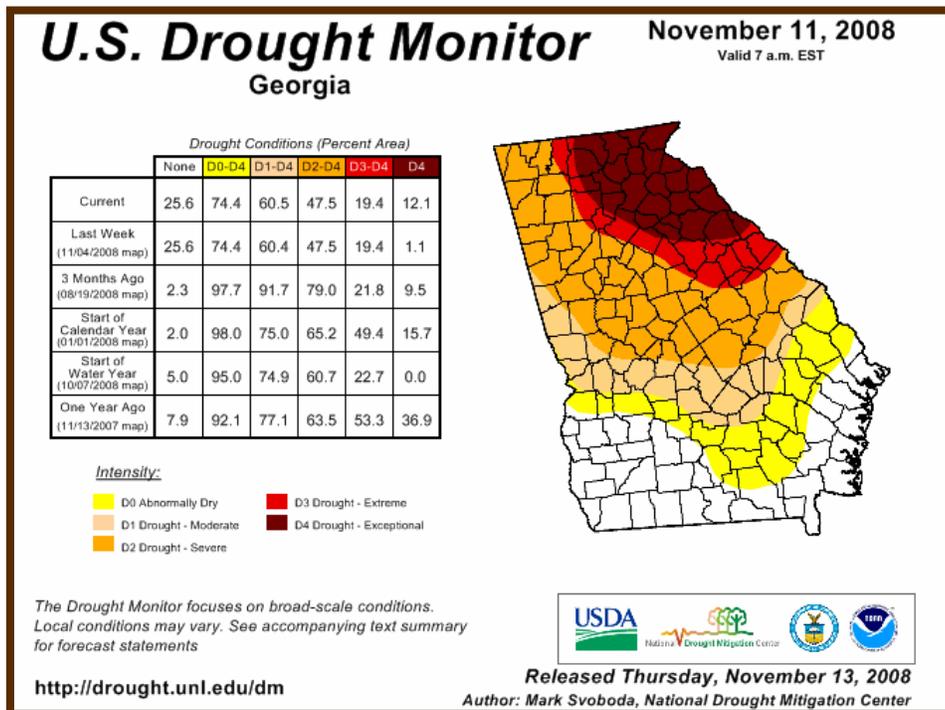
What happened to Autumn? One day we are enjoying a beautiful palette of fall colors, the next day the leaves are gone and Old Man Winter has settled in for another season. You spend a considerable amount of time behind the wheel traveling to and from the national forest. Many of you already experienced sleet and freezing conditions on a recent trail project. It's a good time to talk about winter driving tips...

- ✓ Wear your seatbelt. It's the most important action you can take.
- ✓ Allow more time for the unexpected. Air temperatures can drop 10 to 15 degrees in the mountains. Clear, safe roadways at home can become hazardous at higher elevations.
- ✓ Slow down. You might encounter an icy patch around the bend of the curve. Snow and ice can be found in shady areas several days after a snowfall and gravel roads freeze and thaw becoming very muddy and slick.
- ✓ Drive defensively. There is still a lot of vehicle traffic in the winter months. Stay on your side of the road and be aware that most people will be driving in the center of the road. Be particularly alert when rounding blind curves.
- ✓ Be prepared. Make sure you have the right gear if you break down during cold weather in a remote location. Always carry warm clothing, blankets, flashlight, cell phone, food and water.
- ✓ Change your plans if necessary. Conditions may be such that you have to turn around. Don't be too proud to do so. It could save you from an accident.

## DROUGHT CONDITIONS SEVERE

Drought conditions continue to escalate in the northern half on Georgia. From the northeast to the central part of the state, the drought is considered “Exceptional”, the worst possible rating. Northwest Georgia including the Conasauga Ranger District is within the “Extreme” to “Severe” range. Conditions are not expected to improve in the short term. The extremely dry conditions have resulted in a rash of wildfires across the Chattahoochee National Forest. On November 5<sup>th</sup>, a wildfire broke out on Cowpen Mountain in the Cohutta Wilderness. The human-caused 3-Forks fire burned some 26 acres, jumping a section of the Panther Creek Trail and the East Cowpen Trail, before being brought under control. A 600-acre blaze near Dahlonega is still being worked by firefighters after 2 weeks time. While a campfire ban is not presently in effect, you should use extreme caution should you choose to build a campfire. Here are some important reminders...

- 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.



## *A message from your Board of Directors, Conasauga District Trail Volunteers ....*

Amos Burrell was elected to the Board of Directors of Conasauga District Trail Volunteers and Bob Korch was re-elected to the Board during the annual Volunteer Appreciation Picnic. Both Amos and Bob will serve two-year terms, with Amos replacing Gail Milner. The remainder of the 2009 Board will include holdovers Troy and Wanda Brown and Jim Bishop, each of whom will complete their terms next year.

Gail, as an employee of our legal counsel Troutman Sanders, was a huge help for coordinating the myriad of details required for the incorporation of our group and achieving non-profit status. Gail also managed the procedures required of our recently completed Board elections. Thank you, Gail, for all the extra work you did on our behalf. We are grateful for your leadership.



During 2008, Team Conasauga began the process of fundraising and has already received a number of corporate and individual donations that offset the out-of-pocket costs of government filings. The organization has submitted several applications to receive funding grants and will continue to do so as opportunities become available. These potential grants will provide the funding for Team Conasauga to build a more public Web site and help fund other initiatives for volunteer recruitment.



### **Conasauga Bits and Pieces**

- **New employee on the Conasauga RD.** Great news! Ed Lang has accepted the Recreation Technician (volunteers/wilderness/trails/dispersed recreation) position, vice Mike Davis. Ed comes to us from the Monongahela National Forest in West Virginia where he gained a wealth of experience in recreation management. He will be reporting on January 5<sup>th</sup>.
- **Forest Road 64 still closed.** Forest Road 64 between Watson's Gap and Dyer Gap remains closed for a major road slide repair project. The anticipated date for reopening is January 1<sup>st</sup>.
- **Johns Creek Timber Sale active.** Harvesting has just begun on the Johns Creek Timber Sale. Located in the vicinity of Keown Falls, Pilchers Pond and the Pinhoti Trail, 375 acres will be thinned in several pine stands to improve habitat for northern bobwhite quail and other grassland/open woodland bird species.
- **Grassy Mountain roads stay open.** In a change, Grassy Mountain Forest roads 68 (Potato Patch) and 17 (West Cowpen) will remain open to vehicles this winter. However, Forest Road 64 from Potato Patch Mountain east to the Jacks River Fields Campground

which includes the 3-Forks and Betty Gap Wilderness Trailheads will be closed from January 5<sup>th</sup> to March 1<sup>st</sup>.



## Cohutta Wilderness Earns Dubious Distinction

Wilderness.net is an Internet-based tool connecting the natural resource workforce, scientists, educators, and the public to their wilderness heritage through ready access to wilderness information. You can find information on any and all wildernesses in the country by navigating this web-site. In a recent data pull, the Cohutta Wilderness was ranked #5 in the country for the number of electronic hits on its site. With a hit count of 16,687 last year, the Cohutta ranked ahead of all but these well known wildernesses: Selway-Bitterroot, Bob Marshall, Frank Church-River of No Return, and Absaroka-Beartooth.



As the holidays approach, we know that everyone's schedule becomes very busy. For that reason we do not plan a formal workday in December. Come the New Year though, we plan to crank it up again. We have a number of people that show an interest in our volunteer program throughout the year. Many leave us an e-mail address and receive the newsletter, but have yet to attend a workday. If your one of those folks, make a resolution to join us in January. Our winter Working Weekend is often one of our best attended volunteer events of the year.

## Mark Your Calendars:

**January 23 - 24 East Cowpen Trail. Water bar maintenance. Working Weekend #52. Car camp at the Cottonwood Campground. Communal supper at the Cottonwood on Saturday late afternoon.**

**February 21 To be announced**

**March 21 To be announced**

*Note:* In addition to these scheduled workdays, we are trying to find some volunteers who are interested in working independently or with a small group to tackle these projects:

- Volunteer(s) to blaze non-wilderness trails.
- Volunteer(s) to trim lower Conasauga River Trail from Murray's Lake to the river.
- Volunteer(s) to inventory the Pinhoti Trail south of West Armuchee Road for maintenance needs.

**If you are interested, please contact Larry Thomas, phone 706-695-6736 x103 or e-mail [lrthomas@fs.fed.us](mailto:lrthomas@fs.fed.us).**



*Friends gather at the 2008 Volunteer Appreciation Picnic.*

*Happy Thanksgiving*

The text "Happy Thanksgiving" is written in a large, elegant, cursive script. The word "Happy" is in a dark brown color, while "Thanksgiving" is in a lighter, reddish-brown color. The text is flanked by decorative elements: a cluster of autumn leaves and acorns in shades of yellow, orange, and brown is positioned to the right of the word "Thanksgiving", and a similar cluster is positioned to the left of the word "Happy".