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Did You Know?

There are 454 miles of hiking trails on the National Forests in Georgia including five National Recreation Trails and 77 miles of the Appalachian Trail, a 2100 mile National Scenic Trail that stretches from Georgia to Maine.

There are also 133 miles of OHV trails, 138 miles of horse trails, 21 miles of mountain bike trails and 55 miles of combined-use trails.

USDA Forest Service Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests

Message From the Forest Supervisor

It's shaping up to be a beautiful spring here on the two national forests in Georgia. I hope you are enjoying the outdoors and that you have a chance to visit your national forest soon.

If you are making plans to visit the national forests in Georgia, you might find our Forest Service website (www.fs.fed.us/conf) helpful in planning your trip. This website has lots of good information on the variety of recreation opportunities available on the Chattahoochee and Oconee National Forests. We are working to update our website and improve the level of recreation information (particularly maps) available to our interested visitors. Please check back often as we work to improve the level of information that we provide to you.

Customer service is an important

component of what we do as U.S. Forest Service employees. We strive to be accessible to our customers through phone, email, hard copy mail, and in person. Currently we have a number of offices located in various towns near the national forests. In coming months, some of these locations may be changing, but please keep in mind our continued commitment is to provide you, our customer, quality service in a timely manner.



We are looking for creative ways to partner with local Chamber of Commerce offices, and others to provide a presence in communities where we do not have a physical office. If you have any suggestions for ways we can improve upon our effort to serve you, please let me know.

Kathleen Atkinson
Forest Supervisor

Landlines- Know Your Limits

As with any neighbor, the key to avoiding major hassles is to know where the property line is between your property and your neighbor's property. Just as with private land, to avoid inadvertent trespasses onto federal lands, adjacent land owners should be careful to stay within the property lines when considering any type of construction work, paving, clearing, or project work on their

property.

According to Forest Surveyor Murice Brown, the boundaries for the Chattahoochee and Oconee National Forests in Georgia are maintained on a 15 to 20-year cycle. There are about 2,700 miles of boundary to maintain on both of the national forests in Georgia.

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Partnerships Lead To Teamwork

You might say that the Forest Service is a 'team' player. The agency works with volunteers to help maintain trails. The Forest Service works with state and federal agencies like the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, the Georgia Forestry Commission and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on issues like wildfire prevention, environmental education or habitat management. The agency also works with Georgia Land Trust Service Center to complete land acquisition projects. Partners play a vital role in ensuring that the Forest Service is able to carry on with its mission of "caring for the land and serving the people."

With all this partnering and sharing of responsibilities, sometimes it is difficult to keep track of who does what. Here's some information on two of our key partners

In Georgia, one of our greatest allies in protecting our forests from the devastating effects of wildfire is the Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC). The

Forest Service and the GFC work together to prevent wildfires and they work cooperatively on both public and private forested lands to battle forest fires. In many cases these two agencies depend on each other for assistance in managing these lands together. The GFC is funded through the State, whereas the USDA Forest Service is federally funded.

Another key partner is the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The DNR works to manage wildlife populations in the State. The Forest Service works closely with DNR, since the national forests provide most of the habitat that the state's wildlife needs. The DNR is a state funded agency responsible for managing wildlife and fisheries resources. They are responsible for setting dates for hunting and fishing seasons, selling hunting and fishing licenses, and enforcing state wildlife laws and regulations.

For additional information on our many partnerships, please visit <http://www.fs.fed.us/conf/partners.htm>.

New Names, Familiar Faces....We're Still Your Neighbors!

The Chattahoochee National Forest recently underwent an effort to consolidate several of our offices into central locations to reduce costs and to provide continued customer service. The Blue Ridge office (formerly the Toccoa Ranger District) and the Blairsville office (formerly the Brasstown Ranger District) have been combined into one office in the government-owned Blairsville office. This new unit is now known as the Blue Ridge Ranger District.

The Clayton office (formerly the Tallulah Ranger District) and the Clarkesville office (formerly the Chattooga District) have now been combined into the Chattooga River Ranger District. A new office is being built in a central location just north of Tallulah Falls into what will be a government-owned facility. The land for this new office was

donated to the U.S. Forest Service from the Rabun County Economic Development Authority.

The former Armuchee Ranger District and Cohutta Ranger District are now co-located in an office near Dalton. The new district is now known as the Conasauga Ranger District. A new office will be centrally located near Chattsworth.

Forest Supervisor Kathleen Atkinson said, "I realize this is a lot of changes, but our hope is that by moving to government-owned facilities and moving out of higher cost leased facilities we will be able to save tax-payer dollars and use those funds to accomplish great work on our national forests. At the same time, our emphasis is on providing the very best customer service." If you have any questions about any of these consolidations, please call the Supervisor's Office at (770) 297-3000.

Fire on the National Forest

There are two faces to fire on national forests. One is prescribed fire, a tool that is used to help manage resources while the other type, wildfire, can be started by nature or people and is generally more destructive. Fire management on the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests prepares for and responds to both types.

Prescribed Fire

Historic use of fire by humans is increasingly being seen as a crucial influence on our present ecosystem. The continued use of fire over a long period of time has helped to establish various species composition and arrangement. Vigorous suppression tactics which began in the 1920's have resulted in a forest with thick woody understory typically dominated by shade tolerant and fire intolerant species, allowing a heavy buildup of hazardous fuels.

Reducing fuels in wildland urban interface situations through the use of prescribed fire helps our firefighters in control efforts and the risks to structures adjacent to National Forest Lands by creating a defensible space in the event of a catastrophic wildfire. Prescribed fire reduces extreme wildfire behavior down to a more manageable level and reduces wildfire suppression costs.

Prescribed fire used as a tool has many benefits besides the reduction of hazardous fuels. Wildlife habitats are improved by removing the old dead and down fuels allowing sun light to reach the forest floor which in turn allows new growth to regenerate. The new growth provides food for not only big game animals such as deer, bear and turkey but small mammals and birds of all kinds as well. Habitat for threatened and endangered species like the Red Cockaded Woodpecker is improved by reducing the understory and in some situations mid story vegetation increasing forage for the birds. Habitats for threatened and endangered species of plants such as Purple Cone

Flower are increased by the reduction of fuel buildup allowing sunlight to reach the ground.

The Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests continue to grow our prescribed fire program. In 2006 we treated 29,212 acres of forest land for hazardous fuels, wildlife and site preparation through the use of prescribed fire. The plan for 2007 is to treat approximately the same number of acres with some increase in the mountain districts. Throughout the state of Georgia approximately 1,000,000 acres are treated annually with prescribed fire. These acres are treated by private land owners, timber companies, the Georgia Forestry Commission and the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests.



A prescribed fire moves over the forest floor in the Oconee National Forest. Photo by John Pickering

Landlines from Page 1

Typically, the property line between national forest land and private property is marked with blazes and red paint on trees that can vary within a few feet of the true centerline or actual property boundary. Depending on the type of terrain, markers can be within visible distance of one another or between 300 to 500 feet apart.

“The best way to avoid problems is to have a licensed surveyor come and verify your property line,” says Brown. “If work is being done by a contractor, make sure to maintain national forest boundary markers during the work.” You should also check with your County regarding their local set-back policies to determine how close to a property line you can build.

Maintaining boundary markers are important since the property owner, not the contractor, assumes liability for straying onto national forest land. If an encroachment or trespass occurs, the Forest Service will require you to remove it, regardless of how big it is or how long it has been there.

New technology, such as global positioning systems (GPS), has not eliminated errors with prop-

erty lines. Physical evidence such as monuments, pins or established markers, overrides technology when disputes over land arise since they provide the legal and authoritative point from which to begin a survey.

“Technology has increased the accuracy of surveying,” says Brown. “But accuracy is no good if you’re surveying the wrong thing.”



Red paint marks the National Forest boundary.

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Visit us on the web:
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