



Trail Talk

June 2013

Conasauga Ranger District

June started out on a high note, with three **National Trails Day**[®] events occurring on the district on Saturday the 1st. For Team Conasauga, Wayne **Patillo, Travis and Justin Sanchez, Amos Burrell, Chuck Brock, Larry Thomas, Troy and Wanda Brown, and Jim Cullen** joined **Kevin Vasalinda** of the USFS to brave the high waters of the Jack's River trail and complete vegetation work and campsite clean-up along 2 miles of the trail.

On the other side of the wilderness, eleven Backcountry Horsemen of North Georgia members gathered at the Jack's River Field campground to clean and re-vamp the horse corrals, install vehicle blockades, effect repairs to the vault toilet facility (carpenter ants are eating the caulking at all the wall seams!) and to mow open areas and the adjacent section of the Pinhoti trail. Volunteers present at this NTD event included **Carlos and Carol Martel, Kathleen Corcoran, Hanley Rose, Bill and Debbe Kramer, Jack and Carol Cole, Chuck Panter, Martha Fillingham, Reba Burke, and USFS's Karen Larsen.**

Holding down the fort over on the west side of the district, Larry Wheat headed up a workday at the Dry Creek trail system where 20 volunteers representing Team Conasauga, Backcountry Horsemen of NW Georgia, and SORBA joined up to trim brush, clear deadfall and harden wet spots. It was quite an undertaking with 9 folks on horses, 8 on bicycles and 4 on foot. ATVs and UTVs were also utilized to haul much needed gravel to perennial wet spots. Participants in this multi-faceted event were **Nelli Lucas, Bill Semsrott, Tom and Tannis Blackwell, Jim and Cindy McGarvey, Jim Bishop, Marcus Moore, Kathy and Eddie Henson, and son Andrew, Patricia Petelle, Bill Hester, Gennie Dasinger, Rick Moon, Steve Harrell, Jeff Williams, Tom Wagespack, Larry Wheat and USFS's Ed Lang.**

Throughout the rest of the month, our dedicated volunteers dodged the unusually frequent cloud-bursts, all-day drizzles, and downright deluges to complete even more work this month.

Also in June, Rick **Moon**, Marty **Dominy**, and Larry **Wheat** led a group of **28 community service workers** on the Dennis Mill Pinhoti Re-route section, completing over 100 total hours of trail construction work on this new section of the Pinhoti. **Gay Rice** was the “camp cook”, fixing over 80 hot dogs for this hungry lunch bunch! This project has been a great example of how equestrians, bikers and hikers can all come together and do awesome things!

BEECH BOTTOM UPDATE: The long-anticipated re-route of the Beech Bottom trail was finally completed and opened for public use on June 21st. The **Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards crew** remained steadfast through three more weeks of heavy manual work, skinning logs, hauling dirt and constructing impressive cribbing structures to create the approaches to the newly created re-route. On several occasions, members of another Boot crew “kicked” in as well to provide the extra man-power needed for this undertaking. In a kismet moment, the first “official” hiker through the re-route was former Deputy Supervisor of the Chattahoochee-Oconee, Paul Bradley. In a spontaneous moment, the SAWS crew held a piece of flagging across the trail in a true wilderness-style ribbon-cutting ceremony bringing the project full-circle at last. Thanks to all who have assisted in the completion of this project over the last year! Go check it out in person...the pictures don’t do it justice!



Base Cribbing



Backfilled



Nearly there...



Ribbon Cutting – Wilderness style!

Announcements:

Our very own **Jim McGarvey**, BCHNWG, has been elected to the position of Chairman of the Board of the national Backcountry Horsemen of America. This is the first time in the organization's 40 years that someone from "East of the Rockies" has been elected chairman. Congratulations Jim!

As some of you may know, **Ryan Farr**, USFS forester trainee, has accepted a 120-day detail on the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest (Spring Mountains NRA) in Las Vegas, Nevada. He is performing duties as a recreation specialist in a very challenging and busy district! We've heard from him several times and he is learning a lot of new things and dealing with some pretty major events. Most recently, a 1200 acre fire burned over a newly refurbished picnic area that Ryan had performed the ribbon-cutting on just weeks before. Ryan will be out there until the beginning of October and wanted me to send along his greetings! You can send words of encouragement to Ryan at jrfarr@fs.fed.us.

Co-Trails Update: Thirteen proposals for trail rehab work, decommissioning, change-in-designation, and new trail construction were received in May through the issues and opportunities process. Over the next few months, USFS district personnel, in conjunction with interested volunteers, will be creating a comprehensive trail plan to be used as a guide for future trail investment decisions. Trail needs identified in the 2010 Horse Trail Assessment, the 2012 Forest-Wide Collaborative Trail Assessment, and the recent proposals will all be reviewed and considered as part of this planning process. Any other currently un-documented trail needs

should be brought forward to Karen or Kevin as soon as possible. One goal of this plan will be to identify where National Environment Policy Act (NEPA) processes will be required so these tasks can begin to be undertaken now to make projects “shelf-ready” for implementation when funding and manpower resources become available. If you would like to be a participant in the process of putting this plan together, please call Karen at (706) 695-6737 ext. 103. We will be attempting to put together a draft plan by the end of July and have a finalized plan by the end of September.



Think Safety!

Recent weather patterns have had us all scrambling for cover so far this summer. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association, there is basically no place outdoors that is “safe” in a thunderstorm. The best thing you can do is to avoid getting caught outside in a storm in the first place. To do that, plan ahead, keep abreast of local forecasts, and know the area and its typical weather patterns. When working in mountainous areas in the summer, thunderstorms typically develop in the afternoon hours, so plan to get the bulk of the work done in the morning, then you can retreat to lower elevations (and nearer to your vehicles!) in the afternoon. Head down the mountain and back to your vehicles at the first sign that thunderstorms are approaching. Don’t wait until the storm is on top of you to decide to head in. Lastly, if you do get caught outdoors in a thunderstorm, the following suggestions may *slightly* decrease your risk:

- Avoid open fields and ridge tops.
- Stay away from tall, isolated trees and head for lower stands of trees.
- Put down any tools, particularly those that contain metal parts.

If someone is struck: Lightning victims do not carry an electrical charge, so they are safe to touch. Victims typically suffer from cardiac arrest, so provide immediate medical attention and perform CPR if the person is not breathing or is unresponsive.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!



Saturday, July 13th: Hickory Ridge – vegetation management.

Friday, August 16 and Saturday, August 17th: Working Weekend # 69--Tearbitches and Emery Creek – Swingblading with overnight camping at the Ball Field.

Saturday, September 14th: National Public Lands Day event. We are still tossing around ideas for this, so let us know if you have any ideas ASAP!

Web links

For more information on activities and events happening on the Conasauga Ranger District, please check out the following links to the various associations who are committed to helping us provide safe, enjoyable trail experiences for our forest users...

Appalachian Trail Association (GATC): www.georgia-atclub.org

Backcountry Horsemen of North Georgia (BCHNG): www.bchng.org

Backcountry Horsemen of Northwest Georgia (BCHNWG): www.bchnwg.org

Benton MacKaye Trail Association (BMTA): www.bmta.org

Conasauga District Trail Volunteers (CDTA): www.teamconasauga.org

Ellijay Mountain Bike Association (EMBA): www.ellijaymountainbike.org

Georgia Pinhoti Trail Association: www.pinhoti.info

Northwest Georgia Southern Off-road Bike Association (NWGA SORBA): www.nwgasorba.org

SORBA (Southern Off-Road Bike Association): www.sorba.org or www.ngwasorba.org



(Chattahoochee Oconee NFs website)