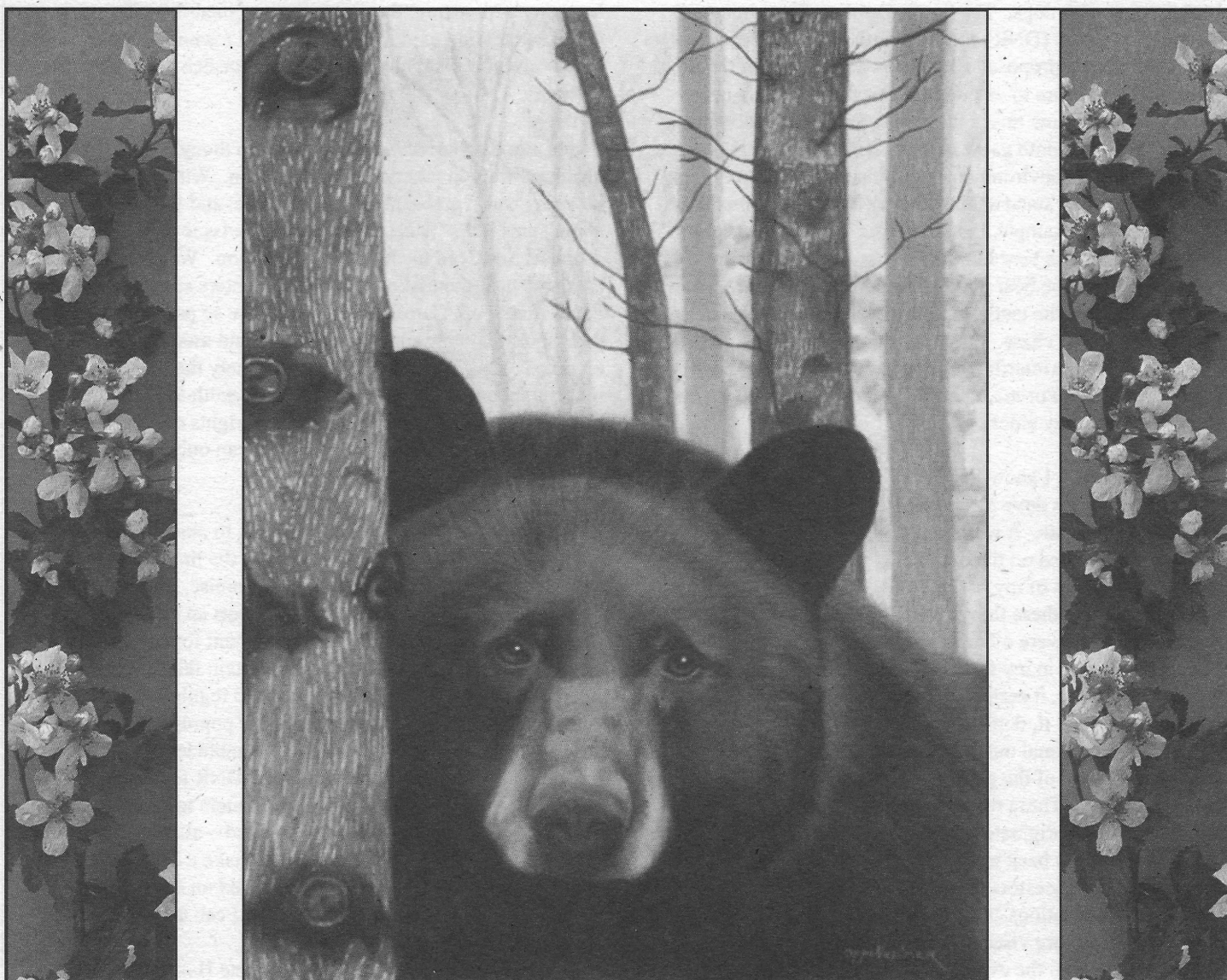




Chattooga Quarterly

Spring ♦♦♦ 2006



*Painting courtesy of the artist, Nancy Oppenheimer.
The original now hangs in First Citizens' Bank, in Banner Elk, North Carolina.*

I n s i d e

Director's Page.....	2	Bears and Hogs.....	7
The Smoking Gun.....	3	Watershed Update.....	9
Farming and the Global Economy by Wendell Berry.....	5	Members' Pages.....	13

Director's Page

Buzz Williams

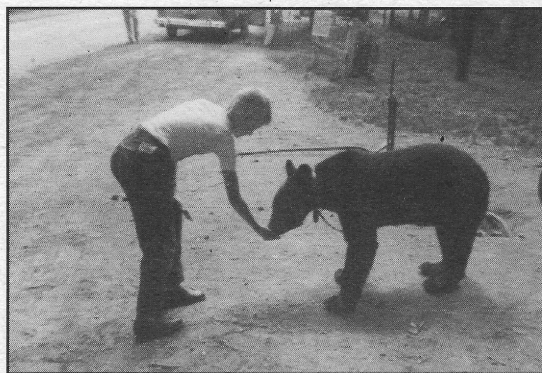
In the conservation business we are often faced with moral and ethical challenges. Take, for example, the current debate about bear hunting with dogs. The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the South Carolina Bear Hunters Association have proposed a bill known as H4448 in the South Carolina Legislature to extend the season for hunting bear with dogs. We know this is the same crowd that continues to release wild hogs onto game management lands, which causes great harm to the environment. The Chattooga Conservancy has taken a strong stand against these activities for a number of reasons. For example, the bill before the state legislature that would increase bear hunting is based on the questionable justification that the bear population has tripled in the upstate. We also question the tactics used by bear hunters as related to the rules of fair chase. Our opposition is based on factual information, but primarily, our opposition hinges on the moral side of the issue. For me, the resolution comes in a flash back to the teachings of my elders.

When I was a kid, I knew that if I ever got caught ponding a duck or shooting a dove off the roost, I would be drummed out of the Williams clan. It was simply not an option, based on the oft-repeated teachings of my parents and grandparents that these things were unethical. There were other unwritten rules so ingrained in my fiber that they were always there, it seemed: if you aren't going to eat it, don't shoot it; never shoot an animal out of season; and, be respectful of the game and give it a chance. These rules taught to me by my elders originated not with them, but went far back to ancient times when our ancestors depended on sustainable populations of game for survival. On a more visceral level, it also had to do with the evolution of my respect for nature, the giver of life itself.

Native Americans practiced sustainable hunting and gathering as well. When hunting, Indians followed the same basic rules I was taught about leaving enough of the breeding populations for sustainability, and respect for nature. When harvesting plants for food or medicine, Indians would replant seeds from the harvested plants on site. Cherokee respect for game animals is legendary. To them, the black bear was their brother; ginseng was little man. I am certain that the ethic passed on to me came through ancestors who traded with the Cherokee, and who were influenced by their land ethic. That deep-rooted ethic cannot easily be ignored. It influences every decision I make as leader of our organization.

Increasingly, as our natural resources dwindle through current exploitation by selfish special interests, adherence to a land ethic must involve sacrifice. Many writers have articulated their idea of conservation. Aldo Leopold believed it was man living in harmony with nature, thus attaining sustainability. To me, in an era of astounding exploitation of natural resources, the idea of conservation is what one is willing to sacrifice to achieve that harmony.

I once asked a Native American what he thought the greatest obstacles were in practicing conservation. Without hesitation his reply was, "greed, arrogance, avarice, and ignorance." That about sums it up. Take, for example, the issue at hand with the proposal to extend the bear hunting season. We are ignorant of adequate bear population data. Bear hunters supporting the bill before the South Carolina Legislature are so passionate about their sport that they simply want more and more until it borders on greed. This is a reflection of our society that places far too much emphasis on greater and greater wealth at all cost. The attitude of a group that infringes on the rights of others in terms of a blatant unwillingness for dialogue can only be termed as arrogant.



*My first bear encounter at Cherokee, NC, in 1959.
I remember feeling sorry for a captive bear.*

There is a time to compromise, and a time to draw the line. We have tried to compromise, given the lack of data to support an extension of the party dog hunt for bear, with the caveat that certain fail safe provisions are written into regulations in the event that bear populations dwindle to an unsustainable level. We have petitioned the DNR for dialogue. We have asked hunters to sacrifice for the greater good—all to no avail. Now we must take a firm stand. That decision is based on ethical and moral principles that I can no longer ignore.

I will be going to the South Carolina State House in Columbia to argue for an amendment to H4448 that will ensure that our bear populations will be adequately monitored for sustainability; that law enforcement be funded to ensure adherence to rules of fairness; and, to argue that the current proposed bill be scaled back. If not, we will do everything possible to stop this bill.

This issue surrounding bear hunting with dogs has caused me to think long and hard about a course of action. In the final analysis, our decision to craft a compromise bill that, if not accepted, will cause us to fight to kill H448 was based on factual information, but in the end it hinged on deep rooted ethics. Perhaps these are the same ethics that caused you, our members, to join in promoting a healthy Chattooga River watershed. Stay tuned.

The Smoking Gun

Jenny Sanders

Last year, we began a campaign to increase public awareness of the rampant pollution affecting Stekoa Creek that included an article entitled "Stekoa Creek Water Monitoring Project," which appeared in the fall 2005 issue of the Chattooga Quarterly. Since that article was printed, we have noticed increased concern amongst the community as well as our membership about the plight of Stekoa Creek. Given that so many of our members have now become more interested in this battle, I would like to take this opportunity to provide you with an update on the progress of the Stekoa Creek Water Monitoring Project.

Last summer, it was brought to our attention that a smoke test had been completed in 2004 on the sewer lines in Clayton. City officials hired an engineering firm named Woolpert LLP to complete this test for two reasons. The first objective of this test was to develop an updated map of the sewer lines. Before this test was completed, the only map that the city manager had available was an old map from 1976 with inaccurate and outdated information. The second purpose of this test was to assess the problems in the lines and to locate leaks, blockages, and areas where storm water infiltration was occurring in order to repair the system. After several verbal and written requests for a copy of this report, we finally received a CD-Rom containing the entire smoke test analysis at the end of December 2005. I have had several phone interviews with the project manager from Woolpert in order to more thoroughly understand this report and I think it's worth sharing with you.

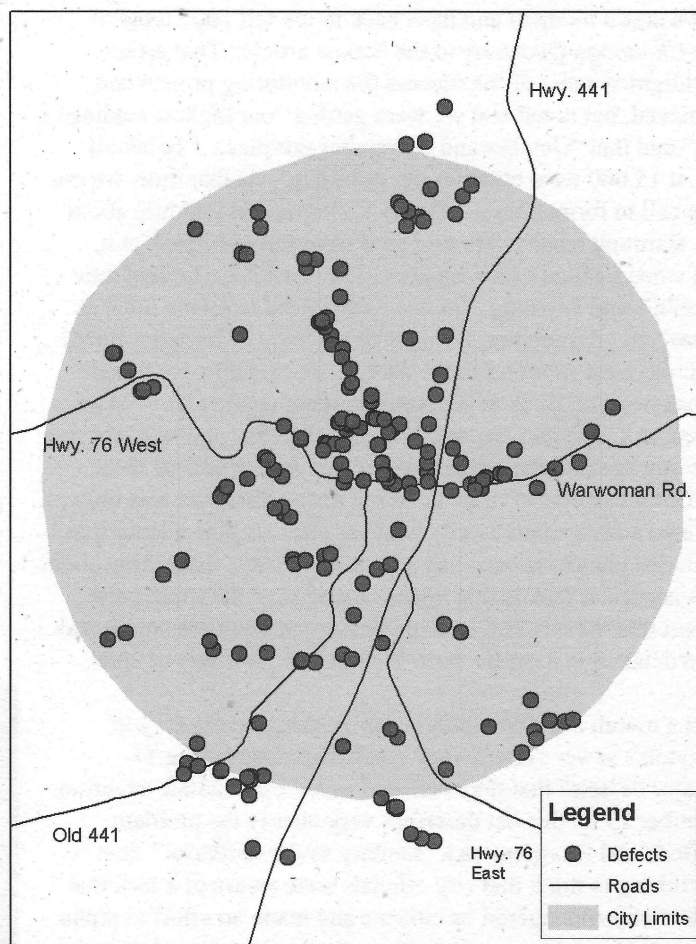
The smoke test was completed in the field over a couple of months and began in September of 2004. First, Woolpert's crew went from manhole to manhole to visually inspect each one for cracks and leaks. Next, they filled the sewer lines with smoke to check all of the manholes and to begin to trace sewer collection pipe defects. Lastly, they lowered television cameras and photographic equipment into the lines to identify the type of defect and to accurately investigate and describe the problem. However, due to the city's lack of financial resources, they were only able to televise a few lines.

In all, the crew from Woolpert found 188 defects with a high concentration right in town where the pipes have been in place the longest. They listed these defects in several categories including: "emergency maintenance issue," "high infiltration area," pipe blockage," "impaired pipe," and "open end pipe." Within the report, each of these categories can be broken down further to reveal a more comprehensive description of each problem. For instance, when smoke escapes from a pipe in a place other than a manhole, this can signify a cracked, blocked or leaking pipe which might

be broadly categorized as "defect" and then as "cracked" in the description of the condition of the pipe. In some cases, storm water pipes were inadvertently connected with sewer lines. As a result, large amounts of storm water "infiltrates" the sewer system inundating the waste water treatment plant. These are marked as "high infiltration" areas and are sometimes identified when smoke comes out of a storm drain instead of the next manhole. Once this data was collected, it was cross referenced with aerial images and road maps to create both a digital report and a hard copy which included maps.

When the Conservancy received this information, we started our investigation by pinpointing and examining the potential leaks. We began with the emergency maintenance issues, which usually included the description "active sewage spill." There were three emergency maintenance issues detailed and we examined each one at the beginning of the year to see if they had been fixed yet. Of the three, it appeared that only one had been repaired. The first emergency issue was located on Dunlap Street down Old 441 just south of town. This "emergency issue" was described as "open pipe in ditch with active sewer

City of Clayton Sewer Defects



The Smoking Gun

spill.” I spoke with a resident in that area who said the city workers had just been there at the beginning of January, 2006 and replaced several feet of sewer pipe. The next “emergency maintenance issue” has been difficult to find! It appears to be located at a manhole on private land and we weren’t able to gain access to check it. However, it was described as an “active sewer spill” as well and city workers could not confirm that repairs have been made to it. The last “emergency maintenance issue” is located at Shadyside Rd., near the city housing complex. Here, an abandoned sewer line has caved in and exposed open pipes leaving them susceptible to allow the water from Scott Creek (a tributary to Stekoa Creek) to enter into the sewer system should the creek rise just a few feet. To the best of my knowledge, it appears that this open ended pipe remains vulnerable to infiltration. Since this line is abandoned, the open pipe does not threaten to discharge raw sewage into the creek, but it does over burden the wastewater treatment plant. This is problematic because if a large storm event does occur and the plant receives more water that it can possibly treat, they are allowed by law to discharge partially treated effluent into Stekoa Creek. If each of the high inflow areas in the lines is repaired, the wastewater treatment plant should have the capacity to handle the amount of sewage that the city of Clayton produces.

Let’s take a moment and flash back to the fall 2005 issue of the *Chattooga Quarterly* to the Stekoa article. That article highlighted some of the success the monitoring project had achieved, but noted that we were getting “our highest readings yet” and that “October and November samples...” [peaked] “...at 15,000 fecal colonies per milliliter.” At that time, we put in a call to former Mayor Danny Gillespie and told him about the alarming results. He said he’d have someone look at it, but when I called him back about it a week later, he said they couldn’t find anything. So, we were forced to locate the leak ourselves. Remember, at this time, we did not have the smoke test; we were shooting in the dark. Subsequently, we found a leak near the Buds & Blossoms gardening store on S. Main Street at a pipe that crossed Scott Creek. This pipe was pouring raw sewage into the creek causing very high levels of fecal coliform bacteria to show up in our tests. This leak was only located and repaired by city workers after we sent a letter that included photographs to city officials. What is interesting about this particular leak is that it was identified in the smoke test report that the city had in its possession at that time, and it was also detailed in a memo from Woolpert in February of 2004.

Just a month after Woolpert began working on the City of Clayton’s sewer system, they created a memo listing 31 “major defects” that they believed needed immediate attention. Number 13 on this list describes very clearly the problem at Buds and Blossoms as a “sanitary sewer overflow.” It is disturbing to think that city officials were aware of a leak that potentially endangered its citizens and made no effort to repair it for nearly two years. Even then, they only replaced that pipe

under pressure applied by the Chattooga Conservancy. At that time, Clayton’s problem was more than just a failing sewer system; it was apathy among city officials.

Just a few weeks ago, we presented the details of this story as public information to the city council and new Mayor Tom Ramey. In our report, we summarized the information above, and presented one possible solution to this problem. Mayor Ramey has expressed interest in hiring a new engineering firm to handle our sanitary sewer collection problems. We’ve suggested that the city continue its relationship with Woolpert and finish the job. A thorough analysis of the lines combined with a good cleaning would produce a clear picture of the repairs that the city is facing. Additionally, once they have a cost repair estimate, the city may apply for funding from the Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority, which offers low interest loans to municipalities for such upgrades. However, since the city is obviously in serious financial straits, this loan would have to be paid back by the citizens of Clayton, Mountain City, and Tiger. The most common way to repay such debt is to phase in a rate increase over several years, and we believe this is the best option for the city at this time. For example, a mere 5.5 % increase in water and sewer rates every year for five years would produce an extra 1.5 million dollars in revenue for the city. This would translate to only a total average increase of \$13 per household in that time, depending on use. In addition, the Chattooga Conservancy has offered to help the city create a public education campaign that could help teach citizens how to conserve water in order to limit the effects of the rate increase.

What we are suggesting is an end to this patchwork style repair approach. We would like to see the City of Clayton move away from the gravity-fed system that is the basis of its current operation. Presently, the pipes that cross both Scott Creek and Stekoa Creek are unsightly, and are very susceptible to damage caused by debris moving downstream during rain events. Ultimately, Clayton needs to have the entire collection system redesigned by an engineer and updated. So far, the response at City Hall seems to be positive. Council members are particularly interested in this situation and are showing genuine concern regarding the sanitary sewer system problem. We look forward to continuing this relationship with city officials and working cooperatively to achieve our goal.

Thank You to the most recent sponsors of the Adopt-A-Sample Program:

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Farming and the Global Economy

Wendell Berry

Wendell Berry is the author of over 40 books of essays, poetry, and novels. He continues to farm the Kentucky land that his family has farmed for over 200 years. Berry is well-known as a proponent of sustainable agriculture and local economies. This essay was originally published in *Another Turn of the Crank*, by Wendell Berry, copyright October 21, 1996. It has been reprinted with permission from Perseus Books Group.

We have been repeatedly warned that we cannot know where we wish to go if we do not know where we have been. And so let us start by remembering a little history.

As late as World War II, our farms were predominantly solar powered. That is, the work was accomplished principally by human beings and horses and mules. These creatures were empowered by solar energy, which was collected, for the most part, on the farms where they worked and so was pretty cheaply available to the farmer.

However, American farms had not become as self-sufficient in fertility as they should have been-or many of them had not. They were still drawing, without sufficient repayment, against an account of natural fertility accumulated over thousands of years beneath the native forest trees and prairie grasses.

The agriculture we had at the time of World War II was nevertheless often pretty good, and it was promising. In many parts of our country we had begun to have established agricultural communities, each with its own local knowledge, memory, and tradition. Some of our farming practices had become well adapted to local conditions. The best traditional practices of the Midwest, for example, are still used by the Amish with considerable success in terms of both economy and ecology.

Now that the issue of sustainability has arisen so urgently, and in fact so transformingly, we can see that the correct agricultural agenda following World War II would have been to continue and refine the already established connection between our farms and the sun and to correct, where necessary, the fertility deficit. There can be no question, now, that that is what we should have done.

It was, notoriously, not what we did. Instead, the adopted agenda called for a shift from the cheap, clean, and, for all practical purposes, limitless energy of the sun to the expensive, filthy, and limited energy of the fossil fuels. It called for the massive use

of chemical fertilizers to offset the destruction of topsoil and the depletion of natural fertility. It called also for the displacement of nearly the entire farming population and the replacement of their labor and good farming practices by machines and toxic chemicals. This agenda has succeeded in its aims, but to the benefit of no one and nothing except the corporations that have supplied the necessary machines, fuels, and chemicals-and the corporations that have bought cheap and sold high the products that, as a result of this agenda, have been increasingly expensive for farmers to produce.

The immediate difficulty in even thinking about agricultural reform is that we are rapidly running out of farmers. The tragedy of this decline is not just in its numbers; it is also in the fact that these farming people, assuming we will ever recognize our need to replace them, cannot be replaced anything like as quickly or easily as they have been dispensed with.

The farmers have not benefited-not, at least, as a class-for as a result of this agenda they have become one of the smallest and most threatened of all our minorities. Many farmers, sad to say, have subscribed to this agenda and its economic assumptions, believing that they would not be its victims. But millions, in fact, have been its victims-not farmers alone but also their supporters and dependents in our rural communities.

The people who benefit from this state of affairs have been at pains to convince us that the agricultural practices and policies that have almost annihilated the farming population have greatly benefited the population of food consumers. But more and more consumers are now becoming aware

that our supposed abundance of cheap and healthful food is to a considerable extent illusory. They are beginning to see that the social, ecological, and even the economic costs of such "cheap food" are, in fact, great. They are beginning to see that a system of food production that is dependent on massive applications of drugs and chemicals cannot, by definition, produce "pure food." And they are beginning to see that a kind of agriculture that involves unprecedented erosion and depletion of soil, unprecedented waste of water, and unprecedented destruction of the farm population cannot by any accommodation of sense or fantasy be called "sustainable."

From the point of view, then, of the farmer, the ecologist, and the consumer, the need to reform our ways of farming is now both obvious and imperative. We need to adapt our farming much more sensitively to the nature of the places where the farming is done. We need to make our farming practices and our food economy subject to standards set not by the industrial system but by the health of ecosystems and of human communities.

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Farming and the Global Economy

reform is that we are rapidly running out of farmers. The tragedy of this decline is not just in its numbers; it is also in the fact that these farming people, assuming we will ever recognize our need to replace them, cannot be replaced anything like as quickly or easily as they have been dispensed with. Contrary to popular assumption, good farmers are not in any simple way part of the "labor force." Good farmers, like good musicians, must be raised to the trade.

The severe reduction of our farming population may signify nothing to our national government, but the members of country communities feel the significance of it-and the threat of it-every day. Eventually urban consumers will feel these things, too. Every day farmers feel the oppression of their long-standing problems: overproduction, low prices, and high costs. Farmers sell on a market that because of overproduction is characteristically depressed, and they buy their supplies on a market that is characteristically inflated-which is necessarily a recipe for failure, because farmers do not control either market. If they will not control production and if they will not reduce their dependence on purchased supplies, then they will keep on failing.

The survival of farmers, then, requires two complementary efforts. The first is entirely up to the farmers, who must learn-or learn again-to farm in ways that minimize their dependence on industrial supplies. They must diversify, using both plants and animals. They must produce, on their farms, as much of the required fertility and energy as they can. So far as they can, they must replace purchased goods and services with natural health and diversity and with their own intelligence. To increase production by increasing costs, as farmers have been doing for the last half century, is not only unintelligent; it is crazy. If farmers do not wish to cooperate any longer in their own destruction, then they will have to reduce their dependence on those global economic forces that intend and approve and profit from the destruction of farmers, and they will have to increase their dependence on local nature and local intelligence.

The second effort involves cooperation between local farmers and local consumers. If farmers hope to exercise any control over their markets, in a time when a global economy and global transportation make it possible for the products of any region to be undersold by the products of any other region, then they will have to look to local markets. The longbroken connections between towns and cities and their surrounding landscapes will have to be restored. There is much promise and much hope in such a restoration. But farmers must understand that this requires an economics of cooperation rather than competition. They must understand also that such an economy sooner or later will require some rational means of production control.

If communities of farmers and consumers wish to promote a sustainable, safe, reasonably inexpensive supply of good food,

then they must see that the best, the safest, and most dependable source of food for a city is not the global economy, with its extreme vulnerabilities and extravagant transportation costs, but its own surrounding countryside. It is, in every way, in the best interest of urban consumers to be surrounded by productive land, well farmed and well maintained by thriving farm families in thriving farm communities.

If a safe, sustainable local food economy appeals to some of us as a goal that we would like to work for, then we must be careful to recognize not only the great power of the interests arrayed against us but also our own weakness. The hope for such a food economy as we desire is represented by no political party and is spoken for by no national public officials of any consequence. Our national political leaders do not know what we are talking about, and they are without the local affections and allegiances that would permit them to learn what we are talking about.

But we should also understand that our predicament is not without precedent; it is approximately the same as that of the proponents of American independence at the time of the Stamp Act-and with one difference in our favor: in order to do the work that we must do, we do not need a national organization. What we must do is simple: we must shorten the distance that our food is transported so that we are eating more and more from local supplies, more and more to the benefit of local farmers, and more and more to the satisfaction of local consumers. This can be done by cooperation among small organizations: conservation groups, churches, neighborhood associations, consumer co-ops, local merchants, local independent banks, and organizations of small farmers. It also can be done by cooperation between individual producers and consumers. We should not be discouraged to find that local food economies can grow only gradually; it is better that they should grow gradually. But as they grow they will bring about a significant return of power, wealth, and health to the people.

One thing at least should be obvious to us all: the whole human population of the world cannot live on imported food. Some people somewhere are going to have to grow the food. And wherever food is grown the growing of it will raise the same two questions: How do you preserve the land in use? And how do you preserve the people who use the land?

The farther the food is transported, the harder it will be to answer those questions correctly. The correct answers will not come as the inevitable by-products of the aims, policies, and procedures of international trade, free or unfree. They cannot be legislated or imposed by international or national or state agencies. They can only be supplied locally, by skilled and highly motivated local farmers meeting as directly as possible the needs of informed local consumers.

Bears and Hogs

Buzz Williams

The 2006 session of the South Carolina State Legislature is considering a bill to extend the season for hunting bear with dogs in the Mountain Hunt Unit, which includes Greenville, Pickens and Oconee Counties. This area also includes the South Carolina section of the Chattooga River watershed. Currently, hunters can hunt bear with dogs in the Mountain Hunt Unit for one week of the designated bear hunting season. Bear may also be hunted with primitive weapons for one week, and for one week during the gun hunt. The South Carolina Bear Hunters Association is based in Pickens County, and drafted H4448 that was introduced at the state house by Representative David Hiott and Senator Larry Martin, both of whom are from Pickens. According to the bear hunters, the reasoning behind the proposed season extension is that they need a dog training season as well as an extended kill season due to evidence that the bear population in the mountains has expanded enough to sustain a greater harvest. Opponents of the bill dispute the population estimates, and claim that bear hunting with dogs violates the rules of fair chase and encourages trespassing on private property.

The bear population in the upstate of South Carolina has increased in recent years to an estimated 900 bears, according to Skip Still, bear biologist with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Previous estimates by the DNR of the bear population in upper South Carolina ranged from 200 to 300 individuals. While most experts agree bear habitat has improved since the founding of the national forest after the turn of the century and more recent improvement in state and federal land management practices; others point to the fact that remaining private land in bear country is being fragmented and developed at an astonishing rate. Brad Wyche with Upstate Forever, a conservation organization located in Greenville, estimates that every day in the upstate we lose 40 acres to development and add 40 people to our human population. This development and population growth fragments and even destroys bear habitat and wildlife movement corridors, and also causes much more frequent interaction between people and bears. Bears have an outstanding sense of smell and often forage for food in bird feeders, dog food, and garbage, which often results in a bear/human confrontation. Bears that are normally shy soon adapt to the easy pickin's around human habitat, and lose their fear of people. The DNR's mantra is that "a fed bear is a dead bear." Recent bear/human interaction has caused nuisance bear complaints to skyrocket. Some believe that the DNR is inflating

bear population numbers to justify increasing the kill rate in order to cut down on the expensive relocation and euthanasia program necessary to reduce nuisance bear complaints.

The South Carolina Bear Hunters Association cites their cultural tradition of hunting bears with dogs as a reason for dog hunt allocations. Yet others, including many "still" hunters, argue that a bear pursued with dogs equipped with radio telemetry collars that send signals to hunters sitting in pick up trucks, who then speed down county and state roads to cut the bear off, kill it, and haul it out on an ATV, is a far cry from traditional hunting. Bolstering this counterargument is the sentiment expressed in a quote by Aldo Leopold in his landmark book *A Sand County Almanac*, as follows: "...there is value in any experience that exercises those ethical restraints collectively called 'sportsmanship.' Our tools for the pursuit of wildlife improve faster than we do, and sportsmanship is a voluntary limitation in the use of these armaments. It is aimed to augment the role of skill and shrink the role of gadgets in the pursuit of wild things."



This captive bear is confined in a 6' x 12' cage by bear hunters, who use the animal to train hunting dogs.

Bear dogs often stray onto private property on party dog hunts, a fact that bear hunters use to justify their use of radio collars. The argument is that a lost dog can be located and retrieved, if they know where the dog goes. But the retrieval process often involves trespassing on to private property. In recent years, confrontations between irate landowners and hunters that have trespassed to retrieve expensive hunting dogs have reached the boiling point on a number of occasions in the Mountain Hunt Unit.

There are other problems. Training bear dogs often involves "bear baying," a training process where dogs are taught to harass a captive bear that is usually chained to a low platform. The dogs are reprimanded for making physical contact with the bear; nonetheless, opponents believe the training technique involving captive bears is inhumane. Recent media stories about bear baying rodeos, where the public pays to watch as bears in an enclosed area are set upon with bear dogs in open competition, has spawned protest at what many consider to be cruelty to animals. Public outcry on this issue has resulted in the DNR instituting a registration program for captive bears and refusing to issue new permits, essentially taking a middle-of-the-road policy to phase out bear baying.

Bears and Hogs

Another problem concerns setting out food for bears, known as baiting, in hopes of drawing the animals into a designated area. Unethical bear hunters put out bait to lure bears to an area where dogs can be loosed for the chase. Based on tips from the public, the Chattooga Conservancy has documented several bait sites during the 2005 bear hunting season. The practice of putting out bait for bears adds more fuel to the claim of violations of the rules of fair chase.

Law enforcement officials have identified another vexing problem with current bear hunting regulations. Unethical bear hunters allow dogs to pursue bear out of season during their hunts for other game animals including raccoons, squirrel, possum, and fox. This loophole effectively allows pursuing bear from September to March, except during the still hunt for deer and bear. Game wardens must actually catch the hunters killing a bear before they can take action against the offenders. Exacerbating this problem is the fact that law enforcement is woefully under funded—a point the DNR does not dispute.

Then there is the problem with feral hogs. Wild hog populations have exploded in the last five years due to the popularity of "hog dogging," a sport involving the catch and release of wild boar. The hogs are pursued with catch dogs, and often involve the same hunters who hunt bear with dogs. The DNR does not consider the feral hogs as a game animal, thus allowing dog hunters to hunt almost year-round. Meanwhile, damage to the natural environment by hogs is dramatic. Hogs wallow in wetlands causing water pollution, ravenously devour a wide variety of sensitive plants and animals that include salamanders, orchids, and crayfish, and carry diseases such as swine brucellosis, pseudo-rabies, hog cholera, and tuberculosis. Wild hogs also devour the eggs of ground nesting birds such as wild turkey, grouse, and ovenbirds. Ironically, hogs compete with animals such as deer and bear for acorns, which is the primary food of these preferred game animals. Repetitive catch and release of hogs is a brutal sport, often resulting in severe injury to both hogs and catch dogs. Bear hunters that use hogs as an extension of their sport by taking advantage of the lack of regulation and enforcement cause extensive damage to the environment, injury to animals, and promote unethical hunting practices. Any debate about bear hunting regulations must also engage the issue of unregulated hog hunting.

As it stands now, the bill H448 before the South Carolina State Legislature would extend the dog hunting season for bear

by one week and add six weeks of running bear with dogs in September and October, to "train dogs." During this extended running season, hunters would not be allowed to kill bears. However, studies have shown that running bear with dogs in the late summer and fall can result in mortality when cubs are lost after being separated from sows. In addition, cubs are sometimes killed by dogs, or are killed by unethical hunters irregardless of regulation.

Bear hunting with dogs is also a safety issue. One quarter of the bears killed by dog hunters are within 200 yards of a road, and sometimes are in the road (Collins, 1972). Observations by Chattooga Conservancy staff in the 2005 bear hunting season documented hunters "standing" along both sides of a paved county road waiting for a bear pursued by dogs to cross.



Russian wild boar, displaying its razor sharp tusks. Photographed in the mountains of SC, circa 1954.

As we go to press, the South Carolina Senate Game, Fish and Forestry Committee is debating the issue. To date, the DNR refuses to budge on their support for H444,8 even in light of the fact that the Chattooga Conservancy and several private citizens in Pickens County have offered a compromise bill that would allow a two week "running season" (for dog training) in September, one week of still hunting for bear in October, one week of hound hunting in October, and one week of bear/deer still hunting in December. The compromise bill also increases law enforcement, as well as more regulation of hunting parties as per size, kill reports, and hunt master requirements. We have also proposed that the DNR and the U. S. Forest Service should institute an intense hog-trapping program, and beefed up law enforcement of catch and release hog activity on game management lands.

In summary, the bear hunting situation in the upstate of South Carolina is out of control. Bear hunters who have "captured" the DNR and local politicians are asking for a greater number of days to hunt bear with dogs, and a dramatic increase in the number of days to run bear with dogs for training. We are opposed to the proposed increases because we believe the bear population data being used to justify this is simply wrong. DNR's data suggesting that bear populations have jumped from 2-300 bear to 900, literally overnight, is questionable at best. The necessary law enforcement to check illegal bear baiting, out of season harvest, illegal bear running, catch and release of wild hogs by bear hunters, and trespass on private property is seriously inadequate. Most disturbing is the fact that the current method of bear hunting with high tech equipment violates the rules of fair chase. We have offered a reasonable compromise and it has been rejected. There is no choice but to kill H4448.

Watershed Update

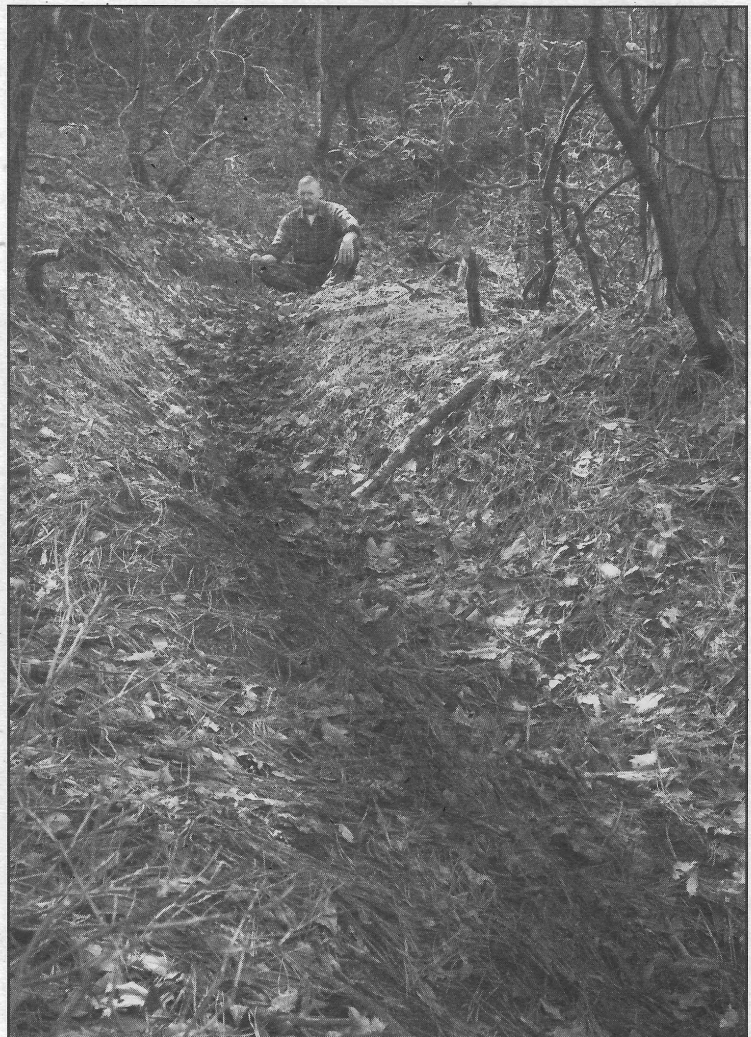
Chattooga Headwaters Boating Controversy

The American Whitewater Association (AWA) has issued an ultimatum to the Forest Service to open the headwaters of the Chattooga River to boating, or face a lawsuit from their organization. The smoldering controversy was ignited in early 2005 when AWA appealed the Forest Service's decision in the recent 2004 Sumter National Forest Plan revision to continue banning boating on the Chattooga River above the highway 28 bridge. As a result of AWA's appeal, the chief of the Forest Service (based in Washington, D. C.) remanded the regional forester's decision to continue this ban. In sum, the chief's decision found that the Sumter Forest Plan's analysis of the boater ban issue was insufficient, and directed the three forest supervisors in the Chattooga River watershed (NC, SC and GA) to reanalyze the question of allowing "creek boating" in the headwaters. This reanalysis process is currently underway, and is being orchestrated by the Forest Service as the "visitor use capacity analysis."

Meanwhile, AWA's interpretation of the chief's decision is vastly different from that of the three forest supervisors. AWA claims that the chief's decision orders the forest officers to allow boating, with the only question being whether or not limitations are necessary to protect the "outstandingly remarkable values" (as per the National Wild & Scenic Rivers Act) of the upper sections of the Chattooga River. Forest officers maintain that should the ongoing analysis determine that the Chattooga River environment, or the designated "experience," would be harmed by allowing boating in the headwaters, then Forest Service has the authority to continue a total ban. The threat of an immediate lawsuit by AWA comes after months of public meetings already held by the Forest Service about the boating ban issue. This latest move by AWA is confusing, in consideration of the fact that the Forest Service is right in the middle of doing exactly what AWA's appeal asked for in reconsidering the question of allowing boating in the headwaters. Could it be that the "no compromise" position of AWA signals their intention to get what that organization wants at all costs, other users be damned? The Chattooga Conservancy favors keeping the ban for two very simple and intertwined reasons. First, the Forest Service has not been able to enforce the mandate to limit use in the Chattooga's lower sections to protect a "wilderness experience" as prescribed by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, so how could we expect them to protect the experience in the headwaters, should the ban be lifted? Secondly, AWA has stated that they are demanding access without limitations. AWA's demand violates our basic, ethical litmus test for conservation: You should be willing to make sacrifices in terms of reasonable limitations in order to protect the natural resource.

Horse Trail Debacle

Readers may remember our summary of a proposal by the Andrew Pickens Ranger District in South Carolina's Sumter National Forest to expand the system of horse trails in the Chattooga River watershed (Chattooga Quarterly, p. 12, Fall 2004). This project came to a halt when the Chattooga Conservancy challenged the ill conceived trail design. The idea of a new trail system on the South Carolina side of the Chattooga River was being backed by a private entrepreneur, who also proposed to help design, construct, patrol, and maintain the system if the Forest Service would allow the trails to terminate at a private horse camp situated on his private property. The Forest Service, under funded and under staffed due to budget cuts, as well as responding to the Bush Administration's pressure to increase development and privatize concessions on public lands, had been eager to try this new way of doing business. Prior to any public notice or specific "scoping" proposal, 15 miles of new trails were laid out, flagged, and were actually being cleared. About that time



Executive Director Buzz Williams points out "gully erosion" caused by an illegal horse trail on a steep slope in the Andrew Pickens District.

Watershed Update

news of the project was leaked, and the Conservancy began field checking the trail project. We were astounded to find trails being flagged that were on highly erodible soils and steep 25% grades, because contemporary trail design experts agree that horse trails should not exceed a 10% grade. The flagged and partially cleared trails also went through wetlands, and closely paralleling and adjacent to streambeds. In addition, the trail designer admitted that the trails had not taken into account soil type and slope data. In one case, a trail crossed into the Chattooga Wild and Scenic River Corridor at the Narrows rapids (located in the Whetstone area). We were later informed that the trail designer had intended this part of the trail to offer a view of the river, and the vista would require periodic maintenance to clear vegetation. Pressure from the Conservancy to recognize the flaws in the proposed trail system resulted in cancellation of the project. End of story? Not quite. The Forest Service, clearly embarrassed by the debacle, simply walked away without requiring the private contractors to remove flagging on the partially cleared trails. As a result, riders have been following the flagging, clearing more vegetation and creating the trails anyway. We encourage members of the Chattooga Conservancy to contact the Andrew Pickens District Ranger (tel. 864-638-9568) and oppose the development of ecologically damaging and unauthorized trails.

April Fools!

At a public meeting on April 11th in Clayton, Georgia, the Forest Service unveiled a new process for developing their 5 year program of work for the Chattahoochee National Forest. The spin on this "different way of doing business" is to involve the public up front to develop project proposals, as opposed to presenting a predefined project. Sounds good. What's the catch? This new process could be called the "choose your poison" method, because the Forest Service's program of work as defined in the new Chattahoochee National Forest Management Plan lays out "timber targets" for large acreages of public lands to be harvested for creating "early successional habitat," otherwise known as areas where the dominant vegetation is just 0 to 10 years old. The only thing on the table is: where will this happen? Yes, the public will have an opportunity to have input; however, the magnitude of the management activity (timber cutting) being proposed is the real question. It looks like the Forest Service is simply working to revive a stalled out timber program under the guise of wildlife habitat restoration and ecosystem management. Check future issues of the *Chattooga Quarterly* and the Conservancy's website to stay abreast of and get involved

with timber harvesting proposals on national forest land in the Chattooga River watershed.

Stekoa Creek Greenway Breakthrough

On March 21st the board of education in Rabun County, Georgia, granted permission for establishing an unpaved walking path around the perimeter of the old Clayton Elementary School property located on westbound highway 76. Linda Johnston, chair of the Stekoa Greenway group, made a presentation to the board of education that resulted in the favorable decision. The board also gave permission to eradicate nonnative plants in the riparian corridor along Scott Creek, which borders the property and is a major tributary to Stekoa Creek, and to plant native trees along the path. The Chattooga Conservancy is a member of the Stekoa Greenway group, which also has been a supporter and partial funder of our Stekoa Creek water sampling program. Scott Creek is listed as an "impaired waterway" according to both the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Georgia's Environmental Protection Division. The breakthrough with the Rabun County Board of Education has given the Stekoa Greenway project its first real opportunity to begin implementing a plan that would establish a riparian buffer featuring native species to protect Stekoa Creek, while providing a place for public recreation and promoting the downtown business district. Once more landowners realize the benefits of the greenway project, we hope additional property owners along Stekoa Creek and its tributaries will join in the project.



Members of the Chattooga Conservancy and the Stekoa Greenway Group partner to plant trees on the first section of greenway along Scott Creek, which is a tributary to Stekoa Creek.

Watershed Update

Nuclear Salvation

Duke Energy Corporation has announced plans to apply for a permit to construct another nuclear reactor at the Oconee Nuclear Station in upstate South Carolina near Greenville. The facility is within 30 miles of the Chattooga River, and the entire Chattooga watershed lies within the 50-mile evacuation zone that would be enforced in the event of a major nuclear accident. Duke's announcement comes as no surprise, given the push by the Bush Administration to ramp up nuclear power as an alleged "clean" alternative to burning fossil fuels and our dependence on foreign oil. Proponents often tout nuclear power as a way to combat global warming while ignoring other important issues such as the non existence of a facility to dispose of the deadly waste generated by nuclear reactors, public health issues associated with radiation leaks into the environment, the huge federal subsidies necessary to jump start the nuclear program, and the threat from terrorist attacks on nuclear facilities. Yet, many advocates of other low or no-carbon energy sources point to real trends as well as predictions that in the next five years, wind, solar, and hydrogen energy sources will add 160 times as much capacity to our search for alternative energy as nuclear power. But with a 55% increase for nuclear research and development along with \$250 million earmarked for a new initiative to recycle nuclear waste in the pipe line for the federal government's 2007 budget, it looks like another David and Goliath fight shaping up on the east side of the Chattooga River watershed. Stay tuned for updates.

Take To The Skies

Expert birder Jack Johnston led a great outing on our annual spring bird walk on April 21st. A hardy group of birders met at the Chattooga Conservancy office and departed around 7:30 a.m. to scout along Warwoman Creek, which is a Rabun County tributary to the Chattooga River. The previous night, a fresh



A hardy group of birders identified 42 species during the annual spring bird walk. Photo by Honor Woodard.

spring rain had swept a new wave of migratory birds into the area and the early morning weather was perfect. The group identified 42 species of birds, which set a new record for the most individual species seen during the Conservancy's annual spring outings. Topping the list were a couple of new sightings including the Palm Warbler and the Yellow Rumped Warbler, and we even heard the call of the wily wild turkey. Our leader, Jack Johnson, has 32 years of experience conducting bird counts for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Jack is a wonderful teacher and we greatly appreciate his excellent volunteer service in leading our annual spring bird hike.

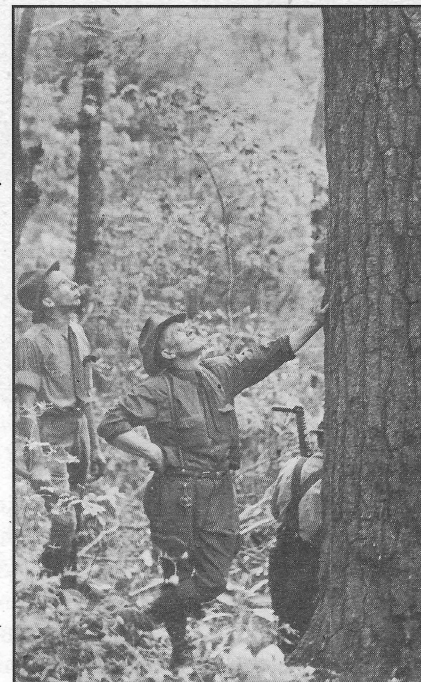
The End Of An Era

For the first time since it was created in 1936, the large acreage of national forest land in Rabun County,

Georgia, will not have its own individual ranger district. The Forest Service recently made a surprise announcement that they plan to combine the Tallulah Ranger District office, which now is located in the town of Clayton in the Chattooga River watershed, with the nearby Chattooga Ranger District. For management purposes, the Tallulah and Chattooga Districts will be merged and will be given a new name (as yet undetermined). The new office will most likely be located closer to the Gainesville area. The decision to consolidate districts is linked to the Bush Administration's initiative to downsize the Forest Service, and move towards managing public land resources through private contractors.

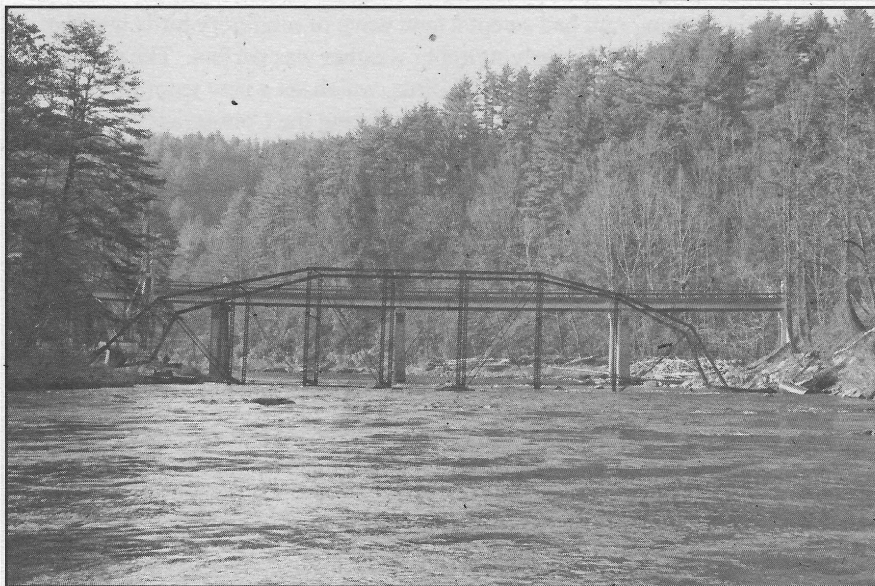
The Old Iron Bridge Is No More

The old "camel back" iron bridge that was once the main bridge across the Chattooga River between South Carolina and Georgia recently fell into the river. Erected in 1894, this bridge was situated just upstream of the present day highway 76 bridge. The Forest Service inherited jurisdiction over the camel back trestle, and citing safety concerns had planned for years to tear it down. This spring the SC Department of Transportation (DOT) did the job for them, and the historical bridge that had evolved to become a feature of the landscape disappeared.



Roscoe "Ranger Nick" Nicholson, Georgia's first Forest Service ranger.

Watershed Update



The old iron bridge was dropped into the Chattooga River, dragged over to the South Carolina side, and dismantled. Photo by W.S. Lesan

The DOT is engaged in a yearlong project to replace the highway 76 bridge, and tearing down the old iron bridge was part of the work plan. On the appointed day, a group of local residents (mostly former river guides and their kids) piled into a raft provided by Wildwater Ltd. and ferried across the Chattooga to watch the show. After an early morning commercial raft trip floated under the bridge, workers used torches to cut through the pylons. Then a team of backhoes applied tension to cables attached to the bridge, and literally pulled it off its piers. In short order the old bridge dropped with a splash into the Chattooga, where it was dragged across to the South Carolina shore, crushed, and dismantled. The whole process took less than an hour.

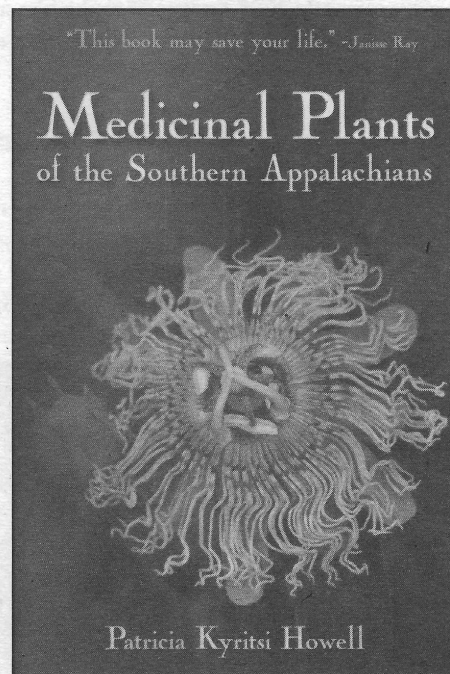
Few people will miss the old camel back iron bridge, yet its story is an integral part of Chattooga River history. According to Mary Elizabeth Law in *A Pictorial History of Rabun County*, the decision in 1894 to erect the bridge sparked a strong controversy between various factions, all of whom were vying for it to be built in their communities. The two principal advocates for the bridge, "ordinary" judge Franklin Bleckley from Rabun County and Oconee County's supervisor Nathaniel Phillips, wanted it built at the highway 76 location. However, Colonel Sam Beck, who was Bleckley's chief political rival, wanted it built in his district, further upstream and close to Warwoman Creek. Bleckley and Phillips prevailed in pushing the bridge project through, but the squabble was the political downfall of both men who were defeated in subsequent elections. When friends warned Bleckley that if he built the bridge he would lose the election, his reply was that "the citizens of Rabun County needed the bridge more than they needed his reelection to office."

Chattooga River Watershed Cultural Heritage Series Upcoming Events

The first two programs in our Chattooga River Watershed Cultural Heritage Series are on the calendar. **On June 2nd, archaeologist Russell Cutts will present a program on Native American culture, with an emphasis on how Indians used the natural resources in their environment.** Russell will also demonstrate friction fire and identify and date Indian artifacts brought by participants. Cutts holds Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in Anthropology (Archaeology) from the University of Georgia. He has 14 years of professional experience teaching earth skills, American Indian history/prehistory, and outdoor education. His experience includes museum directorships, teaching and giving special presentations at the University of Georgia, Kennesaw State University, and Reinhardt College. Cutts also has served on the board of directors for conservation and cultural groups and is the author of two books, which will be available for purchase.

On July 14th, Patricia Howell will present a lecture on her new book Medicinal Plants of the Southern Appalachians.

Patricia's book is chocked full with interesting facts about the biologically rich Southern Appalachian flora, and focuses on the traditional use of native plants for healing. Ms. Howell is a former president of the board of the Georgia Organics organization, and owns and operates BotanoLogos, a school for edible and medicinal plant studies located in Rabun County, Georgia.



The cultural heritage series programs are open to the public and will begin at 7:00 p.m. at the Chattooga Conservancy office, which is located at the corner of Pinnacle and Warwoman Roads. For more information call 706-782-6097.

Members' Page

Many thanks to all who recently renewed their membership, joined, or donated goods or time to the Chattooga Conservancy. Your generous contributions will help us continue to work on all of the important conservation issues facing the watershed.

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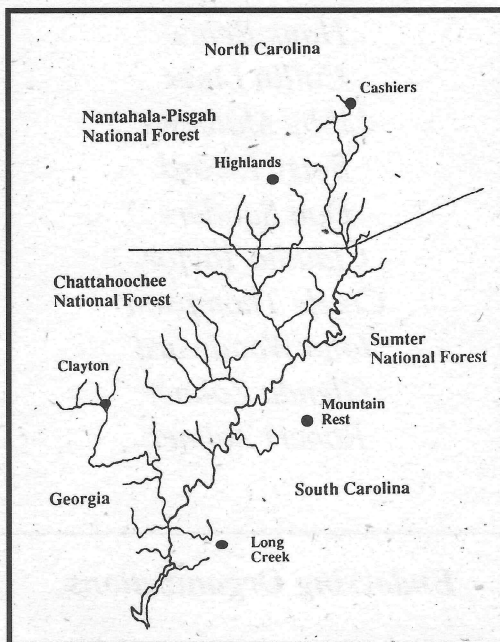
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Purpose: To protect, promote and restore the natural ecological integrity of the Chattooga River watershed ecosystems; to ensure the viability of native species in harmony with the need for a healthy human environment; and to educate and empower communities to practice good stewardship on public and private lands.

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Goals:

Monitor the U.S. Forest Service's management of public forest lands in the watershed, and work cooperatively to develop a sound ecosystem initiative for the watershed

Educate the public

Promote public choice based on credible scientific information

Promote public land acquisition by the Forest Service within the watershed

Protect remaining old growth and roadless areas

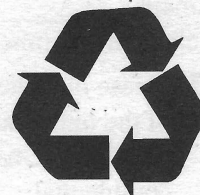
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