



TIGHT LINES

January 2000

Newsletter of the Rabun Chapter of Trout Unlimited

Georgia Council of Trout Unlimited Issues A Position Paper on the USFS Revision of the Land & Resource Management Plan

Now that the smoke has cleared a little and the public hearings on the Revision of the Land & Resource Management Plan are temporarily on hold, the Georgia Council of Trout Unlimited has forwarded a position paper on the plan to the USFS. After several meetings, many E-mails and phone conversations, a committee of TU members drafted a well thought out document that reflects the view of most, if not all, Trout Unlimited members in Georgia. The committee consisted of Doug Adams, Rabun TU; Bob Beck, Georgia Council, TU; Bob

Gill, Cohutta TU; Jimmy Harris, Foothills TU; Greg Moran, Chairman Georgia Council of TU; Terry Seehorn, Rabun TU; and Garland Stewart, NRB of TU. We owe a debt of gratitude to these TU folks who spent a great deal of time and thought to come up with an agreeable position on this very important issue.

The complete text of the letter follows below and on page two. Please take time to read it and we can discuss the points made at a chapter meeting.

December 15, 1999

Mr. George Martin, Supervisor
Chattahoochee - Oconee National Forest
USDA Forest Service
1755 Cleveland Highway
Gainesville, GA 30501

Subject: GA TU Position Letter on the USFS Revision of the Land & Resource Management Plan

Dear George:

The purpose of this letter is to advise you that the Georgia Council of Trout Unlimited (GA TU) has NOT endorsed the Georgia ForestWatch letters dated October 6, 1999. The following is the GA TU position on the process underway for the Forest Management Plan Revision and the Rolling Alternative.

Goal: We endorse a science-based emphasis on watershed restoration, water quality protection, and aquatic habitat restoration.

Science Based Management: The time has come for science-based management decisions to be made for public lands in spite of public pressure to the contrary. We support the use of scientific principles to drive prescription allocation on Southern Appalachian Forests. We believe this would eliminate the use of prescriptions that inhibit reasonable, scientific management of the forest and thus cause declines in primary productivity and biodiversity. There are simply too many good management options that will assure these two things. Many management alternatives are entirely sustainable and carry the benefit of being fitted to the "multiple use" directives. Publicizing management options as "not used" sends a message that management is a bad thing and "hands off" is better. The health of forest streams is tied to

healthy forests, and healthy forests are productive and biodiverse, not simply old growth. We advocate the full use of the information available from research centers like Coweeta and Fernow to guide management. We believe these will point out that prescribed burning, periodic thinning of developing tree stands, and at times even timber removal have a right and proper place in a healthy forest. In line with this emphasis on science, we support appropriate scientific monitoring and data collection in the forests and subsequent dissemination of data for public consumption. It is both appropriate and beneficial for the public to be made aware that science-based management can contribute significantly to forest health. We believe this approach will allow the forests in the Southern Appalachians to sustainably meet the growing needs of the entire public, rather than being set apart for use by a select few with admirable intent but overly narrow objectives.

Sideboards: We believe the sideboards, or the design criteria, used for the Rolling Alternative should be based on either good science or legal requirements, such as the Multiple Use Act. We suggest the science-based sideboards need more work to address their side effects. For example, the '4% early-successional', 'unsuitable riparian areas' and 'scenic views' constraints have placed too much emphasis on late-successional forests, which may adversely affect the long-term health of the forest. Further, we believe sideboards based on political or social objectives should be re-examined for scientific validity.

Wilderness: GA TU is not, at this time, endorsing the Wilderness study areas in the Rolling Alternative. We will be making site-specific recommendations at a later date. The Southern Appalachian Assessment reveals a need for greater public understanding of the Wilderness designation; it also clearly establishes a substantial public appreciation for all the scenic and recreational opportunities our public forests have to offer. We believe there are other alternatives available for land and resource protection that are not as restrictive as Wilderness and will achieve the same management objectives. Without a sound scientific basis specific to the area, reliance on Wilderness or any other management prescription to protect and preserve the forests from the effects of human visitation does not serve the best interests of the forests or the American people. Wilderness designations limit the flexibility in managing our forests for the benefit of all.

Prescriptions: We believe the prescriptions need additional work in the 'standards and guidelines' to further define their response to the 16 identified Forest Plan Revision Issues. The prescriptions need to be fine-tuned for the particular forest conditions found in our portion of the Southern Blue Ridge. The prescriptions used in the Rolling Alternative overemphasize the late-successional conditions. We advocate taking a projected look at the long-term quantitative effect of the applied prescriptions in a model to determine whether they will achieve intended forest vegetation health goals.

Reasonable Access: Recognizing that forest roads are major contributors of non-point source water pollution, we fully support the upgrading and proper maintenance of the existing needed forest roads. Our National Forests belong to all citizens of the United States, and they should be equally accessible in a way that preserves overall forest health. We recognize that there are solid, science-based reasons to limit access to portions of the forest to protect sensitive ecosystems, and we support such limitations when there is a sound basis for doing so. We cannot, however, support management prescriptions that will limit access to the forests when our scientific knowledge and understanding do not present a compelling reason for such limitations.

Our position is consistent with our mission to conserve, protect, and restore the trout fisheries and their watersheds in Northern Georgia. GA TU will continue to participate in the ongoing Forest Plan Revision process with site-specific recommendations. As we enter the 21st century, we look forward to another decade of continued partnership with the U.S. Forest Service.

Sincerely,

Greg Moran, Chairman
Georgia Council of Trout Unlimited

Rendezvous Plans Need to be Finalized

At the January 18th Chapter meeting at the Rock House, final plans for the Rabun Rendezvous need to come together.

Those who can should come to the Dillard Conference Center on Saturday, January 22nd by 2-3 o'clock. We will need to set up buckets and items for the raffle; and, lay out the silent auction items. These two activities takes some time.

The ticket table should be in place no later than 4 o'clock as we can expect people to start arriving anytime after that even though the event doesn't officially start until five.

As guests arrive, many of them will be bringing items for the raffle, auction and for door prizes. Each item has to be put in the proper place and a form filled out. This also takes time and several members should be ready to lend a hand with that task.

As hectic as it gets, it always seems to get done and it's thanks to those of you who come out and help.

So, come to the regular meeting and make it known what you would like to do to make this Rabun Rendezvous the most successful yet.

Christmas Dinner Meeting

The Rabun Chapter of Trout Unlimited on December 21st at the Rock House on tended and after a few tips of the bubbly joyed a delicious dinner spread by the missed a good time and should make cember 18, 2000! (And, yes, with my have pictures. I have learned how to get am having some problems getting them



held it's annual Christmas Dinner Meeting the Dillard House complex. It was well at-in a spirit of fellowship, the gathering en-Dillard House. If you weren't there, you plans right now to be at the next one, De-fancy new digital camera I had hoped to them from the camera to the computer but into Tight Lines. Maybe next issue!)

Wildlife Resources Division of the Georgia DNR

On Friday, January 06, 2000, a meeting was held at WRD headquarters in Social Circle, to which the WRD invited concerned conservation and preservation groups in order to lay out the agency's position on the U. S. Forest Service's Rolling Alternative plan for the forest.

The WRD is concerned that the Rolling Alternative places too much emphasis on setting aside large blocks of land into categories that eliminate wildlife mangement practices and greatly restricts pblic recreational access. Specific practices such as creation of wildlife openings, forest management, controlled burning, maintenance of access roads, **fish stocking, and building trout stream structures** may be severely restricted or lost totally on much of this acreage.

Two specific areas effected that are of especial interest to the Rabun Chapter are the **Ridley Branch** of Reed Creek and **Tate Branch**, a trib of the Tallulah River. Should the proposed total of 1,700 plus

acres in these two areas become designated Wilder-ness, loss of fisheries management would limit stocking alternatives, limit sampling options for re-search purposes and restrict habitat improvements. With the Rolling Alternative almost one half of the acreage in 11 Wildlife Management Areas would have habitat management and/or access restric-tions.

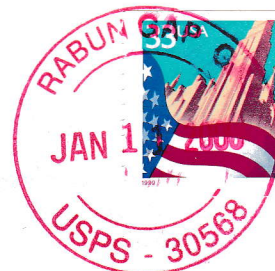
The WRD is not rejecting the entire Rolling Alterna-tive. With specific changes such as moving pro-posed wilderness area boundaries to avoid manage-able portions of the forest, by changing some pre-scriptions from "proposed wilderness" to "back country" or National Recreation Area" could pro-duce a "win-win" situation for forest users. It is difficult to sum up such a complex subject in a newsletter. Perhaps we should remember that the forest belongs to all citizens and should not be managed for one interest group. More later.

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

Jan 18	Chapter Meeting	6:30 PM
Jan 21	Chattooga River Coalition South Carolina DNR Clemson, SC	9:30 AM
Jan 22	Rabun Rendezvous	5:30 PM
Jan 29	Chapter Planning Breakfast Dillard House, Dillard, GA	8:30 AM
Feb 15	Chapter Meeting	6:30 PM



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CAN YOU BELIEVE IT? CLEM DEFINO IS A MARRIED MAN!