



# Save Georgia's Hemlocks

## **10/27/13 Notes for SGH Leadership Team Meeting**

A quarterly meeting of the Save Georgia's Hemlocks Leadership Team was held on Sunday, October 27, 2013 at the home of Donna Shearer in Dahlonega. In attendance: Bob Pledger, Dave Teffeteller, Frank Gheesling, Bruce Granger, Chris Curtin, Susan Chapman, and Donna Shearer. Rose Mott and Buz Stone were unable to attend.

### **STRATEGIES IN 2013**

#### **\* Bob – Review of goals and completed tasks to date, discussion of plans for accomplishing outstanding items**

The group reviewed the Progress Report, which provided a summary of SGH accomplishments & activities as of 10/26/13, including the milestones described in the sections that follow.

- Everyone attending expressed their commitment to continue to motivate participation in all areas of service through efforts including clinics, Facilitator training, presentations to schools & community groups, working alongside property owners associations, attending fairs and festivals, promoting / conducting SGH events such as the Hemlock Hikes.
- We also will address other service areas through leadership our efforts, including continuation of volunteer projects, some in partnership with GFS, DNR and/or GFC; expanding our program into areas needing service; providing for ongoing training of lead facilitators, including maintenance, repair and accessibility of injectors.
- Public communications and membership solicitation are also a priority.
- Discussion of plans for accomplishing outstanding items was guided by agenda and the updated 2013 Strategy Tracking document.

#### **\* Donna – Report on education to date**

- 4 Facilitator Training Workshops, bringing the total to 130 Volunteer Facilitators in Georgia and 53 in TN, NC & AL
- 5 Hemlock Help Clinics with 114 attendees in Gilmer, Dade/Walker, and Rabun in Georgia and Hamilton and Sequatchie counties in Tennessee
- 13 presentations to community/civic groups with 463 attendees/contacts
- 14 articles published in local (GA and TN) newspapers
- 30 Hemlock Lessons presented to 876 K-12 students and teachers
- Dave is involved in outreach to North Georgia Technical College with presentations to students in environmental education classes.
- 23 students from Georgia Tech assisted with the treatment project at Clements Branch and have expressed interest in continuing partnership.

#### **\* Susan, Chris, Frank, Bob – Report on fairs/festivals to date**

- 6 community festivals with 1,210 contacts and 2 children's festivals with 210 K-12 students and teachers
- We did not participate in two festivals that were originally scheduled – 4th of July Family Festival in Dahlonega was rained out on the 4th and rescheduled on a day that we already had a project planned for. We withdrew from participation in the John C. Campbell Folk School festival on October 5-6 due to scheduling conflicts that weekend.
- We participated in the first weekend of Apple Festival (535 visitors) but decided not to do the second weekend because of a shortage of volunteers. Chris and Dave supported the JCC and Apple Festival decisions and pointed out that although there are large numbers of people attending these popular fall events, many folks are from areas outside the hemlock native zone.
- The group commented that the smaller local festivals may be more productive than the huge ones from the standpoint of being able to have meaningful conversations with visitors and engage them as possible volunteers. Although SGH information is disseminated and we share our stewardship efforts at these festivals, our ability to have meaningful conversations with visitors, engage them as active volunteers, and recruit Facilitator candidates is not as strong at those venues. The importance of working locally was a point stressed by several board members.
- Bruce suggested we focus more contact toward local churches that already embrace broad stewardship efforts. Donna mentioned that we have a handout designed for churches titled “Stewardship of a Sanctuary in Crisis” that is available to share with churches and other faith-based groups.

**\* Dave – Report on Cartecay project in 2013**

- 12 days worked on the Cartecay Tract of the Rich Mountain Wildlife Area by volunteers from SGH and Mountain Stewards
- Approximately 2,859 trees treated there
- As a general comment, Dave stressed that volunteer participation will be an ongoing challenge as those who are dedicated beyond an initial event may be in a minority. Volunteers may not automatically contribute the second time around, so communication and education even in our areas where we have good volunteer base will become a priority - particularly in areas where treatment cycles are approaching the critical five year cycle.

**\* Bob – Report on USFS and other volunteer projects in 2013, Facilitator support and needs**

- 3 hemlock treatment projects with the U. S. Forest Service so far; 1 more SGH-USFS project is scheduled for November 2 at Fall Branch Falls near Cherry Log in Gilmer County.
- 5 work days on DNR projects (other than Cartecay)
- 9 charitable hemlock treatment projects for property owners
- Approximately 2,473 trees treated on these projects
- Thanks to the diligent efforts Alan Barnes, Buz Stone, and Bob Pledger, the hemlock treatment project for Camp High Harbor will go forward this year. The date is Friday, November 22, 2013. Some of the trees will need Safari, but most can still be treated with Imidacloprid. The Y-camp staff will contribute half a dozen adult helpers, and SGH will bring at least 4 experienced Facilitators plus any other volunteers who can participate. The camp will provide lunch, and SGH will supply the chemical (through the LRA grant) and all the necessary equipment and supplies. Details, map and driving directions will be posted on the Schedule of Events page of our web site.
- Bob reminded everyone to send him record of all activity volunteer hours and number of visits made to property owners etc. to him on a quarterly basis. This is part of the information is needed for filing our annual IRS information report, maintaining our nonprofit registration with the Secretary of State, and addressing inquiries from potential volunteers, members, and donors.
- To underscore the importance of the Facilitator role, Dave recommended a scheduled mandatory annual meeting for all Facilitators. He also recommended sending out a questionnaire to Facilitators, including a copy of the Facilitator job description, followed by e-mails and phone calls to clarify and confirm information received. The emphasis on the function of the Facilitator to address community service needs to be consistently emphasized to both new and current Facilitators.
- We need to identify Lead Facilitators for Dade, Fannin, Walker, White, and possibly Habersham. Need to strengthen Facilitator corps in Dawson, Fannin, Lumpkin, Murray, Pickens, Towns, Walker, and Whitfield.

**\* Donna – Report on Hemlock Help Program expansion in 2013**

- Dade & Walker counties added to the Hemlock Help Program, bringing the total to 14 Georgia counties now served.
- We had originally planned to add the 5 remaining HWA-infested counties in 2013 – Hall, Banks, Stephens, Cherokee, and Gordon – but will now schedule them for 2014.
- The Hemlock Help Line is open 7 days a week and has received more than 900 calls so far in 2013. Calls are mostly from north Georgia, but an increasing number are coming from TN, SC, NC, VA, PA, MA, and even Canada.
- Susan is making outbound calls with informal interest surveys and follow-up e-mails to new and prospective members and volunteers.

**OTHER ACTIVITIES IN 2013**

**\* Dave – Review of hemlock awareness survey taken at Apple Festival, discussion of future improvements to our communication reach and effectiveness**

- Informal survey taken by Renee Gracon at Apple Festival indicated that the majority of people who know about the hemlock crisis consider it a very important issue, but there are many people who don't know about it, don't know what they can do about it, or don't know where to get information about it.
- Survey did not indicate where the respondents were from, and many were from out of state.
- Need to do more Hemlock Help Clinics with heavy advance publicity, write more articles for newspapers, develop targeted materials for special audiences such as real estate professionals and property managers, provide a set of short modules to post periodically on FaceBook.

**\* Dave – Presentation of poster for Alliance for Saving Threatened Forests**

- Dave unveiled the beautiful poster he designed for Donna to present at the Alliance for Saving Threatened Forests 2013 Symposium in Asheville on October 29.
- The poster theme is “Utilizing Education & Charitable Service to Help the Hemlocks” and encourages public engagement in the fight to save the hemlocks. It presents 7 areas of educational initiatives and 7 areas of charitable service initiatives and includes figures representing progress in each.
- Dave raised a question about whether SGH could sponsor a symposium in Asheville or somewhere else to get a lot of experts, researchers and others together to jointly explore shared questions/concerns and pool knowledge/research efforts. We may consider this at our next meeting.

**\* Dave – Adult t-shirts on Café Press web site**

- Dave shared a handout for the SGH adult t-shirts he designed, showing styles, images and prices available on the Café Press web site, [http://www.cafepress.com/mf/81357824/save-georgias-hemlocks\\_tshirt](http://www.cafepress.com/mf/81357824/save-georgias-hemlocks_tshirt).
- There is a SGH logo (either large and centered or small in left pocket position) on front and hemlock branch with “Preserving Georgia’s Forests One Hemlock at a Time” on back.

**\* Bruce – Kids’ t-shirt design and SGH slogan**

- Bruce has a tentative design for a kid’s t-shirt with a SGH sheriff’s badge on the front and a picture of Bugzilla on the back.
- He is also working on a slogan SGH can use for various marketing and communications materials.

**\* Frank – Report on injector repairs**

- Injector photos have been completed to aid in diagnosing injector problems and repair them. Donna will post them on the web site.
- As a result of a much personal time and effort, Frank has found a good machine shop, Cleveland Tool and Design, that is able and willing to make certain replacement parts to repair broken injector, specifically injection tubes and possibly piston rings. Thanks to member David Cheek for letting us know about CTD! If we deliver 6 or more injectors at a time to CTD, the cost will be approx \$160 per injector. If we take fewer than 6 at a time, the cost will be approx \$190 each. The difference is due to set-up time for the equipment used to make the parts.
- Board members expressed that SGH takes great care of our injectors. Frank and Donna have spent a great deal of time learning to disassemble, diagnose problems, repair, and reassemble units. She has a small supply of certain replacement parts, and some replacement parts such as lower springs and ball valves, bolts, and washers – can be found in hardware stores. She has also found a company that can custom-make buffer springs and is still searching for a source for split piston rings and fill caps.
- SGH continues the initiative to check all publicly available soil injectors for accurate calibration and other operational issues.
- Dave asked about the availability of a total inventory of all injectors in Georgia. Donna stated that we know the whereabouts of approx 35; about half are in private hands and half at USFS, GFC, and CES locations. Helena Chemical and Rittenhouse may be able to give us more contact info.
- Frank suggested we might do a mailing to the owners of those who have injectors, offering to check them and repair if necessary.

**\* Frank – Accessibility issues**

- We know of no licensed pesticide applicators in the western part of the state. Donna suggests we should revisit the idea of offering some kind of stipend to individuals willing to get licensed in underserved areas. She has tentatively discussed this with a retired forester near Cloudland Canyon, and he will provide input as to what would be a reasonable incentive and agreement.
- SGA board members have set a goal to identify at least 1 retailer willing to carry treatment products in underserved counties. This includes Banks, Cherokee, Dade, Dawson, Gordon, Habersham, Hall, Murray, Stephens, Towns, Walker, and Whitfield.

**\* Chris – Dawn Davis’ music, film making**

- The short film/video we are planning will visually present the stark contrast between the forest health and beauty we want to preserve and the devastating loss that has occurred in many places. It will be used as an introduction to presentations, a running background at fairs and festivals, and/or a YouTube item.

- Chris reported that Dawn Davis of Blue Ridge is working with a local chorus to provide a background of children's voices to accompany the SGH video. Our film needs a script that defines the imagery to complement our public message.
- She also said Will Blozan (Appalachian Arborists) and David Huff (Back 40 Studios) may also have some film footage they might be willing to share. Donna will contact them to ask about this.
- A property owner in Suches has offered that we can film in his beautiful woods. We need to scout the location and plan filming dates (possibly one in winter and one in spring or summer).

**\* Donna – Information on new fungus problems this year**

- Rosellinia Needle Blight is a fungal infection affecting the foliage of hemlocks (and possibly also firs and spruces) for which the literature is very sketchy, mostly dates back to the late 1930's, and indicates that it's generally not a problem except for very small conifers in a nursery setting. The only suggested remedy was culling infected plants and providing more spacing and air circulation in the nursery setting.
- However, a new strain of it has appeared that did tremendous damage this summer and fall to hemlocks from seedling size up to 30 feet tall. Symptoms are large swaths of chocolate brown needles that look matted and stuck together, followed by defoliation, and serious damage or even tree death can occur in a period of just a few months. The problem is worst where trees are close together, close to waterways or in other very humid settings, with limited air circulation, but it has also been observed on trees growing out in the open with full sunlight and plenty of air circulation.
- At present there are no fungicides labeled for Rosellinia. There are some that are labeled for Needle Blight in general without designating specific kinds, and it is legal to use those, BUT they must be used with extreme care and must be kept out of waterways, AND we don't know enough about the life cycle of Rosellinia to determine when or how often to treat it or which product(s) may be the most effective in controlling it.

**FINANCIAL MATTERS FOR 2013**

**\* Donna –Financial condition through end of October 2013**

- We are on target with our FY 2013 budget to date.
- FY 2013 income to date is \$26,295.03; FY 2013 expense to date is \$19,283.78. Current cash on hand is \$16,265.13.
- Our total 2013 spending to date has been 92.64% for education and charitable service and 7.36% for membership, fundraising, and administrative activities:
- We need to give serious consideration to the wise and productive use of our available funds in 2014.

**\* Donna – Use of Lake Rabun Association funds through end of October 2013**

- So far, SGH has received the following grants from LRA to be used on projects benefiting Rabun County:
 

9/20/10	\$1,500
9/15/11	\$1,500
7/1/12	\$1,500
6/7/13	\$1,000

- The first two grants have been used completely, and \$1,095.87 of the third one has been used. We expect that the remainder of the 7/1/12 grant and possibly part of the 6/7/13 grant will be needed for the Camp High Harbour hemlock treatment project. Detailed usage reports are available upon request.

**\* Donna – Use of Cox funds to date, discussion of assigning additional Cox funds to various completed projects, report she will give re use of funds at Nov 12 announcement of Cox 2013 winner**

- We have used almost half of the \$10,000 Cox funds (\$4,444.07) in 2013. A detailed usage report is available upon request.
- Dave stated that while certain specific initiatives (such as chemicals for the Cartecay project) have been funded almost exclusively by the Cox award, all functions of SGH this year have been supported to some extent by Cox dollars.
- The text of Donna's planned remarks for the 2013 Cox Conserves Heroes award ceremony on Nov. 12 is included at the end of these meeting notes.

**\* Dave – Additional grants**

- Dave and Donna have been working on grants. In June, SGH applied for a small one (\$1500) from The North Georgia Community Foundation to be used to treat hemlocks along waterfall trails on public lands. We have since learned that we did not win the grant because of a large number of applicants and possibly a leaning toward health and human services above environmental causes.
- Dave stated there is a larger NGCF conservation grant available in the future that we will apply for. Need to follow up with Callie Flack.

**\* Dave – Membership appeal letter to go out around year-end, content, logistics, mailing date**

- Dave will prepare the letter as well as outbound and return envelopes. Donna will print the letters, envelopes, and membership forms and send to the team.
- Each team member is asked to send out 20-25 letters to personal friends before the end of the year, preferably with a short personal note handwritten on each letter and the envelopes hand-addressed. To avoid duplication, each team member is asked to send their list to Donna so she can ensure no overlapping among team members or with her list of Facilitators and past donors.

**Planning for 2014**

**\* Bob – Goals for next year, possible board retreat in January**

- Bob asked all team members to start thinking about our Strategic Plan for 2014, including any carry-over items from this year, continuation/improvement of current initiatives, and implementation of new ones. He reminded us that SGH isn't focused just on chemically treating hemlocks for the HWA but on saving them from as many threats as possible, such as the Rosellinia Needle Blight.
- He also suggested we consider reaching out to audiences beyond those we have traditionally addressed.

**\* Bob – Rabun projects**

- We are still hoping to do a hemlock treatment project at the Athens Y Camp, to be scheduled for 2014.
- Bob, Buz, and Rabun Facilitators will work to identify opportunities for additional charitable projects in Rabun County in 2014.

**\* Dave – Continuation of Cartecay project**

- In the spring we will need to evaluate whether or not to continue the Cartecay project in 2014, considering our budget and the additional complication caused by the Rosellinia Needle Blight.
- Condition of the trees, project cost, and safety of fungicide use will be major deciding factors.

**\* Donna – Continuation of USFS projects, possibly undertaking and funding one or two additional SGH-USFS treatment projects**

- Jim Wentworth has supplied the dates for 4 proposed SGH-USFS hemlock treatment projects on his Blue Ridge District, three of which have been identified by HCA and one more will be identified shortly.
- Mark Dalusky of UGA has approached SGH about the possibility of treating an area that is not in a HCA but is adjacent to the Low Gap Campground (which has been treated by the USFS). David Carswell of Anna Ruby Falls indicated his hope that SGH could do a hemlock treatment project in that park. Both of these locations are in John Westbrook's Chattooga District. The Forest Service has not appropriated any funds for them, so SGH would need to supply the chemical. Donna will seek the appropriate land managers' permission, and the team can consider funding at our next meeting.
- Chris expressed concern for the Cohutta area as well. This is in Danny Skojac's Conasauga District. Donna will contact him to understand the condition of the trees, treatments that have been done, and any plans for future treatment so the team can consider what help we may be able to give there.

**\* Bruce, Frank – Outreach to real estate, property rental, home inspector, church communities**

- Need to do more Hemlock Help Clinics with heavy advance publicity, write more articles for newspapers, develop targeted materials for special audiences such as real estate professionals and property managers, provide a set of short modules to post periodically on Facebook.
- Bruce suggested we focus more contact toward local churches that already embrace broad stewardship efforts. Donna mentioned that we have a handout designed for churches titled "Stewardship of a Sanctuary in Crisis" that is available to share with churches and other faith-based groups.

**\* Susan – Recommendations for fairs/festivals, membership, outreach to schools**

- Susan suggested, and the group concurred, that smaller local festivals may be more productive than huge ones. She will make recommendations for specific local festivals -- such as possibly including the Big Apple Festival in Cornelia or the Moonshine Festival in Dawsonville, Indian Summer Festival in Suches -- to consider at our next meeting.
- Although SGH information is disseminated and we share our stewardship efforts at the large festivals, our ability to have meaningful conversations with visitors, interest them in becoming active volunteers, and recruit Facilitator candidates is not as strong at those venues. The importance of working locally was a point stressed by several board members.
- Before our next meeting, we need to put together a list of schools (high schools and local colleges) that have environmental science curriculum and reach out to them with educational programs and involve them in partnerships/projects.

**\* Chris, Bruce – Outreach to other environmental, conservation, recreation groups**

- They recommended we increase our efforts to partner with other like-minded groups such as the Appalachian Trail Club, college hiking clubs, environmental classes, biking clubs, The Nature Conservancy, The Georgia Conservancy.
- At our next meeting team members will be asked to take responsibility for contacting those they have (or are willing to make) connections with.

**\* Donna – Preparations for probable recurrence of fungus problems next spring**

- Donna and her husband Mark have begun personal research on the problem and (along with Bob Pledger) have had initial discussions with various individuals in the Cooperative Extension Service, the U. S. Forest Service, and the University of Georgia.
- Donna recommends that SGH embark on a research project jointly with the above entities and others to:
  - document the signs and symptoms of infection, target plants, and geographical spread; and
  - document the life cycle of the problem and identify the treatment cycle and most effective treatment materials.
- By the end of 2013, Dr. Jean Woodward, head of UGA Plant pathology Department, will give us a written proposal.
- At our next meeting, team members will be asked to consider this initiative and bring ideas concerning funding and partnerships, such as committing our remaining Cox funds as seed money for the project, obtaining support from other donors, and enlisting the help of one or more chemical companies in the quest to identify or develop an effective chemical control.

**Next Board Meeting**

- 2nd weekend of January 2014 (the 11th and/or 12th)
- The team is asked to consider whether we want to do one long day or a weekend retreat, possibly at Smithgall Woods.

## **Donna's planned remarks for the Cox Conserves Heroes award celebration, November 2013**

*Good evening. My name is Donna Shearer, and I'm an inveterate tree hugger. I am also privileged to be the chairman of Save Georgia's Hemlocks, a 100% volunteer 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to saving endangered hemlocks through education and charitable service.*

*Our work focuses on educating people about the danger posed to the trees by an invasive insect, ensuring they understand the importance of preserving our hemlocks as a natural resource, encouraging them to take timely action, and enabling them to do as much as possible for themselves to save the trees. And since our founding in 2009, we've made steady progress in all these areas.*

*But the 2012 Cox award and the funds it provided gave us a quantum leap forward by:*

- Raising visibility of the hemlock cause as well as recognition of and respect for the work of Save Georgia's Hemlocks;*
- Attracting new donors, members and volunteers, including a growing number of young people who will become our future environmental leaders;*
- Opening doors to new partnerships with more community and conservation groups; and*
- Directly supporting some of our key educational and service initiatives.*

*For example, our Hemlock Help Line has experienced a substantial increase in call volume this year, with calls coming from as far away as New England, the upper mid-west, the Pacific north-west, and even Canada.*

*Our membership and volunteer core have grown nicely, particularly among the younger set, and individual donors have been very generous to us.*

*We now have formal agreements with the U. S. Forest Service and the Wildlife Management Division of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, enabling us to work with them to treat hemlocks in on public lands. Four large projects were in hemlock conservation areas of the national forest. For seventeen*

*In all, we treated and saved about 5,600 hemlocks on 31 hemlock treatment projects; some of these were We purchased and donated the treatment product to treat and save about 5600 hemlocks in the beautiful Cartecay tract of the Rich Mountain Wildlife Management Area. And all the labor was provided for free by volunteers, including a generous amount of work by our good friends in the Mountain Stewards. Thank you, Don Wells!*

*We trained 53 new Facilitators, bringing our total to almost 200 in Georgia, Tennessee, North Carolina, and Alabama. Facilitators are volunteers who can advise people in their community on how to save their hemlocks and help them get started; help property owner associations plan and execute neighborhood-wide hemlock projects; and work on hemlock treatment projects on public lands.*

*So far, we have used about half of our \$10,000 Cox funds in these endeavors this year and have some solidly worthwhile plans for the remainder next year, such as expansion of our Hemlock Help Program into additional north Georgia counties; outreach to and partnership with more young people, professional sectors, and other conservation organizations; and an increased emphasis on research and citizen participation.*

*On behalf of Save Georgia's Hemlocks, the people we serve, the trees themselves and everything that depends on them, I want to thank the Cox Conserves Heroes program, Channel 2 WSB-TV, and the Trust for Public Lands for the faith you have shown in us and for the opportunity you've given us to grow in service to this great community.*