



Save Georgia's Hemlocks

1/17/10 Meeting Notes

Our first Annual Meeting was held Sunday, January 17 at 4:00 p.m. at the home of Donna Shearer, 37 Woody Bend, Dahlonega. The meeting was open to all interested parties. In attendance: Bob Pledger, Jimmie and Andy Walters, Rob Strangia, Louis Belline, Mary McClendon, Wendell Snow, Scott McBride, Don Roberts, Dave Teffeteller, and Donna and Mark Shearer.

Review of Accomplishments and Financial Condition for 2009 (ending 11/30/09)

We are pleased to present our first Annual Report. What a busy and exciting year 2009 turned out to be, with the level of awareness about our threatened hemlocks rising to an all-time high and so many wonderful people coming forward to join the battle to save them! The hemlocks raise their branches in thanks!

Bold Beginnings

When we began our efforts in July 2009 as a tiny group of concerned citizens, we set a large goal – to serve all of north Georgia wherever the hemlock woolly adelgid in a serious threat. Our established objectives for the Hemlock Help for Homeowners Program were to:

- **Educate** – Enhance public awareness of the hemlock woolly adelgid problem and the available controls;
- **Enable** – Ensure easy access to information, advice, low-cost solutions, and direct assistance for homeowners without significantly increasing the customer service load on local public agencies; and
- **Encourage** – Establish a clear understanding of the aesthetic, economic, and environmental reasons for homeowners to take timely and effective action to save their hemlocks.

Steady Growth through Action

Since then, we've gathered a talented Board and been joined by over 700 hemlock friends and partner organizations from all over north Georgia who are spreading the word, taking care of their own trees and helping their neighbors do the same, and providing invaluable support in the forms of money, time, energy, expertise, and encouragement. The Hemlock Help for Homeowners program has been implemented in 7 counties, and the Hemlock Help Line plus our 16 trained Facilitators have helped over 400 homeowners and groups working to save their hemlocks. See page 2 for activity snapshot.

Responsible Financial Management

Based on a commitment to excellence and best practices for nonprofits and a tremendous respect for the generosity of our supporters in these challenging times, we have managed our resources very carefully. We finished the 2009 fiscal year with a respectable record of 10.39% for administrative expenses and 89.61% for educational and charitable program spending. As we have no paid officers or staff, most the administrative overhead was for start-up fees for required state and federal registrations. Our application for 501(c)3 nonprofit status with the IRS has been submitted and should be approved soon. See page 2 for financial condition.

Proactive Plans for the Future

The next two years are likely to be the “tipping point” years for hemlock in Georgia, and there is much to do! With the adelgid's prolific reproduction rate and the limited financial and manpower resources facing public land managers, the hemlocks are at a major disadvantage, and private property owners will be an important key to their very survival. Here are the highlights of our 2010 plans.

- **3 more counties** this spring
- **More clinics** in each new/established county
- **More presentations** to concerned groups
- **More Facilitator training** in each county
- **More services**, including customized neighbor-hood hemlock help planning and sapling planting
- **More volunteer opportunities** for residents and non-residents alike

Activity Snapshot as of 11/30/09*

- Implemented Hemlock Help program in 7 north Georgia counties in first 9 weeks of operation
- Launched web site in first week of operation
- Conducted or facilitated 11 Hemlock Help Clinics in 6 counties with 322 attendees
- Gave 2 additional presentations to 300 adults from all over the southeast
- Gave 2 educational presentations to 50 middle school and 25 high school kids and their teachers
- Conducted 2 Facilitator Training programs with 17 trainees from 4 Georgia counties plus Tennessee
- Handled almost 400 calls on Hemlock Help Line
- Helped over 400 homeowners and groups working to save their Hemlocks
- Treated two properties on a totally charitable basis (free labor and chemicals) because of financial need
- Published 7 articles in 13 north Georgia newspapers, newsletters, and magazines
- Conducted 4 radio interviews
- Logged over 900 volunteer hours, including Board and Facilitator hours
- Gained 26 partner organizations and 700 hemlock friends
- Assembled a talented Board of Directors, completed incorporation with GA Secretary of State's Office, and filed application for tax-exempt status with the IRS
- Achieved a use-of-resources ratio of 90% for educational and charitable program activities combined and 10% for administrative overhead (primarily initial fees for county, state, and federal filings)

Financial Condition as of 11/30/09*

Income	Educational Program Spending	Charitable Service Program Spending	Administrative Expense	Total Expenses	Account Balance
\$2,973.83	\$1,494.02	\$345.90	\$213.35	\$2,053.27	\$920.56
	72.76%	16.85%	10.39%		

*The fiscal year for Save Georgia's Hemlocks is December 1 to November 30. Financial details are available upon request.

Program Expansion

In spring 2010, we plan to implement the Hemlock Help for Homeowners in Murray County and also hope to do so in Pickens and Whitfield Counties to stay on the leading edge of the HWA infestation. This will include the placement of additional soil injectors and identification of additional local vendors for the treatment products.

Free public Hemlock Help Clinics will be held and Facilitator training will be offered in each new county as it is implemented. We will schedule more Clinics during the spring and fall for counties that already have the Hemlock Help program to increase awareness and enable more homeowners to save their hemlocks.

Internal Education

We will continue to seek and share information on the spread of the HWA problem, efficacy and methods of chemical treatment protocols, progress of ongoing biological control programs, and new areas of experimental research being conducted by universities and other scientific organizations. In the spring and fall, there will be refresher training for current Facilitators to stay up-to-date and several sessions of new Facilitator training to increase the availability of on-site neighbor-to-neighbor help. In addition, board members will be encouraged to participate in various nonprofit board training to enhance our effectiveness and adherence to best practices.

External Outreach

Recognizing the great wealth of energy, interest, and talent represented in other organizations, we are planning to increase our partner outreach to neighborhood associations, gardening and conservation communities, recreational and hospitality groups, real estate and other businesses, and social/civic institutions such as schools, churches, scouts, and local governments. We will do this through targeted communications, group presentations, local service projects, and neighborhood hemlock help planning assistance. We will also publicize service and support opportunities for resident and non-resident stakeholders alike to be part of the solution for our public forests, state parks, trails, and historic sites.

Financial Resources

Because of the volunteer nature and cost-efficient methods of our efforts, our financial needs are relatively modest. However, to ensure that we have the necessary resources to do the current work at hand and position ourselves for greater service in the future, the board will develop a funding plan to draw increased financial and functional support from a broader community base of individuals and organizations.

To date, all of our financial resources have come from voluntary individual and group contributions, and we have conducted no focused fund-raising programs. Expenditures have been predominantly for educational and service-related purposes, with a small percentage going for required state and federal registrations and applications (including filing for 501(c)3 status with the IRS in December 2009).

Our 2010 financial plan will identify specific mission-related functions and projects that require funding, the sources from which support is most likely available, and the best methods for seeking it following IRS approval of 501(c)3 status. The plan will also include a strategy for sharing our resources charitably with others in support of common goals.