

## **Announcement – Hemlock Help for Public Lands**

### ***From Hemlock Happenings – Spring 2012***

We are delighted to announce that a Challenge Cost Share Agreement has been established between the U. S. Forest Service and Save Georgia's Hemlocks to allow SGH-trained Facilitators to treat hemlocks in designated Hemlock Conservation Areas (HCAs) of the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest. Brian Jackson and Jim Wentworth of the USFS worked closely with us during the past 4 months to craft the agreement, and we very much appreciate their guidance and collaborative spirit.

### ***From press release submitted 5-10-12***

Since the hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA) first arrived in Georgia in 2003, it has been spreading steadily west and south across the state. Counties that have been infested the longest are now experiencing massive hemlock mortality, and more recently infested areas are seeing a marked increase in the speed and severity of HWA damage. With this acceleration of infestation, combined with the vast number of acres and hemlocks in the national forest and the constraints of limited resources, the U. S. Forest Service has been and continues to be engaged in a valiant but uphill battle to maintain and restore ecosystem and watershed health and resilience, protect key natural resources, and address water quality and riparian area protection and restoration.

However, a new partnership between the Forest Service (USFS) and Save Georgia's Hemlocks (SGH) has recently been established in the form of a Challenge Cost Share Agreement that will provide additional manpower to accomplish hemlock treatment in designated hemlock conservation areas. The goal is to work collaboratively for the hemlock preservation effort and utilize trained SGH volunteers (referred to as Facilitators) to supplement USFS personnel in carrying out the "boots on the ground" work.

Without this partnership, many more hemlocks would be lost, and the environmental and economic health of the region would suffer. With it, more hemlocks will be saved to continue performing their vital role as a keystone species. And the benefits will extend to wildlife and woodland plants that rely on hemlock habitat, trout populations that need the cool clean water of hemlock-lined streams, tourism and recreation industries that depend on a healthy beautiful mountain environment, individuals and local governments that derive income from these activities, and all those who live, work, and visit in our north Georgia communities.

"For Save Georgia's Hemlocks, a 100% volunteer 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to saving endangered hemlocks through education and charitable service, the agreement offers an opportunity to more fully achieve our goal of serving both private property owners and public land managers in tangible ways," commented Donna Shearer, SGH chairman. She went on to say, "It is a step that many people in the community have long hoped for and are applauding the USFS for taking."

After the first USFS-SGH project in April 2012 in which a dozen trained volunteers treated or retreated 180 hemlocks in the Wolf Creek hemlock conservation area, Shearer said, "For me personally, and I believe for our Facilitators as well, this partnership creates an increased sense of engagement and meaningful contribution, a heightened awareness of the tremendous effort and dedication of those who have gone before, and a deep conviction of the rightness and privilege of paying it forward for those who will follow."

### ***Update as of October 2012***

Wolf Creek HCA treated in April 2012  
Long Creek Falls HCA treated in June 2012  
Noontootla HCA treated in September 2012  
Helton Creek Falls HCA to be re-treated in November 2012

Trained Facilitators and "newbies" alike are welcome to participate in joint SGH-Forest Service hemlock treatment projects. Anyone who is new to the treatment process will be provided on-site instruction and will be part of a work team that includes one or more experienced volunteers. All treatment projects are done under the direct supervision of Save Georgia's Hemlocks in compliance with the rules and regulations of the U. S. Forest Service.

**Volunteers must register in advance.** Call 706-429-8010 or e-mail [donna@savegeorgiashemlocks.org](mailto:donna@savegeorgiashemlocks.org).