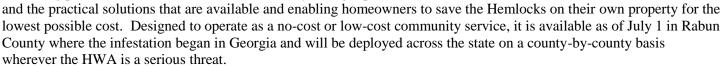**Press Release – July 1, 2009**

HELP IS HERE FOR RABUN HEMLOCKS!

The Hemlocks in north Georgia are being threatened by a spreading infestation of the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA), an invasive insect native to Asia with no local natural predator. Hemlock stands are among the only old growth forests in the east and are of great importance to wildlife, water quality, local economy, and basic quality of life.

The bad news is that if appropriate action is not taken soon, almost all of these magnificent trees will die within the next 10 years. The good news is that SAVE GEORGIA'S HEMLOCKS, a recently formed nonprofit organization, is offering a new program of education and charitable service to help homeowners all across north Georgia manage the health of their Hemlocks against the Woolly Adelgid.

The HEMLOCK HELP FOR HOMEOWNERS program focuses on enhancing public awareness of the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid problem and the practical solutions that are available and enabling homeowners to save the Hemlocks on their own property for the lowest possible cost. Designed to operate as a no-cost or low-cost community service, it is available as of July 1 in Rabun County where the infestation began in Georgia and will be deployed across the state on a county-by-county basis wherever the HWA is a serious threat.

Homeowners can call the Hemlock Help Line (706-429-8010) with their Hemlock questions and receive accurate, up-to-date information and advice. For individuals interested in the do-it-yourself option, the Hemlock Help Line can provide information on borrowing a soil injector (in Rabun County it is available through the UGA Extension Office), advice on purchasing the treatment product economically, and instructions on the treatment procedure. For those who prefer to contract with a licensed professional to treat their trees, the Hemlock Help Line can supply a list of qualified local companies specializing in saving Hemlocks along with their average rate structure.

The public is invited to a free Hemlock clinic sponsored by SAVE GEORGIA'S HEMLOCKS for information on the threat to our Hemlocks and how to recognize it, the options for saving these valuable trees, and the help that is available through the HEMLOCK HELP FOR HOMEOWNERS program. It will be held on Saturday, July 11 at 10 a.m. at the UGA Extension Office, 41 Jo Dotson Circle, Suite 1 in Clayton, Georgia.

If you have Hemlocks that may be in danger, SAVE GEORGIA'S HEMLOCKS urges you to call the Hemlock Help Line (706-429-8010). Please don't wait.