



NEWS FROM THE FOREST

A FRIENDS OF THE CHEROKEE NATIONAL FOREST NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2025

A Message from our Executive Director: Mark Healey



As we close the chapter on 2024, I am pleased to reflect on a successful year for Friends of the Cherokee National Forest. Our membership campaign has gained remarkable momentum, fostering a community of dedicated supporters who share our vision for the preservation and enjoyment of the Cherokee National Forest. Your commitment makes our work possible, and for that, we are truly grateful.

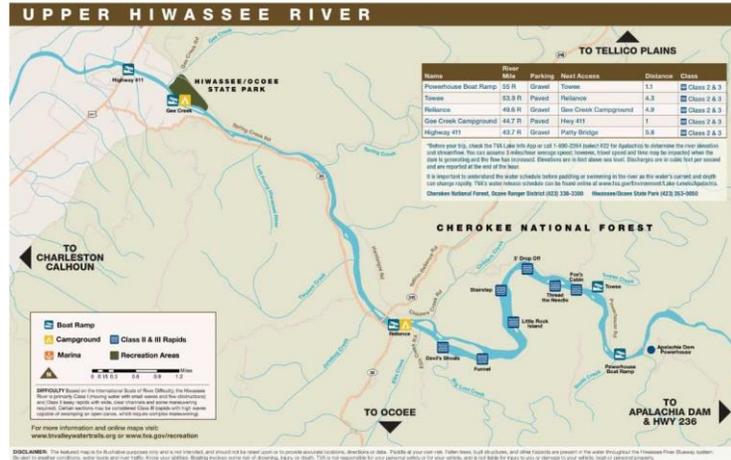
In this issue we discuss our current and upcoming initiatives and details about our first successful grant application, as well as hard truths about the Forest Service budget and why Friends of the Cherokee National Forest is therefore a vital organization. We also share fun facts about the Cherokee National Forest and provide you with information on how you can win a kayak of your choice. (up to \$1700 in value)!

We invite you to connect with us on social media, where we share updates, events, educational content and more.

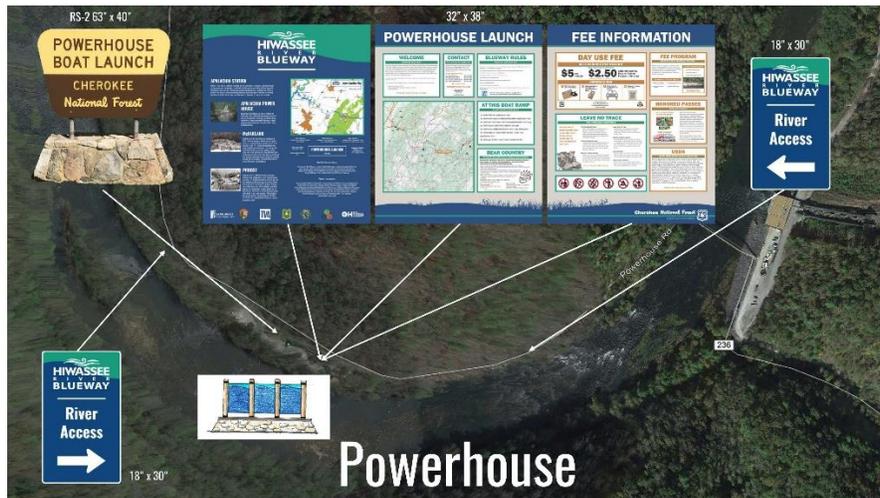
Looking ahead to 2025, we anticipate even more growth and engagement. With plans for additional festivals, a larger Firefly Festival and Art Auction, and new projects across the forest, we are excited about what the year will bring. Thank you for being part of our journey, and together, let's make 2025 our best year yet!

Feedback is welcome! Please feel free to share your ideas or thoughts with me at info@focnf.org.

HIWASSEE BLUEWAY SIGNAGE PROJECT



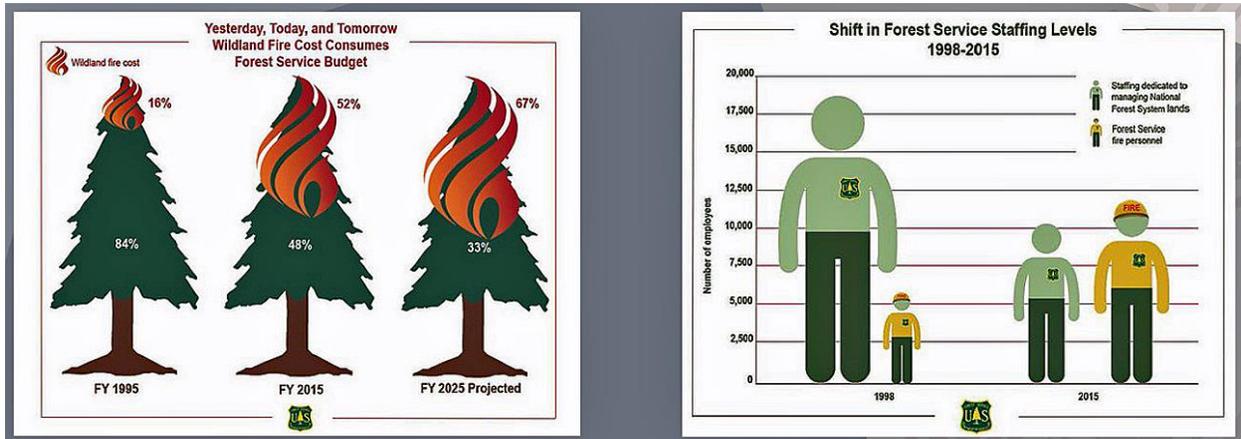
With generous support from Chattanooga's Lyndhurst Foundation, we are installing signage at the Powerhouse boat ramp along the Hiwassee River, in Polk County, TN. This marks the first of four river access sites needing signage in the upper Hiwassee Blueway. Upon completing the Powerhouse site, we will seek further funding to address the remaining sites.



Launched in 2015, the Hiwassee Blueway initiative enhances recreational access, tourism, and conservation along the river. Spanning from Blythe Ferry to the Powerhouse boat ramp, it connects several Tennessee counties and encourages activities like kayaking, fishing, and hiking. This collaborative effort aims to promote sustainable tourism and economic growth while prioritizing environmental conservation.

Standardized signage is crucial for establishing a unique sense of place, enhancing visitor experiences, and providing clear navigation and safety across the Blueway. It highlights the area's cultural and environmental identity, boosting brand recognition and tourism. By fostering community pride and engagement, the project also ensures the Blueway remains a cherished destination for future generations.

WHY DOES THE FOREST SERVICE NEED OUR HELP?



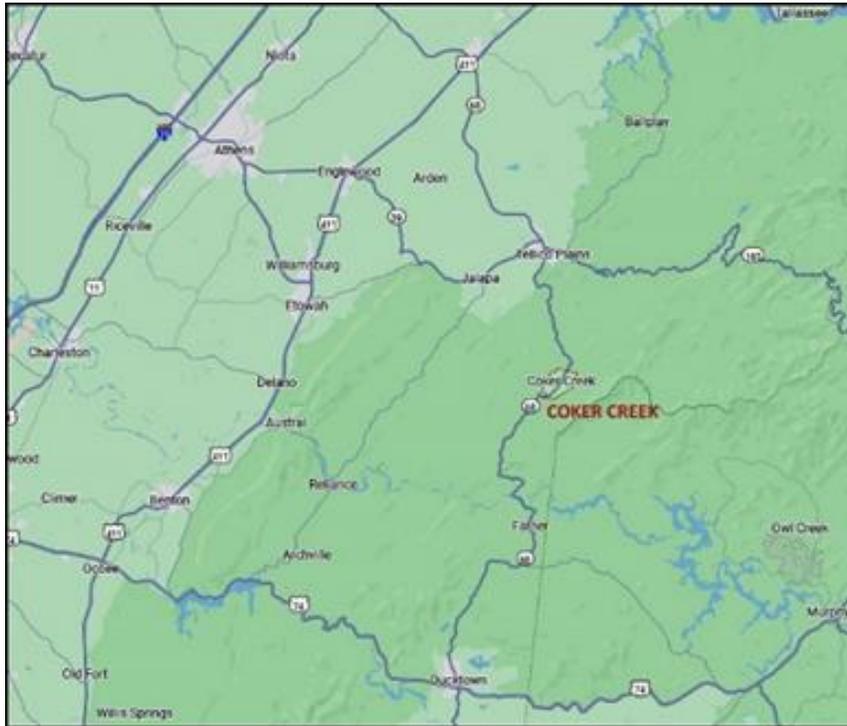
The Forest Service is currently navigating a significant budget crisis that has been developing over many years, extending beyond the current administration. Over recent decades, the costs associated with combating increasingly severe and frequent wildfires have increased dramatically. These escalating expenses have dominated the Forest Service's budget, steadily eroding the resources available for all other non-fire programs such as cultural resource preservation, invasive species management, and the maintenance of trails and facilities.

Although the overall budget for the Forest Service has seen modest increases to account for inflation, funds allocated to non-fire-related programs have steadily decreased. While fire management efforts have expanded to address the escalating intensity and frequency of wildfires nationwide, other vital programs have faced difficult choices due to shrinking financial support. These choices include not filling vacant positions, expecting remaining employees to take on more and more responsibilities, reducing service offerings, and relying more heavily on volunteers.

While solutions are indeed on the horizon, they are yet to be realized. In the meantime, the need for organizations like the Friends of the Cherokee National Forest to engage as conservation partners has never been greater. We can provide extra funding and volunteers to programs that are not receiving enough funding but are nonetheless very important to folks like you. We kindly urge current members to renew their support and welcome new members who share our commitment to our mission. Join us at www.focnf.org to renew or contribute as a member. Your support is invaluable. Thank you.

DID YOU KNOW? (FUN FACTS)

The community of Coker Creek, located within Monroe County on the southern half of the Cherokee National Forest, holds a fascinating historical and cultural legacy. Originally inhabited by the Cherokee people, this area was vital for hunting and trade. The historic Unicoi Turnpike, originally a Native American trading path, facilitated trade and migration through the region. In 1827, it became the site of Tennessee's first gold rush, drawing prospectors long before the California Gold Rush.



Visit Coker Creek in Monroe County, TN

Coker Creek is also linked to the Trail of Tears, as it was part of the route taken during the forced relocation of the Cherokee in the 1830s. Today, this charming community attracts visitors with its outdoor recreation opportunities, including gold panning, hiking, and fishing, while also preserving its rich heritage through events and local initiatives. Discover the beauty and history of Coker Creek—where nature and culture intertwine!

KAYAK RAFFLE

Do you or someone you know want a new kayak, canoe, or standup-paddleboard?



Announcing Friends of the Cherokee National Forest's First Annual

Just in Time for Spring Kayak Raffle

In partnership with River Sports Outfitters in Knoxville, Tennessee, Friends of the Cherokee National Forest is excited to offer

THE BOAT OF YOUR CHOICE* (*maximum raffle payout value is \$1,700)
from River Sports Outfitters' broad selection of manufacturers.

Drawing to be held on February 21, 2025, at 5:30 pm.

10 chances for \$10

25 chances for \$20

75 chances for \$50

175 chances for \$100

Don't live near River Sports Outfitters in Knoxville, TN? No problem! We'll arrange delivery of your new boat.

To purchase chances to win, visit <https://go.rallyup.com/d49cfl> or scan the QR code below.



CURRENT AND UPCOMING INITIATIVES

- **Guided Birding and Wildflower Walks:** Beginning this fall, explore the wonders of nature with our new guided Birding and Wildflower Walks! Watch our website for details coming soon!
- **2nd Annual Firefly Festival:** Located in Greene County, on the Unaka Ranger District, this year's festival will be larger, welcoming more participants, and is set for June 20th and 21st. Participation will be determined through an application and lottery system. Applications are expected to open around March 1st. Stay updated and be among the first to apply by following us on Facebook and Instagram.
- **2nd Annual Art Auction and Benefit:** Plans are underway to host another successful art auction, with this year's event scheduled for May 21st. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram for more details and updates.
- **Recreational Site Improvements:** Proceeds from last year's firefly festival and art auction are being used to replace signage and enhance the trail bed at the Dillard's Ponds site in Greene County.
- **Hiwassee Blueway:** Funding has been provided by the Lyndhurst foundation to install new directional and interpretive signage at the Powerhouse boat ramp along the Hiwassee River. If all goes well, additional funding could be provided to do the same at three other river access points.
- **Sign Maintenance:** There are many Forest Service signs across the forest that are missing or in need of some TLC. We intend to work closely with the Forest Service to identify the highest priority needs and secure funding to deliver results.
- **River Cane Restoration:** The Forest Service has plans to restore native river cane to nine acres site, adjacent to Childers Creek along the Hiwassee River in Polk County. If all goes to plan, this Fall, we intend to contribute to this effort by participating in the planting of approximately one thousand River cane plugs. Volunteers will be needed!
- **Cultural Resources Preservation:** More work is planned to preserve the cultural resources at Paint Rock, adjacent to the French Broad River in Cocke County. We are actively pursuing funding to support this very important work.
- **Trail Cleanup Hikes:** Coming soon, join us for one of our Trail Cleanup Hikes. Meet fellow nature enthusiasts and give back to the trails we love. Let's leave it better than we found it!
- **Nonnative & Invasive Species Management:** We intend to make this an annual initiative at multiple locations across the forest.

- **Trail Maintenance:** Forest Service leadership and managers have asked us to please help them maintain their extensive network of trails. We plan to make this call to action a key focus of our work and have begun developing a signature trails maintenance initiative similar to the Friends of the Smokies, 'Trails Forever' initiative.

INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING?

Email Mark Healey at mark@focnf.org and let us know of your interests.

JOIN OUR COMMUNITY ON FACEBOOK

We're excited to announce that our new Facebook page is live! Connect with us to stay updated on the latest news, events, and exclusive content. Join our growing community today and never miss an update!

Friends of the Cherokee National forest at: [\(20+\) Facebook](#)

MEMBERSHIP

\$35 – Footpath

- ✓ Mary Alton
- ✓ Mike Baker
- ✓ Adam Bean
- ✓ Tim Bigelow
- ✓ Nicka Boone
- ✓ Shane Boyd
- ✓ Andrea Buzeta
- ✓ Alisa Cahill
- ✓ Kayla Carter
- ✓ Rosemary Clark
- ✓ Kristen & Rich Colwell
- ✓ Liz Cutrone
- ✓ Billie Davis
- ✓ Curtis Dush
- ✓ Walt Evans
- ✓ Mark Haugli
- ✓ Adriana Hernandez
- ✓ Tammy Karsten
- ✓ Leslie King
- ✓ Lynn McPhail
- ✓ Katherine Medlock
- ✓ Judy Nowotarski
- ✓ Sam H. Oldham
- ✓ Jenny Rogers
- ✓ Mark Shipley
- ✓ Bryant Swafford
- ✓ Jeff Taylor
- ✓ Stephen Wilham
- ✓ Lewis Clark Wolfe

\$50 – Acorn

- ✓ Buck Adams
- ✓ Ellis Bacon
- ✓ Parker Bunch
- ✓ Michael Byers
- ✓ John Coburn-Lowery
- ✓ Jim Dunn & Brian
- ✓ Randal Bryand
- ✓ Paul & Gayle Edwards
- ✓ Samuel Evans
- ✓ Becca Godwin
- ✓ Brenda Harris
- ✓ Ken Hill
- ✓ Jim & Nita Johnston
- ✓ Larry & Roseanne Killen
- ✓ Ed McAlister
- ✓ Joanne & Rober Mitchell
- ✓ Barbara Muhlbeier
- ✓ John Pegram

- ✓ Ezra Phillips
- ✓ Will Skelton
- ✓ Clare Sullivan
- ✓ Ed Sullivan
- ✓ Brent Tenney
- ✓ Gerald Thornton
- ✓ Donna White-Dropkin

\$100 – Wildlife

- ✓ Everette Aldridge
- ✓ Sheila Ashe
- ✓ Leslie Auriemmo
- ✓ Margaret & Jack Callahan
- ✓ Michael Callaway
- ✓ Simone Canclini
- ✓ Matthew Cook
- ✓ Donna Gaines
- ✓ Marie Spaeder Haas
- ✓ John & Emma Jane Haile
- ✓ Ruth Healey
- ✓ Susanne Herceg
- ✓ Tom & Becky Jackson
- ✓ Marci Spencer
- ✓ Joe Stamper
- ✓ Nancy Watts

\$250 – River

- ✓ Kim Armand
- ✓ Wallis Goodman
- ✓ Paul & Ty Hotsinpiller
- ✓ Haskell Matheny
- ✓ William & Connally Penley
- ✓ Stephen & Candy Scoggins
- ✓ Mary Ruth & Pat Younger

\$500 – Woodland

- ✓ Tania M. Dirks
- ✓ Dr. Michelle Evans
- ✓ Randal Graham
- ✓ Zack Ridder

\$1,000 – Forest

- ✓ Bill & Tracy Frist
- ✓ Ben Keyser & Ken Cagle
- ✓ Daniel Hurst
- ✓ Melissa Woody

\$2,500 – Vista

- ✓ Mark Healey

BUSINESS & CORPORATE
SPONSORSHIP

\$250 – River

ORVIS

\$500



Wild Birds Unlimited
Nature Shop

\$2,500



GREENE COUNTY PARTNERSHIP
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

\$5,000



Thank you for reading and watch for our next News from the Forest newsletter, in July.