



NEWS FROM THE FOREST

A FRIENDS OF THE CHEROKEE NATIONAL FOREST NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2024

A Message from our Executive Director: Mark Healey



We're excited to be up and running! Since launching our new website last November, we've hit the ground running with our membership drive. This marks a significant milestone for us. After two years of careful planning and building a strong foundation, we're thrilled to move into this next chapter. Thank you all for joining Friends of the Cherokee. We greatly appreciate your support!

Our mission is clear: to deliver results that benefit both the Forest and our members. The Board and I are dedicated to growing our expertise and pursuing innovative projects to achieve this. Our plans include developing projects that:

- ✚ **Enhance the Visitor Experience:** We'll maintain and improve recreational facilities and trails, making the Forest even more enjoyable for all.
- ✚ **Protect Our Natural Treasures:** We're committed to supporting the Cherokee National Forest's wildlife and fisheries habitat conservation work.
- ✚ **Inspire the Next Generation:** We'll offer educational and interpretive programs that highlight the Forest's natural and cultural wonders, with a special focus on engaging both young people and our members.

We want you involved! As members, you're a vital part of our mission, and we want to ensure your voices are heard. This newsletter is one way we'll keep you informed about our activities, upcoming plans, and news from the Cherokee National Forest. We're excited to share this first issue with you!

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

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Despite being a young organization, we have already started to make a difference.



- **Conservation Education:** We're thrilled to have sponsored Sweetwater School District's 4th graders at this year's 'Eco Days' on the Tellico Ranger District. Over 130 students got to spend a day immersed in nature, learning about the wonders of the Cherokee National Forest and the vital work done by the Forest Service and its partners to manage these incredible resources.
- **Cultural Resources Preservation:** We're joining forces with the Forest Service's Heritage Program to safeguard the cultural treasures of the Paint Rock area along the French Broad River. Our recent donation of a high-resolution camera equips them to begin a comprehensive inventory and documentation of these important resources. Stay tuned for more from us as we continue to support these efforts.
- **Tellico Trout Festival:** Despite the uncooperative weather and a slight dip in attendance compared to previous years, our booth at the event attracted a good number of visitors. We shared news about our organization and raffled off a fly-fishing rod generously donated by our local Orvis outfitters.



This year's Tellico Trout Festival Raffle Winner!

- **National Trails Day:** This year, we were proud supporters of the National Trails Day trail maintenance event on the Tellico Ranger District. Friends of the Cherokee National Forest volunteers joined others from the Southern Appalachian Back Country Horsemen, the

Cherokee Hiking Club, the Benton MacKaye Trail Association, the McMinn Saddle Club, and the Tellico Ranger District staff for this annual event.



Participants enjoying the evening and waiting for the sun to set at the Firefly Festival.

- **1st Annual Greene County Firefly Festival:** This year, we were truly honored to be invited by the Greene County Partnership to collaborate and help make their first annual event a success. The inaugural Greene County Partnership's Firefly Festival, held on two Saturday evenings in early June, featured an incredible light show that dazzled participants and left everyone in awe! The donated proceeds from this year's event and Art Auction will be used to enhance signage, benches, and handicapped accessibility at the Dillard Ponds recreation area.

WHAT WE ARE PLANNING

- **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!
- **Expanded Firefly Festival:** We are planning to continue to collaborate with the Greene County Partnership to expand the Greeneville Firefly Festival in 2025, adding capacity and activities so that more people can enjoy this amazing experience.
- **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!
- **Cultural Resources Preservation:** More work is planned to preserve the cultural resources at Paint Rock. We aim to support these efforts by providing grant funding and assisting with public education initiatives.
- **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.
 - To jumpstart our trail maintenance efforts, we're partnering with the Southeast Conservation Corps, cosponsoring a trail crew next year and in 2026. The Southeast Conservation Corps empowers local youth and young adults through hands-on

conservation projects, restoring ecosystems and building future environmental stewards.

➤ **Childers Creek on the Hiwassee River:**

- **Signage:** The project area is included in the Hiwassee Blueway Initiative. The Forest Service has plans to install new signage as part of this initiative. They have the signs on hand but need help getting them installed. We hope to raise funds to help complete this task.
- **River cane:** Where Childers Creek meets the Hiwassee River, there is an area of approximately nine that already includes small patches of native river cane. The Forest Service has plans to restore native river cane to the entire nine acres. River cane, once forming vast canebrakes, is a vital but threatened part of the Southeast's ecology. It stabilizes streambanks, filters water, and provides habitat for wildlife. For the Cherokee people, river cane has immense cultural value, serving as a cornerstone of their traditional way of life. This Fall, we will contribute to this effort by participating in the planting of approximately 1000 River cane plugs. Volunteers will be needed for this effort.

- **Nonnative & Invasive Species Management:** We plan to enhance visuals and restore native habitat in the Weavers Bend area along the French Broad River by controlling nonnative and invasive species.

HOW YOU CAN HELP:

- ✓ **Seeking Volunteers** - to sign up, contact our Executive Director at mark@focnf.org.
 - Help restore valuable habitat along the Hiwassee River. Sign up to plant river cane plugs this Fall.
 - Calling all birding and wildflower enthusiasts! Lead guided walks and share your passion with nature lovers.
 - Make a real difference! Join our passionate volunteer leadership team at Friends of the Cherokee National Forest. Your talent and dedication will help us achieve great things together.
- ✓ **Fundraising:** Your support makes a difference! We couldn't do it without you!
 - A heartfelt thank you to our amazing members and friends! Your membership is critical to our success. Consider increasing your support or making a one-time donation to projects that resonate with you.
 - Friends don't let friends miss out! Help us spread the word about our mission and new organization. Tell your family, friends, and colleagues.
 - We wouldn't be here without amazing partners! A huge thank you to our generous corporate and organizational sponsors. Learn more about them on our website.
 - Securing grants to fuel our mission! We're actively seeking funding from regional foundations who share our passion for conservation.
 - Support us in style! Stay tuned for the launch of our online store, where you can find ways to show your love for the Cherokee National Forest.
 - Bid for a cause! Watch out for upcoming auctions like the Greeneville Partnership's Firefly Festival Art Auction, benefiting Friends of the Cherokee National Forest.
 - Win big while doing good! Keep an eye out for exciting raffles with awesome prizes, supporting your conservation efforts.

Friends and Partners

\$35 – Footpath

- ✓ Mary Alton
- ✓ Leslie Auriemmo
- ✓ Mike Baker
- ✓ Adam Bean
- ✓ Nicka Boone
- ✓ Shane Boyd
- ✓ Andrea Buzeta
- ✓ Alisa Cahill
- ✓ Kayla Carter
- ✓ Rosemary Clark
- ✓ Liz Cutrone
- ✓ Billie Davis
- ✓ Curtis Dush
- ✓ Mark Haugli
- ✓ Ruth Healey
- ✓ Adriana Hernandez
- ✓ Tammy Karsten
- ✓ Lynn McPhail
- ✓ Katherine Medlock
- ✓ Judy Nowotarski
- ✓ Jenny Rogers
- ✓ Bryant Swafford
- ✓ Jeff Taylor
- ✓ Stephen Wilham
- ✓ Lewis Clark Wolfe

\$50 – Acorn

- ✓ Buck Adams
- ✓ Parker Bunch
- ✓ Michael Byers
- ✓ John Coburn-Lowery
- ✓ Jim Dunn & Brian
- ✓ Paul & Gayle Edwards
- ✓ Samuel Evans
- ✓ Brenda Harris
- ✓ Jim & Nita Johnston
- ✓ Larry & Roseanne Killen
- ✓ Joanne & Rober Mitchell
- ✓ John Pegram
- ✓ Ezra Phillips
- ✓ Will Skelton
- ✓ Clare Sullivan
- ✓ Brent Tenney
- ✓ Donna White-Dropkin

\$100 – Wildlife

- ✓ Everette Aldridge
- ✓ Sheila Ashe
- ✓ Margaret & Jack Callahan

- ✓ Simone Canclini
- ✓ Matthew Cook
- ✓ Donna Gaines
- ✓ Wallis Goodman
- ✓ Marie Spaeder Haas
- ✓ John & Emma Jane Haile
- ✓ Susanne Herceg
- ✓ Marci Spencer
- ✓ Joe Stamper

\$250 – River

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

ORVIS

\$500 – Woodland

- ✓ Tania M. Dirks
- ✓ Dr. Michelle Evans



\$1,000 – Forest

- ✓ Anonymous Donor
- ✓ Ben Keyser & Ken Cagle
- ✓ Melissa Woody

\$2,500 – Vista

- ✓ Mark Healey



\$5,000 – Landscape



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