

News from the Forest

July 2026

Friends of the Cherokee National Forest
supports conservation, recreation, and stewardship across the forest.
From rivers and trails to cherished recreation areas and critical wildlife habitats.



A Message from the Executive Director

Friends of the Cherokee National Forest continues to grow because of the people who believe in our mission. Executive Director Mark Healey reflects on the partnerships, volunteers, and shared vision that are helping build a stronger future for the Forest.

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Award-Winning Firefly Festival
Celebrates Nature, Community, and Conservation

The 3rd Annual Greene County Firefly Festival once again transformed the Cherokee National Forest into a place of wonder, welcoming sold-out crowds from across the country to experience one of nature's most remarkable spectacles. Visitors enjoyed educational programs, local art, food vendors, and breathtaking displays of synchronous and Blue Ghost fireflies beneath the night sky. Just days before the festival, Friends of the Cherokee National Forest and the Greene County Partnership were honored with the Northeast Tennessee Tourism Association's Partnership of the Year Award, recognizing the collaboration behind this award-winning event.

Read the full story and relive the magic.

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Building a Stronger Foundation for the Future

While conservation happens on the ground, important work is also taking place behind the scenes.

Friends of the Cherokee National Forest is strengthening its governance, financial systems, and organizational capacity to build a solid foundation for future growth and expanded conservation impact.

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Welcoming New Leadership

Friends of the Cherokee National Forest is pleased to welcome Jeff Leach and Leslie Morgan to its Board of Directors.

Bringing extensive leadership, conservation, and organizational experience, both have already begun helping strengthen the organization and advance its mission.

Read more about the newest members of the Friends leadership team.

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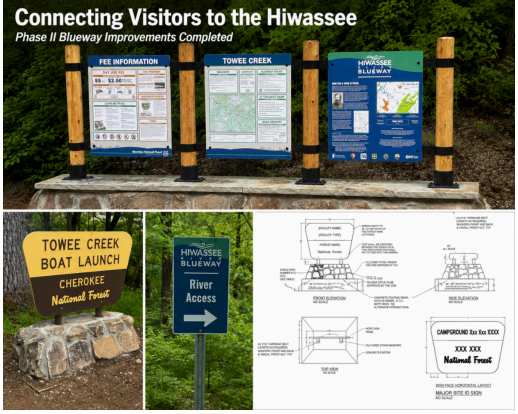
Connecting Visitors to the Hiwassee

New signage and visitor information are helping connect people to the Hiwassee Blueway like never before.

Discover how a partnership between Friends of the Cherokee National Forest, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Lyndhurst Foundation is improving recreation along this remarkable river corridor.



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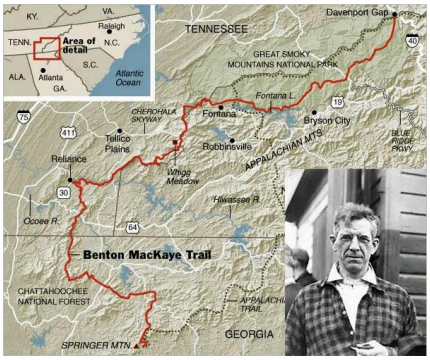

DID YOU KNOW? (FUN FACTS)

How One Man's Century-Old Dream Found New Life in the Cherokee National Forest

The Appalachian Trail may never have existed without the vision of Benton MacKaye. Decades later, volunteers brought his original dream to life by creating the Benton MacKaye Trail—a nearly 300-mile route that winds through some of the Cherokee National Forest's most spectacular and remote landscapes. Discover the remarkable story behind one of America's great conservation legacies.

Read on to get the whole story.

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Visit Our Online Store

Looking for an easy way to support Friends of the Cherokee National Forest? Visit our online store for shirts, stickers, maps, and other forest-inspired items featuring artwork and designs created just for our supporters.



👉 **Shop online at www.focnf.org**

New items and updates are added regularly, so check back often.

Interested in Volunteering?

Friends of the Cherokee National Forest is developing signature volunteer events on both the North and South Zones of the Forest and is looking for volunteers and volunteer leaders to help build these exciting new programs.

If you'd like to get involved, contact Leslie Morgan at lesliem@focnf.org or Mark Healey at mark@focnf.org



CIRCLE OF FRIENDS

Our Circle of Friends reflects the individuals, businesses, and organizations who help make this work possible. Read more to see those who supported Friends of the Cherokee National Forest this season.

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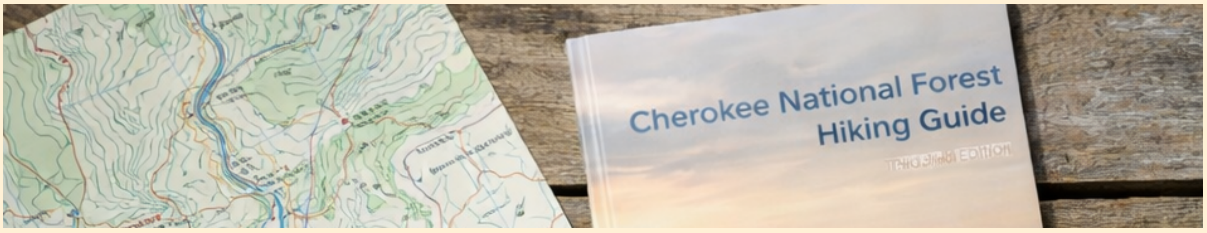
Donate Today at:

Become A Friend - Friends of the Cherokee National Forest



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