



ForestWatch Faces

Get to know the folks who make it happen

This web feature spotlights some of the special folks behind the scenes of Georgia ForestWatch. If you'd like to nominate someone for ForestWatch Faces, please contact our office by clicking the e-mail link below.

Meet Jim Walker: District Leader

Feeling that the big city (Atlanta) was getting way too crowded and stressful, in 1975 Jim and his wife Pat moved to the mountains on the east side of Gilmer County. There they built a cabin from poplar logs cut on their land. Living in the same place for 35 years has allowed Jim to observe in great detail how the forest slowly changes over time.

As a freelance translator (English to Russian) Jim sought excuses to get outside. Georgia ForestWatch was the ticket. He attended District Leader meetings for several years, enjoying the beer and pizza, before absorbing enough knowledge to feel he could make a significant contribution. By the time the Brawley Mountain Woodland Project came along in 2005, he was ready to play a key role in the team that wrote the very lengthy, comprehensive and persuasive comments on the original scoping notice and later on the Environmental Assessment. As a result, four years later, the Forest Service responded to ForestWatch's concerns, sparing hundreds of acres that had been slated to be cut, including some unusually nice, nearly old-growth hardwood forest.

Jim's motives for wanting to protect the forest are not only environmental but also moral and spiritual. He feels the conflict between life that is totally dependent on civilization and the call of the wilderness that is our home. Several years ago, while hiking the Benton MacKaye trail, in seven days he saw more bears than people on the trail. "I feel at home in the woods," he says, "but I understand that I can stay there only until my store-bought food runs out."

Nowadays, more of Jim's hiking is vertical. He likes to get high climbing trees—safely, with ropes. His goal is to climb big redwoods.

Thanks to Jim, Georgia ForestWatch is a little more fun, and the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests are a little more protected.

Want to give us feedback or suggestions? Call our office at 706-635-8733, or send an e-mail to info_at_gafw.org.