

# Notes for 1/7/24 SGH Leadership Team Meeting

*This quarterly Leadership Team meeting for Board Members, Officers, Program Manager, and Lead Facilitators was held at Dahlonga Chamber of Commerce, 342 Hill St., Dahlonga, GA, beginning at 1:00 p.m. Participants were Chris Curtin, Jonathan Micancin, Holly Cochran, Jim Wentworth, Buz Stone, Donna Shearer, Betty Larsen, Dave Teffeteller, Darrell Sheffield, John Shearouse, Jody Webb, John Shearouse, and Ray Lorenzi .Derrick Morris, Todd Jackson, Renee Gracon, Jimmy Stewart, Dara Sinclair, Nick Gardener, Kim Wood, Robert Patchett, Elliott Segall, Lee Higgins, Jim Heilman, Cary Allen, Bob Pledger, Jim Heilman, Alan Barnes, Kat Carey, Jon Jones and Al Battle were unable to attend.*

## BOARD MATTERS

Buz Stone called the meeting to order and took roll. Meeting notes from the 11/5/23 meeting were approved. The agenda for the 1/7/24 meeting was approved.

- **Award:** Buz announced that Donna Shearer and SGH received the Georgia Arborist Association White Oak Award in recognition of "demonstrated leadership, commitment, innovation, impact and sustainability in tree work." Donna, Buz, and Holly Cochran attended the GAA Awards Banquet on January 6 to accept the honor on behalf of SGH.
- **Personnel**
  - \* We are delighted to welcome Jody Webb back to fold after his absence due to the death of his wife. He has kindly agreed to serve as Membership Coordinator beginning in early spring.
  - \* Donna is updating our web site and will then hand that responsibility to one of our SGH members for ongoing maintenance.
  - \* She is preparing a new trainee to take over the responsibility of major repairs for our soil injectors and those of other owners. Holly, Jim and Jon will continue to do minor repairs.
- **Corporate Renewals**

During the month of January, Holly will:

  - \* Renew our corporate registration with the Georgia Secretary of State (reflecting our change of headquarters address)
  - \* Renew our live plant license with the Georgia Department of Agriculture
  - \* Obtain our 2024 business license in Gilmer County.
- **Major initiatives for 2024**
  - \* Newsletter and email distribution using MailChimp
  - \* Release of Chattooga paddling video
  - \* Several major planting projects
  - \* Joint projects with paddling community to treat hemlocks on the Chattooga River corridor
  - \* More corporate partnerships and involvement
  - \* Increased participation in our educational offerings
  - \* Effective outreach to the Atlanta area.

## ACTIVITY REVIEW OF 2023

### \* Progress Report through December 31, 2023

- All 19 HWA-infested Georgia counties in native hemlock range now served by our Hemlock Help Program
- Hemlock Help Line available 7 days a week with 477 calls handled
- 4 Hemlock Help Clinics with total of 30 attendees
- 3 Facilitator Training Workshops with total of 17 new Facilitators trained  
Total active Facilitators = 430 in Georgia and 94 in other states
- 8 Presentations for 150 adults
- 1 Hemlock Lesson for 222 students and 2 teachers
- 1 Customized training session for 11 volunteers and public land managers
- 14 Festivals with 88 volunteers and estimated 3,598 visitors
- 5 Articles / news items written by, with the assistance of, or about SGH published in newspapers/magazines
- 68 Facilitator visits made with charitable treatment of 7,600 trees
- 17 hemlock treatment projects with 275 volunteers treating 8,462 trees



- 2 sapling rescue projects with 12 volunteers, 125 saplings rescued and potted for use in educational / service activities or future adoption
- 141 hemlock saplings adopted; 68 saplings donated to schools, churches, nonprofits
- 5 hemlock sapling planting projects with 22 volunteers planting donated hemlocks
- 7 soil injectors repaired/refurbished
- Total of 5,327 volunteer hours logged

#### \* Fairs/Festivals 2023

| Date                          | Event                        | Participation  |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| March 2023                    | UNG Volunteer Fair           | 40 visitors, 2 volunteers, 8 combined volunteer hrs                      |
| Sat., Apr. 15 & Sun., Apr. 16 | Bear-on-the-Square           | 480 visitors, 25 trees adopted, 12 volunteers combined 87 volunteer hrs  |
| Wed., Apr. 19                 | UNG Gainesville Earth Day    | 89 visitors, 2 volunteers, 16 combined volunteer hrs                     |
| Sat., Apr. 29                 | Trout & Outdoor Adventures   | 370 visitors, 12 trees adopted, 10 volunteers, 45 combined volunteer hrs |
| Sun., May 28                  | LRA Memorial Day Meeting     | 100 visitors, 6 trees adopted, 1 volunteer, 3 hrs                        |
| Sat., Jun 17                  | Etowah Meadery, Dahlonega    | 40 visitors, 6 trees adopted, 2 volunteers, 8 combined volunteer hrs     |
| Sat., June 3 & Sat., July 1   | Blairsville Farmers Market   | 200 visitors, 13 trees adopted, 4 volunteers, 24 combined volunteer hrs  |
| Sun., Sep. 3                  | LRA Labor Day Meeting        | 100 visitors, 3 trees adopted, 1 volunteer, 10 combined volunteer hrs    |
| Sat., Sep. 9                  | Elachee Wildlife Festival    | 200 visitors, 1 volunteer, 9 volunteer hrs                               |
| Sat., Sep. 16                 | Trail Fest                   | 150 visitors, 6 trees adopted, 6 volunteers, 38 volunteer hrs            |
| Sat., Oct 7                   | Foxfire Mountaineer Festival | 150 visitors, _ trees adopted, 4 volunteers, combined 26 volunteer hrs   |
| Sat., Oct. 7 & Sun., Oct. 8   | Marble Festival              | 400 visitors, 18 trees adopted, 10 volunteers, combined 56 volunteer hrs |
| Sat., Oct. 14 & Sun., Oct 15  | Blue Ridge Arts in the Park  | 250 visitors, 16 trees adopted, 12 volunteers, combined 74 volunteer hrs |
| Sat., Nov. 11                 | Scout Camp, Blairsville      | 250 visitors, 2 volunteers, combined 10 volunteer hrs                    |

#### \* Education 2023

| Date          | Event                | Location & Participation  |
|---------------|----------------------|---|
| Sat., Feb. 25 | Clinic               | Fannin, Gilmer, Union (RESCHEDULED)   |
| Sat., Mar. 25 | Facilitator Training | Fannin, Gilmer, Union (RESCHEDULED)   |
| Sat., Apr. 15 | Clinic               | Towns, Rabun, Habersham (1 attendee)  |
| Sat., June 17 | Clinic               | Pickens, Cherokee, Dawson(4 attendees)                                      |
| Sat., July 15 | Facilitator Training | Pickens, Cherokee, Dawson (3 attendees)                                     |
| Sat., Aug. 19 | Clinic               | Lumpkin, White, Hall (7 attendees)  |
| Tue., Sep 5   | Facilitator Training | YHC (13 attendees)  |
| Sat., Sep. 23 | Facilitator Training | Lumpkin, White, Hall (1 attendee)   |
| Sun., Oct. 29 | Clinic               | Dahlonega Property- (12 attendees, 4 trees treated)                         |
| Sat., Nov. 11 | Facilitator Training | Dade, Walker, Whitfield (POSTPONED)   |
| TBD           | Lula Lake staff      | Customized training & treatment project in Lookout Mountain, GA (POSTPONED) |

#### \* Presentations 2023

| Date                         | Audience   | Location & Participation   |
|------------------------------|--|--|
| Tues., Feb. 7                | Redbud Project   | Elachee Nature Center, Gainesville (24 attendees)                            |
| Thu., Mar. 9                 | UNG Peaks Program                                      | Blue Ridge (30 attendees)  |
| Wed., Mar 15 & Thu., Mar. 16 | 6th Grade Exploratory students at Fannin Middle School | Hemlock Lesson & treatment project in Blue Ridge (222 students & 2 teachers) |
| Fri., Mar. 24                | GA/Alabama Land Trust                                  | Dahlonega (11 attendees)   |

|               |                                |  |
|---------------|--------------------------------|--|
| July          | TU Goldrush Chapter            | Dahlonega                                    |
| Tue., Aug. 14 | Mountain Ivy Garden Club       | Tiger  |
| Tue., Aug. 29 | Elachee Center's Science Night | TapIt! Brewery in Gainesville (12 attendees) |

**\* Treatment Projects 2023**

| Date                            | Location  | Participation   |
|---------------------------------|---|---|
| Sat., Jan. 1 -<br>Mon., Jan. 9  | Signal Mountain, TN -<br>Grandview Area   | A dozen volunteers treated 1,387 trees.                           |
| Sun., Mar. 5                    | Rock Creek in Walker<br>County  | 8 volunteers treated 170 trees.                                   |
| Sat., Feb. 18                   | Boy Scout Project at Lake<br>Rabun Beach  | 10 volunteers treated 154 trees.                                  |
| Sat., Mar. 11                   | Signal Mountain, TN –<br>Green Gorge Area   | A dozen volunteers treated 612 trees.                             |
| Thu., Mar. 15                   | Fannin Middle School<br>campus in Blue Ridge                                      | 2 6 <sup>th</sup> grade classes & 2 teachers treated 25 trees.    |
| Sat., Jan. 1 –<br>Thu., Mar. 23 | Signal Mountain, TN –<br>Signal Mountain  | A dozen volunteers treated 4,653 trees                            |
| Fri., Mar. 24 &<br>Fri., 31     | Young Harris College<br>campus  | A dozen 4 <sup>th</sup> Level Ecology students treated 65 trees   |
| Sun., Mar. 26                   | Chattooga River Ranger<br>District – Tate Branch /<br>Sandy Bottom                | 14 volunteers treated 308 trees.                                  |
| Sat., Apr. 22                   | Camp Woodruff in<br>Blairsville   | 9 volunteers treated 120 trees.                                   |
| Sat., Jun 17                    | Blue Ridge Ranger District –<br>Clements Branch                                   | 20 volunteers treated 144 trees.                                  |
| Sat., Jun 24                    | Conasauga Ranger District –<br>Bear Creek   | 9 volunteers treated 311 trees.                                   |
| Sep. 12                         | Young Harris College  | A dozen student volunteers treated 13 trees on campus             |
| Sep. 17                         | Young Harris College  | A dozen student volunteers treated 24 trees on campus             |
| Fri., Sep. 22                   | Blue Ridge Ranger District –<br>Ivy Log   | 10 volunteers treated 54 trees.                                   |
| Sat., Sep. 30                   | Blue Ridge Ranger District –<br>Dockery Lake                                      | 17 volunteers treated 165 trees.                                  |
| Sat., Oct. 21                   | Chattooga River Ranger<br>District – GA / SC Woodall<br>launch on Chattooga River | 16 volunteers treated 173 from rafts and kayaks in the river.     |
| Sat., Nov. 11                   | Scout Camp Woodruff,<br>Blairsville   | 25 Scouting and SGH volunteers treated a large stand of hemlocks. |
| November                        | Blue Ridge Ranger District –<br>Fodder Creek / Hog Creek                          | Postponed   |
| Sat., Dec. 9                    | Chattooga River Ranger<br>District – Camp Creek in<br>Rabun County                | A dozen Boy Scout volunteers treated 82 trees.                    |

**\* Summary of hemlocks treated by or with the assistance of Save Georgia's Hemlocks**

|                           | USFS   | DNR<br>State Parks | DNR Wildlife<br>Mgt | Private<br>Property | Other | TOTAL  |
|---------------------------|--------|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-------|--------|
| FY 2023                   | 1,912  | 0                  | 0                   | 9,956               | 0     | 11,868 |
| Cumulative<br>2009 - 2023 | 17,055 | 6,143              | 3,604               | 30,576              | 9,233 | 66,611 |

**\* Saplings Projects 2023**

| Date          | Location                             | Event   |
|---------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| Sat., Mar. 4  | Dawson County                        | 3 SGH volunteers plus helpers from GNPS rescued 60 hemlock saplings.                          |
| Sat., Apr. 29 | Billy Goat Island on Lake Rabun      | 13 SGH and local volunteers planted 48 hemlock saplings.                                      |
| Fri., Apr. 21 | Lumpkin County                       | 2 SGH volunteers rescued 65 hemlock saplings.   |
| Sat., May 27  | Boy Scout Camp Woodruff, Blairsville | SGH and Scouting volunteers planted 5 large hemlocks.   |
| Wed., Nov 7   | Whitepath Golf Course, Ellijay       | 2 SGH volunteers planted 3 large hemlocks in memory of long-time SGH Facilitator Paul Berrey. |
| Sat., Nov 11  | Scout Camp Woodruff, Blairsville     | 25 Scouting and SGH volunteers planted 5 large hemlocks on Scout Camp Trail.                  |

**FINANCIAL REVIEW OF 2023**

**\* Operating Funds 12/31/23**

|                           |          |
|---------------------------|----------|
| Starting Ckg Acct Balance | \$72,039 |
| Income                    | \$21,711 |
| Expense                   | \$33,003 |
| Ending Ckg Acct Balance   | \$20,747 |
| Fidelity CDs              | \$40,000 |
| TOTAL Operating Funds     | \$60,747 |
| Net Change from 2022      | \$11,292 |

**\* Grants & dedicated funds 12/31/23**

|                               |            |   |
|-------------------------------|------------|---|
| Gheesling UGA Scholarship     | \$1,550.00 |   |
| Lake Burton Civic Association | \$1,398.74 | For use in Rabun County   |
| Lake Rabun Foundation         | \$230.93   | For use in Rabun County   |
| Private donation, Rabun       | \$0.00     | Used in Rabun on Billy Goat Island planting & Chattooga project |
| Laurel Ridge                  | \$391.00   | To be used Fall 2024  |
| Rock Creek Project            | \$0.00     | Used on Rock Creek treatment 3/5/23                             |
| TOTAL Restricted Funds        | \$3,570.67 |   |

**\* Annual Membership Appeal 2023:** 197 donations (82 general, 115 scholarship) totaling \$49,786 compared to 140 donations totaling \$29,952 in 2022.

**\* Shearer UNG Scholarship 12/31/23:** \$40,391

**EDUCATION PLANS FOR 2024**

**\* Fairs & Festivals 2024**

| Event                      | Date                          | Location    |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------|
| Bear-on-the-Square         | Sat., Apr. 20 & Sun., Apr. 21 | Dahlongega  |
| UNG Earth Day              | Wed., Apr. 17                 | Gainesville |
| Trout & Outdoor Adventures | Sat., Apr. 27                 | Ellijay     |
| LRA Memorial Day Meeting   | Sun., May 26                  | Lakemont    |
| Etowah Meadery, Dahlongega | June/July                     | Dahlongega  |
| Farmers Market             | Sat., June 29 OR Sat., July 6 | Blairsville |
| LRA Labor Day Meeting      | Sun., Sep. 1                  | Lakemont    |
| Elachee Wildlife Festival  | Sat., Sep 14                  | Gainesville |
| Trail Fest                 | TBD                           | Dahlongega  |

|                              |                               |             |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------|
| Foxfire Mountaineer Festival | Sat., Oct. 5                  | Clayton     |
| Georgia Marble Festival      | Sat., Oct. 5 & Sun., Oct. 6   | Jasper      |
| Fall Arts in the Park        | Sat., Oct. 12 & Sun., Oct. 13 | Blue Ridge  |
| Boy Scout Awards Weekend     | Sat., Nov. 9                  | Blairsville |

Chris noted there isn't anything on the schedule for Ellijay. She mentioned Apple Blossom Festival, Fainting Goat Festival- mostly local, and wineries. We should reach out to local wineries or the meadery to have a SGH event.

Donna mentioned the festival in NW GA we will get details on. We need to work on increasing our volunteer pool for festivals. Blue Ridge Arts fest will remain in Fall since the Spring Arts in the Park is on Memorial Day and too close to Trout Fest.

#### \* **Classes 2024**

Hemlock Help Clinics will be conducted on line using ZOOM, and Facilitator Training Workshops will be conducted in person. Additional classes may be scheduled during the year. The general approach to scheduling is to have classes several weeks before service events to increase the number and diversity of participants.

| Event                           | Date                   | Location              |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Fac training for Conasauga RD   | Sat., Jan. 30 9:30 AM  | Gilmer County Library |
| Clinic                          | Sat., Feb. 3 10:00 AM  | ZOOM                  |
| Fac training for Yonah Preserve | Sat., June 1 9:30 AM   | TBD                   |
| Clinic                          | Sat., July 27 10:00 AM | ZOOM                  |
| Fac Training for Laurel Ridge   | Sat., Aug. 21 9:30 AM  | Gilmer County Library |

#### \* **Presentations 2024**

| Audience                | Date                             | Location             |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|
| Cherry Log Mountain POA | February                         | Ellijay              |
| Lula Lake               | TBD                              | Lookout Mountain, GA |
| GA Women Fly Fishers    | Tuesday, June 11                 | TBD                  |
| Fernbank Science Center | September (waiting for response) | Atlanta              |
| Amicalola State Park    | TBD waiting for response         | Dawsonville          |

#### \* **Public Communications 2024**

- **Social Media:** We will publish posts and pictures after each event. We are also in process of finalizing a database of partners, civic organizations, other nonprofits, and schools to increase our publicity outreach.
- **Letter for POA/HOA:** Holly plans to send a letter encouraging property owners to recognize the cost advantage of saving their hemlocks.
- **Video:** Dave stated we will release the video that was made of the Chattooga River treatment project, but the most impact we should advertise volunteer opportunities with it. He will place the video on our YouTube channel, and Holly will embed the video in the newsletter. Donna will link the video to the website. Betty suggested we can run the video on loop at festivals.
- Dave stated a campaign advertising the work would get people excited about the work we're doing. Jonathan noted that offering the option to volunteer on a raft project could have a huge draw.

## SERVICE PLANS FOR 2024

### \* Treatment Projects 2024

| District or Area | Date          | Location              |
|------------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Conasauga RD     | March         | Jack's River          |
| Yonah Preserve   | June          | Cleveland             |
| CRRD             | Spring        | TBD                   |
| CRRD             | Spring        | TBD                   |
| BRRD             | Spring        | TBD                   |
| BRRD             | Spring        | TBD                   |
| CRRD             | Fall          | TBD                   |
| CRRD             | Fall          | TBD                   |
| BRRD             | Fall          | TBD                   |
| BRRD             | Fall          | TBD                   |
| Raft Run         | Fall          | Chattooga River       |
| Laurel Ridge POA | Sat., Sep. 21 | Laurel Ridge, Ellijay |

Jim W, Jon J, and Holly will meet in person with USFS Mike Starbuck and team on January 10 to finalize the treatment schedule on Blue Ridge RD and Chattooga River RD, including projects on the Chattooga River Corridor.

Dave mentioned that we have partnered with the Nature Conservancy on treatment projects in the past and should renew our partnership with them. Fannin Middle School is also tentatively interested in doing a treatment project on their campus, pending a decision on whether or not the area they have in mind is slated for constructions. Other suggestions included city parks such as Meeks Park in Blairsville, veteran cemeteries, schools, and public buildings.

### \* Saplings Projects 2024

| Event                        | Date              | Location      |
|------------------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Sapling rescue 40+ saplings  | Sat., Jan. 20     | Fannin County |
| Sapling rescue 100+ saplings | Spring 2 projects | Fannin County |
| Sapling rescue 50+ saplings  | Spring            | Dawson County |
| Sapling rescue 50+ saplings  | Fall              | Rabun County  |

Buz stated a developer has some property near Wildcat Creek. The developer wants to restore the stream banks there by planting hemlocks. The owner helped on Billy Goat Island and wants to be more involved. We could have a scout group do this project in Spring.

We are also hoping to do at least 2 planting projects this year – one on DNR property in White County and one as an insectary at Young Harris College.

Donna and Holly met with Heather Waringa at Fernbank in December and learned that some companies give their employees a day off to volunteer (e.g., National Volunteer Week Apr. 21-27, National Volunteer Day on Dec. 5). We could schedule planting or digging projects in conjunction with those times.

- **Nurseries:** We currently have approximately 100 trees each at our Lakemont and Ellijay nurseries and an estimated 25 saplings in Jasper. Holly will obtain special soils and additives for each nursery.
- **Needs for 2024:-**It is estimated that we'll need 150 for private adoption, 200 for festivals, 100 for hemlock restoration or insectary planting.
- **Hemlock restoration:** We plan to bring 20 saplings from Brevard to be used in planting projects.
- **Sapling fertilizer:** John Shearouse stated it's not time to fertilize nursery saplings yet. He explained that when we have early warm spells and nitrogen goes up the tree too soon, a hard freeze can hurt them. Based on his professional expertise, he recommended waiting until after April 5<sup>th</sup> and then using a product like Osmocote 14-14-14 time release for 3-4 month feeding. This times perfectly with the growing season.

**\* Service/other**

- **Chemicals:** Any SGH Facilitators needing chemical for charitable service projects is asked to let Holly know. Others who need information about what kind of chemical treatment, where and how much to purchase, and how to use it is invited to call the Hemlock Help Line.

## **FINANCIAL PLANS FOR 2024**

**\* Investments**

In 2023 SGH moved \$40K from our operating checking account into two \$20K high interest \$20K CDs at Fidelity Investments. The first one matured in October, having earned \$705 in interest, and is now in a Fidelity money market account. The second one will mature in May. After some discussion of whether or not those funds were likely to be needed for operating expenses this year, the Board voted to reinvest the funds in a 13-month CD at Fidelity.

**\* Budget**

Holly presented the proposed 2024 budget, and it was unanimously approved. Line items were adjusted based on 2023 actual income and expenses and plans for 2024. Special funding is included for the following:

- \$1,000 donation each to the beetle labs at YHC and UNG
- Sapling planting projects in Dahlonge and at Fernbank in Atlanta
- Distribution of our newsletter via MailChimp
- Possible Hemlock Camp Meeting

**\* Annual Appeal**

Our January newsletter, which will be sent electronically, will include an appeal for donations. Then in late March we will mail our traditional appeal letter ahead of National Arbor Day. In addition, the front page of our web site will be changed to include a donation button for ongoing awareness of the funding appeal. In all cases, donors will be provided with several options for making their donations.

**\* Grants**

While we have received (and greatly appreciate) occasional grants from individuals and organizations, generally restricted to a specific purpose, historically we have not solicited major grant funding. However, since we have several members with experience in grant writing, the Board is in favor of beginning to use this tool in support of the growing scope of our programs. They also recommended pursuing corporate sponsorships and matching grants where available.

**\* Scholarships**

The check box for the Frank Gheesling UGA Scholarship will remain on our membership / donation form. Funds received will be retained as restricted and transferred to the fund at the end of the year. Donna will contact Dr. Dale Greene or his successor to learn the status of the program.

No check box will be added to our membership / donation form for the Donna Shearer UNG Scholarship at this time, but the funds will remain invested to receive interest growth. The application process will begin this Spring, and \$1,000 will be awarded the first year.

**NEXT MEETING DATE: SUNDAY APRIL 14<sup>TH</sup> 1:00PM AT DAHLONEGA CHAMBER**