



Energetic group from Go Outdoors USA went immediately from Facilitator training by Save Georgia's Hemlocks to a volunteer hemlock treatment project helping property owners near Dahlonega. (Submitted photo)

Group provides hemlock help to locals

*Submitted to The Nugget
by Donna Shearer*

Increasingly, property owners are finding themselves between a rock and a hard place financially and less able to do those things that protect the beauty and value of their property. One of the most serious threats to the economic and environmental health of the community comes in the form of a tiny creature that is difficult to see and that many people are still unaware of—the hemlock woolly adelgid, an invasive insect that is killing the hemlock trees across North Georgia.

The bad news is that the bugs have been present in Lumpkin County since 2005 and are now causing the death of thousands of hemlocks. The widespread loss of these beautiful, long-lived native evergreens can carry a host of negative results for individual property owners including decreased property value, danger from falling trees, expense of removing dead trees, and increased

fire hazard, not to mention the environmental degradation of forests and waterways in the county, especially trout streams.

The good news is that help is available through Save Georgia's Hemlocks (SGH). Recently a team of trained SGH facilitators helped some local property owners treat their trees to kill the bugs. The labor and most of the chemicals were donated by SGH; the property owners also received financial assistance toward the chemicals from the Lumpkin Coalition. In the space of two and a half hours, the SGH team was able to treat 255 trees. They plan to return to give the largest and most heavily infested trees a follow-up treatment next year, which should then provide residual protection for an average of five years.

SGH is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization of concerned citizens dedicated to saving endangered hemlocks through education and volunteer service. Their educational efforts focus on enhancing

awareness of the hemlock woolly adelgid crisis, current practical solutions, and emerging control technologies and include free information clinics, presentations to schools and community groups, a wide range of instructional materials, hands-on training for property owners throughout north Georgia, and a research-based Web site.

Their volunteer services center on enabling and encouraging property owners to do as much for themselves as possible, with activities ranging from treating infested hemlocks to planting and reforestation projects, assisting groups with hemlock project planning and hemlock rearing operations, and providing a 24/7 help line for up-to-date information about adelgid control options, treatment materials, and application equipment.

For information or help requests, visit www.savegeorgiashemlocks.org or call the Hemlock Help Line 706-429-8010.