



Newsletter
Summer 2019

Hemlock Happenings

A Publication of
Save Georgia's Hemlocks

Hemlock Happenings is an e-newsletter for members, facilitators and other volunteers, donors, and friends of Save Georgia's Hemlocks to share hemlock news, educational information, service opportunities, and announcements. If you'd like to submit an article or calendar item, please send it to the e-mail address below. Readers' feedback is always welcome!

News from the front

It's always gratifying to hear people say how much they enjoy being out in nature, treasure its beauty, ponder its mysteries, and feel the call of environmental stewardship. But it was particularly interesting to read this week that science has now confirmed what our bodies and spirits have always known intuitively — **it's GOOD FOR US to get outdoors.**

A [study published in the journal Scientific Reports](#) on 6/13/19 found that people can benefit from spending at least 120 minutes a week in natural environments, including town parks, local urban green spaces, woodlands and beaches. Researchers found that people who met the threshold reported better health and higher psychological well-being than people who did not spend any time in nature during the week.

The study found the health benefits were observed in people whether they spent a continuous two hours in nature or whether the time was accumulated through multiple shorter visits throughout the week, regardless of the participants' age, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, medical conditions or occupation.

So as you're making plans for some special weekends with your family this summer, why not get out into nature. Maybe go for a hike, go paddling or fishing, have a picnic, or just spend time outdoors relaxing and enjoying the sounds, smells, colors, and scenery.



Happy Summer!

Hemlock Camp Meeting was wonderful!

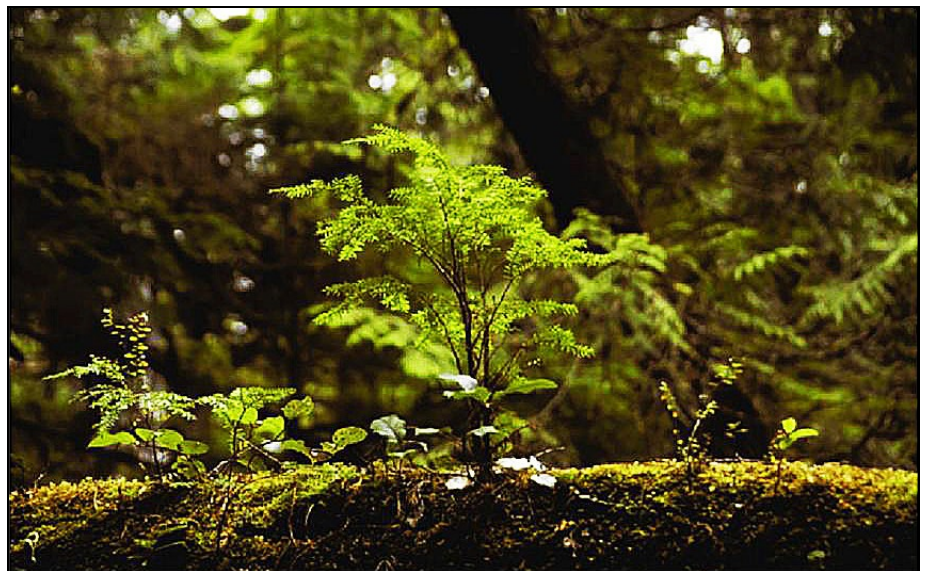
On Saturday, May 4, 2019 Save Georgia's Hemlocks held its annual Hemlock Camp Meeting — a gathering of kindred spirits to celebrate and preserve the magnificent hemlock — at the ETC pavilion on the beautiful Coosawattee River in Ellijay. Our theme was **appreciation and inspiration for all our wonderful members, volunteers, and supporters.**



The day started with a stormy weather forecast and did in fact bring a short noisy rain shower, but hemlock huggers are hearty people, and those present didn't seem to mind a bit. Everyone enjoyed the good music, delicious food, warm company of old and new friends, interesting and inspirational messages from not one but *two* keynote speakers, and a supersized raffle of delightful items at the end of the day. *See page 3 for the full recap.*

We thank everyone for coming, missed those who weren't able to be with us, and look forward to Hemlock Camp Meeting 2020, which will likely be on a Sunday in June as we have done in most prior years.

Between now and then, we hope you'll ALL feel appreciated and be inspired!



**Trees are sanctuaries.
Whoever know how to speak to them,
how to listen to them,
can learn the truth.
They do not preach learning and precepts.
They preach, undeterred by particulars,
the ancient law of life.**

Hermann Hesse

CALENDAR CORNER

We have completed almost half of our calendar for FY 2019 and feel we have accomplished a great deal. See *Progress Report on page ____*. Here are the known events for the remainder of the year.

Training

- * Sat., June 22 — SGH Hemlock Help Clinic & Facilitator Training Workshop in Chatsworth
- * Sat., July 6 — SGH Hemlock Help Clinic & Facilitator Training Workshop in Dahlonega
- * Sat., July 13. 8:30 a.m.—1 p.m. — SGH Hemlock Help Clinic & Facilitator Training Workshop in Cloudland Canyon, to be followed by a treatment project in the park
- * Sat., July 27 — SGH Hemlock Help Clinic & Facilitator Training Workshop in Banks or Stephens County (tbd)
- * Sat., Aug. 3 — SGH Hemlock Help Clinic & Facilitator Training Workshop in Gainesville
- * Sat., Oct. 26 — SGH Hemlock Help Clinic & Facilitator Training Workshop in Hiawassee.



Unless otherwise noted, all classes are from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. To sign up for any of our classes, please contact Kim at 706-455-2313 or kimberlyraewood@gmail.com.

Classes will also be scheduled for Gilmer and Fannin Counties. Check our [Schedule of Events](#) page for details and new postings.

Festivals

SGH will have our information booth with healthy hemlock saplings available for adoption at the following fall events:

- * Sat., Sept. 7 Sun., Sept. 8 — Trail Fest in Dahlonega
- * Sat., Oct. 5 — Foxfire Mountaineer Festival in Clayton
- * Sat., Oct. 5 & Sun., Oct. 6 — Georgia Marble Festival in Jasper
- * Sat., Oct. 19 — Georgia Mountains Brew Fest at Gibbs Gardens in Ball Ground



We need volunteers to staff our booth at all of these important educational and outreach events. If you can help, please contact Kim at 706-455-2313 or kimberlyraewood@gmail.com.

Service Events

- * Sat., June 29 — Hemlock treatment at Wolf Creek in Union County
- * Sat., July 13, 1—5 p.m. — Hemlock treatment in Cloudland Canyon State Park
- * Sat., July 20 — Hemlock treatment at Swallow Creek and Fall Branch Falls in Towns County
- * Sat., Aug 24 — Hemlock treatment in Blue Ridge District (location tbd)
- * Sat., Sept. 24 — Hemlock treatment in Blue Ridge District (location tbd)
- * Sat., Sept. 14 — Hemlock treatment in Blue Ridge District (location tbd)
- * Sat., Oct. 12 — Hemlock treatment in Blue Ridge District (location tbd)
- * Sat., Nov. 23—Hemlock treatment in Blue Ridge District (location tbd)

Unless otherwise noted, all projects are from 9 a.m.—3:30 p.m. Volunteers are needed for all these events. To sign up, please contact Donna at 706-429-8010 or donna@savegeorgiashemlocks.org.

We also plan to do a second hemlock treatment at Lake Winfield Scott, one at Project Chimps in Morganton, and our annual Hike & Help the Hemlocks before year-end. Check our [Schedule of Events](#) page for details.

Mason Sheffield, youngest SGH Facilitator, receives honors

Mason Sheffield (center below) was the first student from North Forsyth Future Farmers of America (FFA) to ever win a 1st place title in a major FFA state-level competition at a state convention. He made history for his school's program by winning the state-level live on stage for his Forest Management Proficiency, a project that encompassed 400+ hours with Save Georgia's Hemlocks and the University of North Georgia Beetle Lab. Mason will be representing Georgia FFA by competing at the National FFA Convention in this October.



Congratulations Mason!



Do you remember the first treatment project you and your family did with us in 2015 at Blackwell Creek?

Frank Gheesling, long-serving Board Member, retires

January 2019

Dear Frank,

This letter brings with it a celebration of YOU, our enormous gratitude for all you have done as a member of the SGH Board, and happy anticipation for all you will continue to do on behalf of the hemlocks. And recognizing Linda as your partner and our benefactor in all of this, we all extend our sincere thanks to her as well.

Our relationship began when you attended a Hemlock Help Clinic way back in 2010 and followed up becoming a Facilitator in 2011. Since joining our Board in 2011, you have served in more ways than we can count: helping teach Facilitator Training Workshops, staff our information booth at a dozen festivals, participated in all our Hemlock Camp Meetings and all but one of all our Hike & Help the Hemlocks, served as team leader for at least 2 dozen hemlock treatment and sapling rescue projects, taken great photos at all our major events, provided repair service for soil injector from all over the eastern U. S., and patiently attended 30 Board meetings since 2011!

You have contributed so much over the years by sharing your good ideas, the benefit of your experience as a forester, your time and talent, energy and enthusiasm, and your unfailing good nature and positive can-do spirit, and we are deeply grateful.

We are also joyful that this letter is not occasioned by a good-bye but only by a transition. Lord knows, if anyone has earned a break to assume a different pace, you certainly have. And we look forward to many more days of tree-hugging with you!



Warmest wishes from all your friends in Save Georgia's Hemlocks

[letter reprinted by permission]

CAMP MEETING RECAP



SPEAKER – Thom Green of the Hemlock Restoration Initiative

Thom Green is the Lead Technician and Outreach Support Associate for the Asheville-based Hemlock Restoration Initiative working with our good friend Margot Wallston (<https://savehemlocksnc.org>).



Before taking on his current role, he served through AmeriCorps Project Conserve as the HRI Stewardship and Volunteer Engagement Associate. After working for several years as an environmental educator in his native Oregon, Thom moved to western North Carolina in 2014 to earn an MS in Biology with a focus in forest ecology from Western Carolina University.

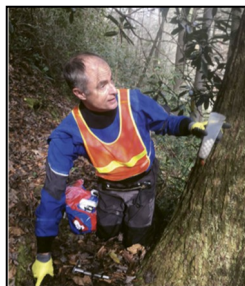
His newly found love of the Blue Ridge Mountains and passion for ecosystem-based forest management fuel his work to protect and restore hemlock forests.

Thom gave a very interesting presentation about HRI's work with a variety of partners to establish hemlock conservation areas, educate property owners to save their trees, treat more trees on public lands, and implement Integrated Pest Management and long-term biological controls. Click here to see [Thom's HRI presentation](#).



SPEAKER – Alex Harvey of the Paddlers Hemlock Health Action Taskforce

Alex grew up in North Carolina where, at an early age, he developed a passion for rivers and the outdoors. After studying biology at Johns Hopkins University and earning his PhD at Vanderbilt, he moved to Athens, Georgia to pursue a career in biopharmaceutical development. While continuing his pioneering work in pursuit of effective disease therapies, he enjoys time with his wife and two children, camping, traveling and taking care of their rescued cats and dogs.



He is an avid kayaker and mountain biker. In 2016 when he learned that the science of saving hemlocks had matured, he realized that there was a need for the paddling community to get involved and has since devoted much of his time coordinating teams of paddlers (<https://paddlersforhemlocks.com>) to save hemlocks on the Green River in North Carolina.



Alex shared his inspiring story of what he and his paddlers do, how they do it, and what motivates them to get out and do it.

Click here to see [Alex's PHHAT presentation](#) and a [PHHAT documentary](#).

MUSIC – Bill Pound

For Bill Pound, being born and raised in Macon, Georgia has had a profound influence on his musical upbringing. Macon's heritage of musical diversity, from Little Richard to Otis Redding to the Allman Brothers Band, is evident in the songs he has written, recorded, and released on CDs.



Bill expresses his talents through a variety of voices – electric, acoustic or slide guitar, silver and Native American flutes, harmonica, and vocals.

Everyone thoroughly enjoyed Bill's music and the relaxed mood he set for the day. For more about Bill and his music, please visit www.billpound.com.

Hemlock Woolly Adelgid – Film about Loss of an Ecosystem

In addition to our two keynote speakers, this year's Camp Meeting presented a short film with a well balanced and very timely educational message. The trailer reads:

"The Hemlock Woolly Adelgid. A species few people have heard of – yet it is devastating the Hemlock forests and the delicate ecosystems that depend upon them. From infestations in our own backyards, the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid has already spread throughout the east coast of North America from the Carolinas up into Canada.



"This award-winning film by Chris Foito aims to engage and educate the viewer on this all too often, over looked invasive species by explaining its past, present, and what could easily be the future if significant action is not taken.

"Through the use of cinematic visuals and archival footage of other forest pests, the film illustrates the vital importance of The Eastern Hemlock Tree as a foundation species in North American forests and raises the questions of what should be done to prevent the spread of the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid and the growing phenomena of invasive species as a whole."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AupnMjYa10Q>

FOOD—Poole's plus Pot Luck

We were treated to some of the best barbecue in north Georgia. Poole's is famous for mouth-watering chicken and pork dressed with Colonel Poole's original sauce.

Everyone was also asked to bring a generous-sized covered side-dish to share so we had a wonderful variety of delicious selections on the buffet



CAMP MEETING RECAP cont'd.

SGH Information Station

Experts were on hand to answer questions about what's happening to the hemlocks, how to recognize and assess the problem, why it matters, what people can do to save their own trees, and how they can help save the hemlocks on our public lands.



There was also plenty of educational handout materials to pick up, saplings available for adoption, and a few special *surprise items* available for purchase.

Sapling Rescue & Potting Station

Rena Milford shared information about the most successful techniques for rescuing hemlock saplings and the best materials to pot them.



Knowing how to choose and dig saplings with the best chance of survival and maintaining them in pots for 6 to 12 months with the right growing conditions to reestablish a strong root system can allow a lot of little ones to be saved that otherwise might go untreated and die.

Hemlock Treatment Station

Jim Heilman and Ray Lorenzi were on hand to explain how property owners can treat their own hemlocks by several different methods – soil drench, soil injection, and basal trunk spray. Information was also available about the two primary kinds of chemical treatment when it's appropriate to choose each one, and specific instructions for how to apply them.



Raffle

The raffle at the end of the day included an eclectic collection of interesting and desirable items, most of which were donated by the artists, merchants, or creators. Chris Curtin and Robin Masarro did the honors of drawing the tickets and announcing the winners.



We'd like to express our sincere thanks to our members who donated items:



*Fish among aquatic grasses—
painting by David Bechler*



*Stained glass dragonfly by
Ray Lorenzi*



*Local honey by
Chris Curtin*



Special thanks to David Burns for the grand prize, a custom-made wooden dog crate

And thanks to ALL our other contributors:

Black Sheep Restaurant	Fergully Cove
Blackhawk Fly Fishing	Hightower Crafts
Georgia Pine Creations	Jim-n-I Creations
Georgia Wine Time	Lily of the Valley
Jumping Mouse Beads	Paul Mailman
More Than Mudpies	Small Batch Garden
Southern Butterflies	Steven Towle
Suches Vacation Rentals	Trout Unlimited

More photos of the day



Dave Teffeteller & Kim Wood welcoming our guests



Ken Taylor with this 15-year-old bonsai hemlock that he lent for the saplings demo



Guests in the buffet line



Donna introducing the program

And everyone enjoying the messages from our speakers



PROGRESS REPORT

With our Hemlock Help Program serving all 19 HWA-infested north Georgia counties in the native hemlock range plus the Atlanta area and our Hemlock Help Line serving the entire U.S., we've had a very busy and productive first two quarters of FY 2019.

Education

- 6 festivals with 34 volunteers and 1,142 visitors / contacts



David & Cindy Wasileski and friends at Trout Fest in Blue Ridge



Rose & Wynn Mott and Rena Milford at Bear on the Square in Dahlonega



Frank & Linda Gheesling at Blue Ridge Arts Festival

- 7 Hemlock Help Clinics with 32 attendees
- 7 Facilitator Training Workshops with 32 new Facilitators trained
- 4 presentations to civic / community groups with 47 attendees
- 12 articles / news items written by, with the assistance of, or about SGH published in newspapers / newsletters
- 483 calls on the Hemlock Help Line



Billy Johnson & Mark Nielsen at Hemlock Day at Anna Ruby Falls

Service

- 23 Facilitator visits reported
- 6 hemlock treatment projects with 130 volunteers treating 1,575 trees



Steve Weintraub & good helpers from North Georgia treating hemlocks at Smithgall Woods

Phoenix Milford tagging a tree during Lake Winfield Scott project, where 39 volunteers treated 954 trees in 1 day!



- 6 hemlock rescue projects with 15 volunteers, 352 saplings rescued and potted for future adoption



- 161 hemlock saplings adopted; 8 saplings donated to schools & nonprofits
- 5 hemlock planting projects with 59 volunteers planting 76 trees
- 8 soil injectors repaired / refurbished
- Total of 2,983 volunteer hours reported

Hemlock Restoration Project

In 2016 SGH began a new initiative for hemlock restoration on trout streams - in partnership with Trout Unlimited, The Nature Conservancy, and the U. S. Forest Service - to restore the shade canopy on trout streams. Using a grant awarded by the North Georgia EMC Foundation, our first project was the planting of 60 hemlock saplings along the Toccoa River. Following that was a project to plant 40 trees along a beautiful stretch of Rock Creek in Murray County.

This year's hemlock restoration took place on Mill Creek, also in Murray County, on March 2. Forty volunteers from SGH, Trout Unlimited, Dalton State College, the Georgia DNR, The Nature Conservancy, the U. S. Forest Service, and the community came out to plant 60 very large hemlocks (6 feet or taller!) along the stream and in the adjacent campground.



After receiving instructions, teams of diggers, pruners, soil mixers, and planters went to work. All the newly planted trees were treated for 5 years of HWA protection, and a separate team treated the mature hemlocks already on the site.



Above, Dalton State students.

Below, Chris Disser & her son Griffin



OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE

There are a number of interesting and important opportunities coming up through several partnerships that are in the formative stage, and we would like to gauge the level of interest among our Facilitators and other volunteers. **If you are interested, in any of these activities, please contact the Hemlock Help Line 706-429-8010.**

Paddling for Hemlocks

Following Alex Harvey's presentation about the fine work he and his paddlers are doing in North Carolina, we would like to explore the possibility of a similar initiative in Georgia. The [PHHAT web site](#) states, "As a foundation species, hemlock trees play a vital role in structuring ecosystems. Active when deciduous trees are not, hemlock trees stabilize riverbanks, regulate river flows, and balance river temperatures, among other important functions." We agree and believe our rivers and their inhabitants deserve our stewardship.

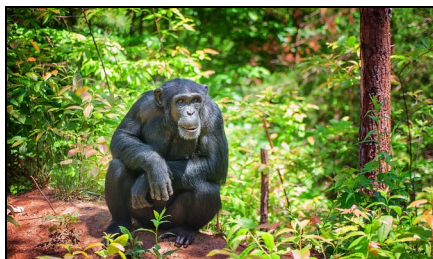


Paddling by some hemlocks on the Green River

If there is sufficient interest, we will recruit one or more teams of capable recreational paddlers, provide the necessary training in treatment techniques and safety protocols, and then target river segments to treat hemlocks where the trees are more accessible by water than by land. With permission from the various public land managers, we will treat the trees using CoreTect tablets to avoid the risk of spillage of liquid products.

Project Chimps

Chimps and hemlocks — really? Yes, really. [Project Chimps](#) is a nonprofit that provides lifelong care to former research chimpanzees at its 236-acre forested sanctuary in Morganton, and they have reached out to SGH for help preserving and enhancing the beauty and health of their woodlands.



"Almasi" in the habitat

The sanctuary includes a forested, six-acre habitat in which former research chimpanzees can forage, climb and play with no caging overhead.



"The Peachtree Habitat," a six-acre forest surrounded by five chimpanzee villas.

The hemlock effort at Project Chimps will likely have three components. Of primary importance is treating the mature hemlocks on the property, hopefully some time this summer. Another phase will be digging small saplings that are not where they need to be and either potting them or holding them temporarily in an in-ground nursery for future replanting. And last, the small saplings dug from the property plus others we will donate will be planted along the roads and pathways this fall to increase the visual enjoyment for visitors.

Mountain Heritage Program

[Woody Gap School's](#) Mountain Heritage Program engages students in grades K–12 in preserving their mountain heritage and environment, exploring sustainable agriculture, undertaking hands-on projects, honing hands-on and 21st century technical skills, and mapping related career opportunities. With community participation and support, the program equips WGS graduates to draw upon their roots to reach for their dreams as skilled, community-conscious adults.



Recognizing the importance of hemlocks as a native tree species, Chris Disser arranged a meeting earlier this year between SGH and WGS to discuss incorporating a hemlock initiative in their program starting this fall. It could include rescuing and potting hemlock saplings to offer for adoption later to benefit their school, or planting a number of hemlocks to beautify their campus, or establishing a hemlock grove near a stream on campus to serve as a quiet place of contemplation, or several other ideas. Several SGH helpers will be needed to support the WGS students in their efforts.

OTHER WAYS TO HELP

Hemlock saplings: Our saplings program has 4 main purposes:

- * saving as many little trees as possible that might otherwise go untreated and die;
- * getting them into the hands of caring people who will look after them;
- * donating them to municipalities, schools, and other nonprofits to draw attention to their beauty and environmental significance; and
- * bringing in a bit of money to support the work of our organization.



Chestatee HS Students potting saplings

So if you have little hemlocks 1 to 4 feet tall on your property and would be willing to donate them to SGH, we would be grateful and would give you a tax receipt letter. Every little bit helps, right?

And if you'd be interested in helping us dig and pot the little trees or even set up a mini-nursery on your property to maintain them for a while, we would be glad of your help and would provide all the necessary instructions and materials.

Teaching: I know there are quite a few of you who are current or retired teachers, and we would love to have the benefit of your skills and experience to give hemlock presentations to adults or youth, conduct short Hemlock Help Clinics for community groups, or teach our Facilitator Training Workshops.



Since we serve 19 northern counties plus the Atlanta area, there's bound to be an opportunity close to home. We'd give you all the training you need, and I think you would not only find satisfaction in helping spread the hemlock message, but you would also increase your own skills and knowledge by doing it.

READERS & VIEWERS DIGEST

Individuals and organizations throughout the eastern U. S. are struggling (as we are) to deal with HWA and try to mitigate its consequences. The links mentioned below are provided to share what's going on in areas outside of Georgia — the remembrances of forests past, the profound sense of current and coming loss, the dogged determination to stem the tide of destruction through scientific research and dedicated volunteer efforts, and yes, some success stories that offer glimmers of hope.

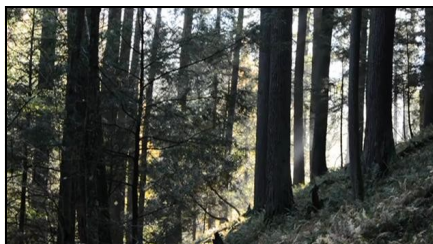
[Long-term study reveals one invasive insect can change a forest bird community.](#)



Eastern hemlock forests have been declining due to a non-native insect pest. A new study presents some of the best data showing how the decline of a single tree species leads to the disappearance of birds specialized to them. The data also indicate birds associated with non-hemlock habitat features are spreading into former hemlock forests. A single insect species has led to a less diverse bird community across this landscape.

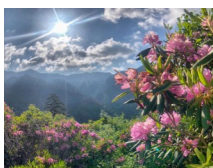
Also see [“The Link Between Hemlocks and Birds.”](#)

[“Cathedral: The Fight to Save the Ancient Hemlocks of Cook Forest”](#) tells the story of the efforts to save the hemlock trees of Cook Forest State Park, Pennsylvania.



The documentary, filmed in the 8,500-acre park in northwestern Pennsylvania, examines the importance of hemlock trees in the old-growth forest, and includes interviews with park staff about the invasive Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, which has killed thousands of trees across the eastern United States and was discovered in Cook Forest in 2013.

[Gatlinburg Overnight Experience June 25-26.](#)



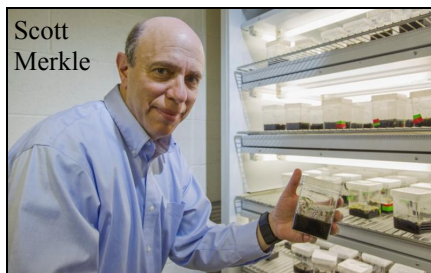
Friends of the Smokies has opened registration for the 2019 Classic Hikes of the Smokies “Overnight Experience.” Proceeds of the event will support suppression of the hemlock woolly adelgid infestation using a multipronged approach, including treatment of 30,000 trees and release of 570,000 biological control beetles.

[Harvard Forest Hemlock Hospice Documentary.](#) A short documentary exploring Harvard Forest's first art-based interpretive trail. This immersive science-communication project tells the story of the ongoing demise of the hemlock tree at the hands (and mouth) of the hemlock woolly adelgid.



While telling the story of the loss of eastern hemlock, the project addresses larger issues of climate change and the future of New England forests.

[UGA researchers unlock new way to clone pest-fighting hemlock trees.](#) For the first time, UGA researchers successfully have cryogenically frozen germplasm from hemlock trees being wiped out across the eastern U.S. by an invasive insect, hemlock woolly adelgid. They also have unlocked a new way to clone the few hemlock trees apparently fighting off the insect, which may lead to a solution for the pest.



In a paper published in *Trees-Structure and Function*, researchers in the Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources outline how they were able to generate hemlock tissue cultures, cryogenically store them, and then grow plants from the cultures after thawing them several months later—the first to successfully do so.

[How tree diversity regulates invading forest pests.](#) A national-scale study of U.S. forests found strong relationships between the diversity of native tree species and the number of nonnative pests that pose economic and ecological threats to the nation's forests.



[Tree likely planted by George Washington felled by recent storm.](#) A massive 227-year-old Canadian hemlock that may have been planted by George Washington at his Mount Vernon estate in Virginia is no more.



In March 2018, brutal nor'easter that struck the region and downed thousands of trees also toppled the historic hemlock, as well as a Virginia cedar that had previously stood watch over Washington's tomb.

Opportunities for Leadership

As SGH continues to grow and serve more people, we are seeking to strengthen our Leadership Team in the following areas:

- * **SGH Board Member** to fill the vacancy following Frank Gheesling's retirement.
- * **Treasurer**
- * **Hemlock Treatment Co-Leader**
- * **Facilitator Training Instructor**
- * **Lead Facilitators** in several counties

If you'd like to learn more about any of these opportunities to serve, please call the Hemlock Help Line 706-429-8010.



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