

# House Speaker Ralston Leads State Resolution Declaring the 'Official Trout Festival of Georgia' in Blue Ridge

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**(April 12, 2016/Blue Ridge, GA)** When the Blue Ridge Trout Festival kicks off with the Trout Train fundraising ride on the rails on Friday, April 29, it does so with the added fever for being named the “**Official Trout Festival of Georgia.**” It resumes with fun, food and entertainment on Saturday, April 30, with the Breakout Marketplace public event in downtown City Park of Blue Ridge.

House Speaker David Ralston (representative, 7<sup>th</sup> District) on January 15 led the effort behind House Resolution 1039 that gave the Festival its official status when the declaration was passed by the Georgia Legislature.

“When I was told about the festival, I wanted to give support to the festival and Fannin County, which we’ve already designated as the ‘Trout Capital of Georgia.’ So, we drafted the resolution,” Ralston says. “And the festival is built around the fact that Fannin County has become a trout-fishing destination for fishermen from all over the nation.”

Working off the “Capital” trout-fishing designation, the Fannin County Chamber of Commerce ([www.BlueRidgeMountains.com](http://www.BlueRidgeMountains.com)) /and Blue Ridge Mountain Trout Unlimited ([www.BlueRidgeTU.com](http://www.BlueRidgeTU.com)/chapter 696) presents the event in two stages:



- **The Trout Train** (on Facebook as “Trout Train of Blue Ridge”) opens the weekend on the evening of April 29, with a fundraising ride on the Blue Ridge Scenic Railway ([www.BRScenic.com](http://www.BRScenic.com)). More than 500 reserved seats (book online or by phone) are available for the train ride along the scenic Toccoa River while passengers enjoy beers from Sweetwater Brewing Company ([www.SweewaterBrew.com](http://www.SweewaterBrew.com)) and wines from Smoking Loon ([www.smokingloon.com](http://www.smokingloon.com)). Hearty appetizers from Harvest on Main ([www.HarvestOnMain.com](http://www.HarvestOnMain.com)) restaurant in Blue Ridge complement the adult beverages served both on the train and at the silent auction event at trackside immediately following the train ride.
- **The Breakout Marketplace** follows the Trout Train event the next day, Saturday, April 30, from 9 am to 5 pm at the downtown City Park in Blue Ridge. More than 70 vendors and food trucks will gather in the park where visitors can enjoy a variety of foods while discovering Fannin County as a trout-fishing destination. Learn fishing secrets and get expert tips on the top tackle from local fishing experts. Shop for the latest in outdoor gear/apparel and fishing equipment. Take free fly-fishing lessons from the Atlanta Fly Fishing School ([www.AtlantaFlyFishingSchool.com](http://www.AtlantaFlyFishingSchool.com)). Throw a cast (or more!) of your own on the casting pond. Learn to tie trout flies. Enjoy live music and cold beverages in the Beer Garden, sponsored by Sweetwater Brewing Company.



“The Blue Ridge Trout Festival and Outdoor Adventures has become larger and more popular than we ever imagined at the beginning,” says Lynn Brincks, festival planning committee chair. “A lot of hard work and long hours have gone into planning, coordinating and getting ready for this first ever festival. The sponsors, vendors, exhibitors and entertainment we have lined up will make the festival a memorable one that will lay the foundation for an even better event next year.”

While visiting with vendors and exhibitors – from the Fly Fishing Museum of the Southern Appalachians, to Casting For Recovery, to the fossil-fish artwork of Buzz Quintrell – the public is invited to share their Saturday in the City Park of historic Blue Ridge with fun and entertainment surrounding them. Test your fly-casting skills for shwag from Sweetwater Brewing. Discover the wide variety of quality lodging options in Fannin County. Enter the raffle

to win a Yeti cooler from Georgia Women Fly Fishers. Plan a paddling trip with outfitters on the Toccoa River. And learn more about the wild environments of Fannin County – from our trout waters to mountain-bike trails to canoe trails – from the folks who promote and maintain these public recreational resources. Hear three great Georgia-born music shows!

“The inaugural Trout Fest involves experiences, education, and inspiration for all ages and outdoor interests and showcases the magnificence of a largely untapped outdoor resource: the Trout Capital of Georgia,” says Ralph Artigliere, education chairman for BRMTU. “Trout Fest will be good clean fun and raises funds and awareness for great local TU programs for veterans, kids, breast cancer survivors, and cold, clean trout water.”

Whether it’s creeping through the untamed forest canopy over a sparking wild-trout stream, float-fishing for trout over gravel bottoms and granite ledges, tackling trophy trout on private waters, or casting soft baits to fresh-stocked trout, anglers of all kinds find Fannin County waters test trout fishing skills from beginners to experts.



“I’m often surprised by how many people don’t know about all the great fishing and other outdoor activities in Fannin County,” says Howard Winkler, BRMTU board member. “Working on the Trout Fest has given me a chance to help highlight these terrific resources both for full-time residents, weekenders and visitors ... and how cool to be doing it in the form of a fun downtown event!”

The state resolution that recognizes the Blue Ridge Trout Festival & Outdoor Adventures event as the official trout festival of Georgia reinforces the fact that Blue Ridge is, indeed, the Trout Capital of Georgia.

For more information, visit the festival online at [www.BlueRidgeTroutFest.com](http://www.BlueRidgeTroutFest.com) and on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/BlueRidgeTroutFestival>.

Sponsors of the Blue Ridge Trout Festival & Outdoor Adventures include:



**ABOUT BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAIN TROUT UNLIMITED CHAPTER 696**

BRMTU is the official local chapter of the acclaimed national organization dedicated to cold-water fisheries. TU is dedicated to protecting critical habitat, reconnecting degraded waterways, and restoring populations to cold-water fisheries. All funds raised or donated to BRMTU are applied right here in the North Georgia mountains for conservation and stream restoration efforts; stream cleanups, such as Rivers Alive; and education and outreach programs. Sponsored programs include Trout in the Classroom in local schools, the Trout Adventure Trail, Boy Scout and Girl Scout conservation education, Project Healing Waters for wounded veterans, Casting for Recovery for breast-cancer survivors, Georgia Trout Camp, and Mercier Orchard Family Fishing Days. For more information, please visit [BlueRidgeTU.com](http://BlueRidgeTU.com).

**ABOUT FANNIN COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

Blue Ridge, Georgia, is located 8 miles south of the North Carolina–Tennessee border line, only 1½ hours north of Atlanta via I-575- GA/Hwy 515, within easy reach of the best attractions the Georgia, North Carolina and Tennessee mountains have to offer. The Fannin County Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Bureau is the place to visit to find out information about the entire Georgia Mountain region. Make sure your first stop on a vacation in Georgia's Blue Ridge Mountains is at our new **Fannin County Chamber Visitor Center**, 152 Orvin Lance Drive, Blue Ridge 30513. For more information, please visit <http://www.BlueRidgeMountains.com>.