

MOUNTAIN CONSERVATION TRUST

Newsletter Vol. 6, Issue 2

Summer 2003

Russell Marane to Speak at MCT Annual Meeting

Russell Marane, Georgia State Director of the Trust for Public Land, will be the featured speaker at the 6th Annual Meeting of the Mountain Conservation Trust, Saturday September 13th, 2003. Russ has been a good friend to MCT and was very helpful to Pickens County in completing the purchase of 800 acres on Burnt Mountain.

A native of Chattanooga, Tennessee, Russ grew up living throughout the South, Turkey and Brazil where he graduated from high school. He attended the University of Tennessee where he graduated with a major in Business Administration and later completed graduate studies at Memphis University in City Planning. He served in many City Planning positions in the public and private sectors before being named by President Jimmy Carter as Regional Administrator of the Department of Housing and Urban Development and later held an Assistant Secretarial level position at HUD in Washington, D.C.

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MCT members socializing
at the 2002 picnic.

Join Us!

It's time to make plans to attend the 6th Annual Meeting and Picnic of the Mountain Conservation Trust. Once again, it will be at the lovely home of Cody Laird in Tate Mountain Estates, Saturday, September 13, 2003. Our guest speaker will be Russ

Marane, Georgia State Director of The Trust for Public Land. Please watch the mail for your invitation and check our web site for details of the day's activities.

The success of our picnic, like the success of the Mountain Conservation Trust depends on volunteers and we have some of the very best. If you would like to help, your time would be appreciated in the following areas:

- Check-in & Registration
- Set-up
- Clean-up
- Decorations
- Hike Leaders

Please email Laura at lauras@mctga.org or call the office at (706) 253-4077.

This is a special time to celebrate the continuing success of MCT made possible by the generosity and hard work of our wonderful membership. 🐾

MCT Receives PCCRA Grant

The Mountain Conservation Trust is pleased to have received a grant in the amount of \$3000 from the Pickens County Community Resource Association in June. While the main focus of PCCRA is to help provide basic necessities for families of limited means, they also realize the importance of clean streams and pristine forests to the physical and emotional health of the community.

PCCRA grants are helping us to create trails and natural areas where families will be free to picnic, hike or just enjoy the peace and healing to be found in our beautiful mountains.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks to the Board of Directors of PCCRA for their generosity and continuing support. 🐾

Russell Marane to Speak at MCT Annual Meeting

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Following his years at HUD, Russ owned his own real estate development company with projects in Atlantic City, NJ, Charleston, SC, Columbia, SC and Atlanta, GA. He most recently served as Vice President of Development for the Centennial Olympic Area, Inc. charged with the responsibility for stimulating new housing and entertainment development around Centennial Olympic Park in Downtown Atlanta.

Russ joined The Trust for Public Land in January 2002 as State Director. He had served for 6 years on its Advisory Board from 1995 – 2001.

He is married to the former Daphne Alston of Atlanta and has lived in the Atlanta area since 1984.

We're fortunate that Russ is taking time from his busy schedule to join us for the day's festivities. 🐾



Champion Trees

Travelers passing the Tate House, the Pink Marble Mansion, on Highway 53 often remark on the huge size of the oak in the front yard. A call to the Georgia Forestry Commission revealed that, in fact, it is the largest Chinkapin Oak in the state of Georgia.



GFC maintains a list of CHAMPION TREES growing in Georgia. They are the largest trees of each species in the state. Any tree, native or exotic, growing in Georgia may be nominated subject to certain eligibility standards.

Champion Trees of each species are determined by a point system, with points being given for circumference, height and crown spread. The tree with the most points is declared Champion. The names of exceptional Georgia Champion Trees are sent to the National Register of Big Trees maintained by American Forests in Washington, DC. Judged under the same point system, the tree could be accepted as a National Champion.

This register has served to identify and protect our grandest trees since 1940. Three champions remain from the original list: a giant sequoia (General Sherman) in Sequoia National Park in California, Rocky Mountain juniper (Jardine Juniper) in Cache National Forest in Utah, and Western juniper (Bennett Juniper) in Stanislaus National Forest in California. Georgia has 38 National Champion Trees and currently has the most new champions on the National Register.

Three of Georgia's Champion Trees in Pickens County are a Hazel Alder on the spillway of Disharoon Lake in Big Canoe, a Kentucky Coffeetree and the Chinkapin Oak at the Tate House. While most Champion Trees are on private property, three trees in the North Georgia area are on property owned by the US Forest Service. You can find detailed direction to these trees on the GFC website.

These graceful giants should stand as constant reminders of the importance of our efforts to protect the beauty and natural resources of our mountains.

For more information on the Champion Tree Program you can go to the Georgia Forestry Commission's website at www.gfc.state.ga.us or check out the National Register of Big Trees at the website for American Forests, www.americanforests.org. 🐾

MAKING TRACKS

By Barb Decker, Executive Director

Our Board of Directors, energized and full of plans after our Spring retreat, has been working on two new projects. One of the projects is to look into ways that the land trusts in Georgia can work together to strengthen all the organizations. Our initiative led to a meeting of Georgia land trusts at the Land Trust Alliance's Southeastern Conference in which everyone expressed enthusiasm. LTA's Southeastern Regional office agreed to organize a statewide meeting in the near future to discuss various options in more depth. Six members of our Board and both members of the staff attended the Southeastern Conference, an admirable show of the strength and dedication of our organization.

Our second new project focuses on our long-term goal to protect the Pickens County watershed and provide nature sanctuaries and trails for public enjoyment. With rapid growth in the county, there are many areas that urgently need some form of protection to enable people to experience the thrill and serenity of outdoor recreation. This type of outdoor recreation is called 'passive' as opposed to city and county recreation parks devoted to organized team sports. What a misnomer that is when you think of fishing and canoeing in wild streams, hiking mountainous trails, and horse riding or mountain biking through rugged terrain! Local trails and nature parks also provide for family picnics and leisurely strolls to observe birds and wildflowers. Whatever the individual choice of sport and outdoor experience, we believe that it is important that there be areas where one can enjoy it close to home.

Work proceeds on the outdoor classroom nature sanctuary at Pickens High School thanks to the strong leadership of Principal Lloyd Shaddix. New signs were placed along the boundary of the 42 acre preserve to let riders of off-road vehicles know that they are not permitted to ride in the sanctuary. Their indiscriminate riding in and out of Long Swamp Creek has done severe damage to the streambanks causing severe erosion and destroying the fragile streamside ecology. Demonstrating blatant disregard for the law, the signs were torn down in the first week. School security personnel are also patrolling the area.

Your Board of Directors has also undertaken a self-assessment prior to inviting new members to join the Board to ensure that the Board has the diversity of talents needed and represents the entire community. A nomination committee for the Board of Directors and Advisory Board has been formed, and your nominations are welcome. If you know someone who enthusiastically embraces our mission and is willing to work hard to achieve our goals, please let Dan Pool, John Kiser or Barbara Wylly know.

Many thanks to all of you who continue to contribute so generously to keep our precious North Georgia mountains a treasure that all can enjoy for generations to come.

Wildflowers Benefit from the Murphy Marble Belt



On a beautiful Spring afternoon in mid-April, a group of hikers followed Tom Govus down a steep hillside to Pickens High School's outdoor classroom, 42 beautiful acres adjacent to the campus with Long Swamp Creek running through it. The profusion of wildflowers on the property were blooming at their peak, and teachers, students, and MCT board members and staff paid rapt attention to Tom, one of Georgia's most knowledgeable botanists, as he identified 49 wildflowers, flowering trees and shrubs. The group was fortunate to see in bloom Barren Strawberry which is on Georgia's Threatened Species List, the Southern Nodding Trillium which is on the Heritage Watch List, and the rare Decumbent Trillium.

Tom, impressed by the plethora of wildflowers, attributed the richness to two factors, both having to do with the outdoor classroom's location. The outdoor classroom lies at the base of the southernmost mountains in the Appalachians, Burnt and Oglethorpe, just on the edge of the Piedmont foothills. The site contains species found only in the mountains as well as some that are more often seen in the Piedmont, such as Early Blue Phlox, Early Saxifrage, Blue Star and Pennywort.

The outdoor classroom's position on Long Swamp Creek also accounts for the floral diversity due to a little known fact. Long Swamp Creek's channel flows through a steep valley which is part of the Murphy Marble Belt, a sinuous geologic structure that extends nearly a hundred miles between Cherokee County, North Carolina and Cherokee County, Georgia. From Murphy, North Carolina its path crosses the state line and roughly follows Routes 76 and 515 south through Blue Ridge, Ellijay, and Talking Rock. It then veers to the east through Twin Mountain Lakes before turning south again, passing just to the east of Jasper on its way to Canton. The minerals found within the geologic layers of the Belt provide rich nutrients to the soil which result in an uncommonly diverse wildflower display. Wildflower species identified along Long Swamp that are indicative of richness include Maidenhair Fern, Decumbent Trillium, Large Chickweed, Bladderpod, Spicebush and Redbud.

The Murphy Marble Belt was formed during four major

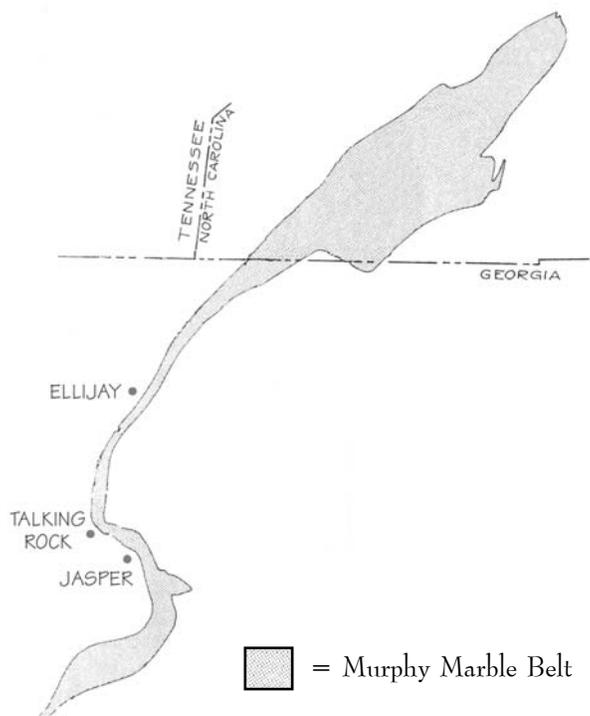
folding episodes over geological time. These folds in the Earth's crust are visible in satellite photographs.

The geologic formations are distinctly different from and younger than the Great Smoky formation. The stratigraphy of the Belt has five layers containing mixtures of mica schist, quartzite, marble, dolomite, and slate with lesser amounts of graphite, biotite, talc, pyrite, garnet and feldspar. The marble layer is thickest at Tate, and a formation of schist layers found near Jasper is quarried for flagstone.

The group of hikers waded across Long Swamp to explore the little-visited eastern side of the nature sanctuary. John White, who has long championed the creation of the outdoor classroom, led the group on a short climb to two splendidly high waterfalls in ferny glades.

Our thanks go out to Tom Govus for his visit and to Lloyd Shaddix, Principal of Pickens High, for his leadership in preserving a beautiful and important piece of the county.

Contact the office at 706-253-4077 if you would like a complete list of the plants identified on the hike. 🌿



The Waterfalls of Burnt, Sassafras, & Oglethorpe Mountains By Don Wells

The principal water resource for much of North Georgia is the crystalline rock Piedmont and Blue Ridge aquifer. This aquifer extends from northwest Maryland and ends in North Ga. While this rock aquifer is generally not very porous, locally where the crystalline rock contains marble, the slightly acidic water dissolves the rock and creates fissures for large volumes of water to escape on the surface. This is the case for Burnt, Sassafras, and Oglethorpe Mountains.

Along the Southern Appalachian ridge containing Burnt, Sassafras and Oglethorpe Mountain, water springs forth from the rock fissures at a plethora of locations. These springs join together to form small creeks and the small creeks form large creeks. These creeks become part of the principal water supply for Pickens and Dawson Counties.

On the Pickens side of the ridge, these springs supply the principal creeks of Clear, Talking Rock, Champion, and Long Swamp. They also supply a large number of unnamed second-



ary creeks that flow into the principal creeks. Similarly, on the Dawson side of the ridge, the springs feed the principal creeks of Huckleberry Brook, Huckleberry Branch, Fall (north and south branches) and Disharoon. There are also a large number of unnamed secondary creeks. All of these creeks cascade down the steep mountain slopes forming some of the most spectacular waterfalls in North Ga.

Over the past year the area on both sides of the mountain ridge has been explored to locate the waterfalls. Thirty-four waterfalls have been found to date, some with drops of over 100 feet. Each of these waterfalls have been photographed and digitally located for documentation purposes. One of the more spectacular waterfalls is located on the North Branch of Fall Creek and is cataloged as the Upper Waterfall.

In the area of interest to the Mountain Conservation Trust, we are blessed to have an abundance of fresh, clear mountain water. 🐾

Board & Staff Members Acquire Valuable Knowledge

The staff and board members of MCT have had the opportunity to attend several meetings that address the many issues facing land trusts today.

In April staff members Barbara Decker and Laura Slaughenhop and board member Mark Dickerson attended a workshop in Athens on the UGA campus. The workshop, **'Piecing Together the Puzzle of Land Protection: Recent Findings and Implications of Land Protection Research in Georgia'**, was sponsored by the Warnell School of Forest Resources and the Institute of Ecology of the University of Georgia, the Georgia Land Trust Service Center and the Land Trust Alliance.

The program was a full day of presentations on the presence of land trusts in Georgia, regional greenspace planning, the need for statewide policies on assessing conservation easements, and transfer of development rights.

Together with the University of Georgia, the Upper Etowah River Alliance and The Nature Conservancy, MCT sponsored a **Workshop for Tax Assessors** held in the conference room at Dawsonville's Thunder Road in May. Forty tax assessors and employees from 16 North Georgia counties were in attendance. The Georgia Department of Revenue is working on a policy that

will help county tax assessors know how to handle conservation easements, but the policy may not be determined for a year or two. The purpose of this workshop was to inform participants about perpetual conservation easements, which differ from the 10-year state conservation use program. If landowners can be assured of receiving a property tax adjustment, it would be an additional incentive to place an easement on their land.

The 2003 Southeast Land Trust Conference was held at Unicoi State Park near Helen, Georgia, June 5th, 6th & 7th. Barb, Laura and board members Edward Daugherty, Mark Dickerson, Clay Johnston, Dan Pool, Bill Ragsdale and Gayle Rice participated in the event.

Concurrent sessions covered a wide range of topics, including fundraising, managing invasive plants (kudzu, anyone?), the latest in software for stewardship programs and using satellite data to aid in creating land preservation plans. There were sessions on drafting conservation easements, winning open space ballot measures and building effective boards. The conference also afforded us the opportunity to meet members and representatives of land trusts from all over the southeast and share our concerns and our triumphs. 🐾

Board Members and Staff Profiles



Rick Jasperse

Rick Jasperse has worked for the University of Georgia College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences as Pickens County Extension Agent since 1982. He coordinates programming in Pickens County and

concentrates work in horticulture, pasture management, and agricultural environmental awareness. He also works with the 4-H Youth Program.

Rick grew up in East Tennessee, attended the University of Tennessee, and the University of Georgia and graduated in 1979. He will receive his Masters Degree from UGA in December 2003. He is a member of a number of local organizations, including the Lions Club and Appalachian Cattleman's Association Director. In the past, he has worked on behalf of the Pickens County Library, Pickens County Senior Center, the Marble Festival, Headstart Program, Leadership Pickens and Hope House Emergency Foster Home.

Rick and wife Marcia live on a small farm in Pickens County with their three children, Elizabeth, Mary Alice, and Bob.



Laura Slaughop

Laura Slaughop joined the Mountain Conservation Trust staff in July 2002. Born in Chatsworth, Georgia, she spent her childhood traveling as an Army Brat. After graduating from high school in Kansas she attended North

Georgia College in Dahlonega.

Laura and husband Bill moved to Marietta where they raised a son and daughter. They also now have three grandchildren. A shared interest in travel, hiking and mountains brought them to Pickens County. They bought a small weekend home in Bent Tree in 1992 and eventually moved there fulltime in 1997.

Shortly after the move, Laura began volunteering at the Pickens County Chamber of Commerce and later accepted a part time position there. She worked at the Chamber until joining the MCT staff.



Barbara B. Wyly

Barbara B. Wyly was born and grew up in suburban Philadelphia. After college and World War II, she married William B. Wyly from Tennille, Ga. in 1947. They lived first in Tampa, then Houston, moving to Atlanta

in 1952. They became members of the Cathedral of St. Philip and their three children attended Lovett School. Two daughters now live in East Cobb and a son in Nashville. Barbara has three grandchildren, two in college and one in high school. She was widowed in December, 1994. She has lived in Buckhead since coming to Atlanta.

Barbara has an impressive background of wide community involvement, including past president of the Lovett Mothers Club, past president of Atlanta Symphony Associates, past president of Hillside Hospital, serving now on the advisory councils of the ASA and Hillside. She is a member of the board of the Mountain Conservation Trust, the Atlanta Opera Guild and the Georgian Chamber Players. For the past 13 years she was chairman of the board of the Center for Puppetry Arts, now the immediate past chairman. 🌱

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Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where Nature may heal and cheer and give strength to body and soul alike.

- John Muir

Special Thanks

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Thomas and Jean Puett of The Edge Group, Inc. The Edge Group provides our internet service and maintains our web site. Thomas and Jean's expertise and patience in helping us meet the challenges of today's changing technology is greatly appreciated.

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