



ForestWatch Faces

Get to know the folks who make it happen

This web feature spotlights some of the special folks behind the scenes of Georgia ForestWatch. If you'd like to nominate someone for ForestWatch Faces, please contact our office by clicking the e-mail link below.

Meet Joe Gatins: Board member and co-district leader

After decades of urban living - Atlanta, Paris, Washington, Richmond - Joe and his wife Fran retired in 1996 to the less-citified far backwoods of Rabun County near the Ellicott Rock Wilderness. That's where Georgia ForestWatch found him with time on his hands. "The Forest Service was re-doing the Chattahoochee National Forest plan and I found the ForestWatchers were excellent guides and teachers to understanding that process," he explained. "Now, we're fortunate enough to have the time to try to pass on what we've learned to the next generation."

Given a previous career as a newspaper journalist, Joe moves fast. Being a mover and shaker, he did not let much grass grow under his ForestWatching feet. He first worked with Mort Meadors, his predecessor as district leader, and then assumed a position on the ForestWatch board of directors. He served as the board president during 2004-06. Today, Joe remains a very active board member and co-district leader for the Chattooga River Ranger District.

Joe spreads the word about ForestWatch's mission wherever he goes. Thanks to his inviting personality many folks have discovered ways to get more involved or join as new members.

For fun, Joe finds time to help out with the doings of the Highlands Biological Station and Nature Center. He is one of the founding members of the Simply Homegrown Market in Clayton, and a certified organic grower. He was also a founding organizer of the Stop I-3 Coalition, now called WaysSouth. Given a bit more time, Joe would devote greater attention to his passion for working clay and throwing pots. "But," he says, "what I really love is the forests around here. They both chase the demons away – and provide pure balm for the soul."

Thanks to Joe, ForestWatch is more visible, more effective and movin' ahead.

Want to give us feedback or suggestions? Call our office at 706-635-8733, or send an e-mail to [info at gafw.org](mailto:info@gafw.org).