

GOS Bill Terrell Avian Conservation Grant

Grant recipient:

The Nature Conservancy

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REPORT TO THE GEORGIA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY ON COMPLETION OF PROJECT

Project Title: "Habitat Restoration in the Chattahoochee National Forest's Songbird Management Area, Murray County, Georgia"

The Nature Conservancy is contracting with Chattahoochee National Forest to provide services for habitat management in the Conasauga Ranger District's Sumac Creek Watershed. We requested \$18,120.00 from GOS to fund habitat improvement of high-elevation early successional habitats in the Songbird Management Area on Grassy Mountain, in Murray County, Georgia, and received \$7500.00. TNC is grateful to GOS for supporting this work.

The Songbird Area was developed in the late 1970s when several stands of timber in the vicinity of the beaver pond complex were clearcut to diversify the area and attract songbirds for viewing along a trail. NF staff has maintained the area (keeping the harvested areas in an early successional condition) by a combination of prescribed burning and a mechanical slashdown treatment, but late winter burns in recent years have been relatively unsuccessful because of

late snows and wet conditions. Consequently, the old clearcuts quickly became unsuitable for disturbance-dependent species, and unmanageable by prescribed fire.

Details of completed project

Timber slash-down. Five of the original clearcuts (totaling approximately 38 acres; see attached map) within the Songbird Management Area received a slash-down treatment, accomplished via a sub-contract, to re-establish early-successional conditions. The contract cost TNC \$12,350.00, to which we applied the \$7500.00 granted by GOS. The work was completed in spring 2016.

A combination of chainsaw or brush-saw felling of trees was used to fell the majority of the trees in the 5 units, and the felled trees were left on site. Within each unit, snags, cull trees, and some mature trees were retained. Attached photos 1-2, taken December 2016, show completed work.

Tree-mowing. Approximately 27 acres in the largest original clearcut (along Forest Road 19; see attached map) had small-diameter saplings and no large standing timber. This allowed the area to be mowed with a tree-mower, which was accomplished gratis by GA Department of Natural Resources personnel. Making this arrangement with DNR allowed us to reduce the final cost of the project. The work was completed in winter 2016. Attached photos 3-4 show the completed work.

These areas will be maintained by prescribed fire or manual/mechanical methods as necessary and as funding permits. Increased fuel created by the slash-down operation will increase fire intensity in the clearings, which we hope will assist in killing inevitable root sprouts from cut trees. Until then, downed wood provides habitat for many forest organisms.

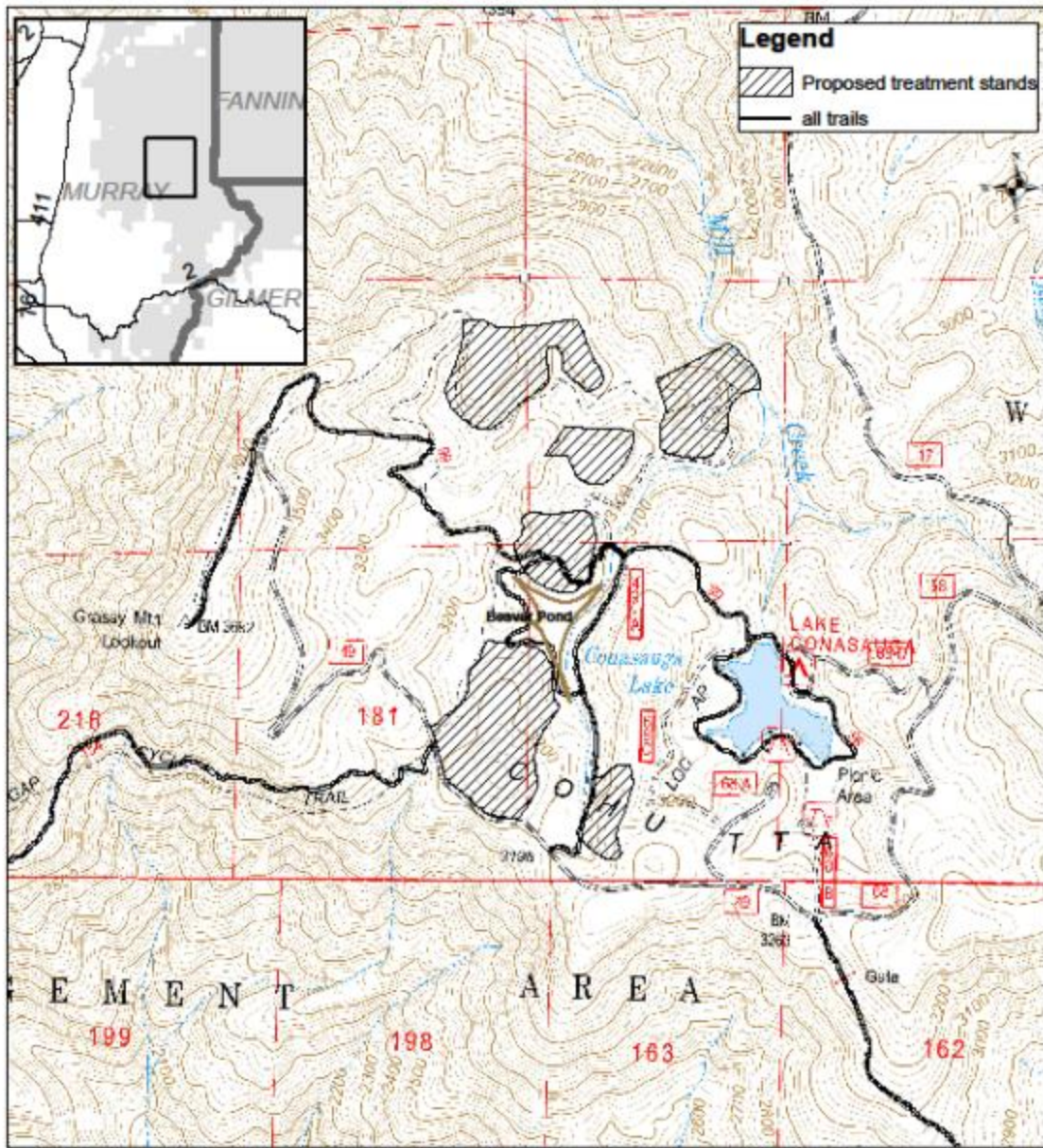




Photo 1: slashdown operation.



Photo 2: slashdown operation.



Photo 3: mowed clearing (Katie Owens in photo).



Photo 4: mowed clearing.