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Friends of Jocassee Newsletter

# Sizzling Summer of 2024 Recap

It's been a busy summer at Friends of Jocassee and we can't believe it's already coming to an end! We have lots to report on, so read ahead to see what we've been up to. And thank you for your help with the conservation of the Jocassee Gorges for all! Please invite your friends to join our organization too!



## BellFest 2024

THANK YOU to EVERYONE who made this our most successful BellFest yet! The gorgeous weather was a delight after rain was predicted all week! Thank You's begin with the FOJ board and planning committee, all 30+ Vendors and Exhibitors, our FOJ volunteers, the Devils Fork State Park (DFSP) staff, the Silent Auction donors, our food trucks, and each of you who came out to enjoy the day!

Highlights of the day were our musicians, which included Dacusvillians, Conservation Theory, and Amongst the Trees. Our guest speaker, Rick Huffman, gave a grand overview of the acquisition of the Jocassee Gorges, including the importance the Oconee Bell flower played in its history. The Upstate Master Naturalist Association provided a host of volunteers for the interpretation of the area history, flora, and fauna on the Oconee Bell Nature Trail. Thanks to all!



The star of the show - the shortia galacifolia (Oconee Bell) flower!

Save the date: Saturday, March 15  
for BellFest 2025.



During our noon FOJ focus, President Chris Rucker shared a review of our events and projects. The current board members were introduced, and we thanked our outgoing board members, Mike Atkins and Jennifer Bausman. They were recognized with Emeritus Board Member status for their long term years of service. New board members Traci BeGole and Jennifer Rush were welcomed to our team. If interested in becoming a board member, let us know!

New this year was a raffle which awarded a 2-night stay at a DFSP villa. This was a huge financial success for FOJ as was our silent auction. All proceeds go to help fund future events and projects. Also new this year was our free shuttle service, which got a lot of positive feedback. Additionally, our new members were treated to a complimentary one-hour pontoon tour provided by Jocassee Lake Tours. Welcome to all new FOJ members!

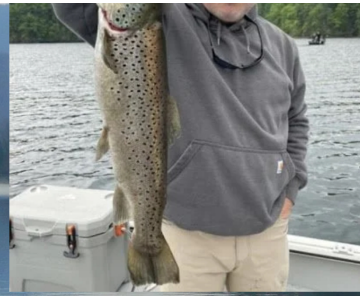


## Fishing with Friends Trout Tournament

The tournament included a membership drive to get



more anglers that fish Jocassee involved in this and other FOJ events. We had 24 people show up on a beautiful April day to fish this tournament, and 15 people joined or renewed FOJ Membership. Doug Glenn took first place with a 5.86 pound brown trout.



*Doug Glenn with winning brown trout.*

The next tournament will be held on April 26th, 2025.

## Future Friends

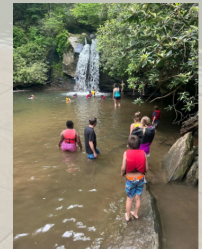
\$1,000 scholarships were presented to 2 Oconee County Schools, James M. Brown Elementary School on April 19th and Blue Ridge Elementary School on April 22nd, so their students could attend a fun, educational field trip on pontoon boats on Lake Jocassee with the Jocassee Wild Outdoor Education organization.



*Blue Ridge Elementary School Grant Recipient*



*James M. Brown Elementary School Grant Recipient*



## Honoring our beloved former Board Members

We honored our past president, Nathan Pinner, who passed away on February 28, 2023. A memorial bench was dedicated at Devils Fork State Park and a beautiful serviceberry tree was planted near the boat ramp in his honor.

We recognized two of our longtime board members, Mike Atkins and Jennifer Bausman, as emeritus board members. We appreciate their dedication and service to Friends of Jocassee!





*Memorial Bench for Nathan Pinner unveiled to his family*



*Mike Atkins accepting emeritus board member certificate from FOJ president Chris Rucker*



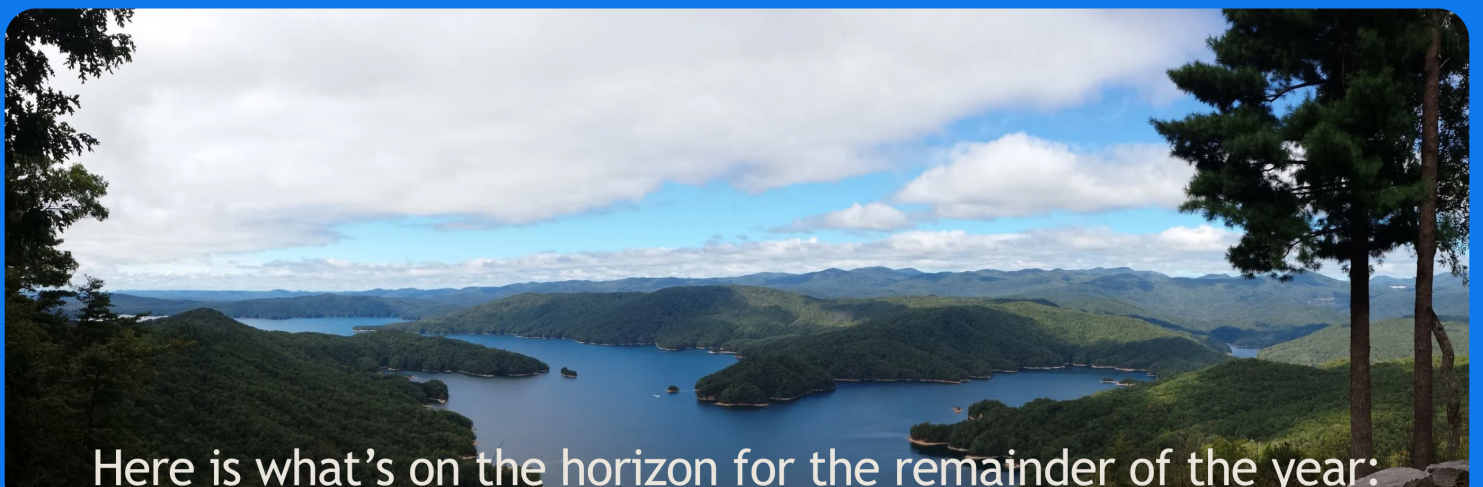
*KTSP staff and FOJ Board Members and Volunteers*

## Keowee-Toxaway State Park Perk Up the Park Event of May 13, 2024

### *Trash, Trash, Trash . . .*

In May, Friends of Jocassee held their annual “Perk Up the Park” event at Keowee-Toxaway State Park (KTSP) where volunteers worked side by side with park ranger staff cleaning and picking up litter in the park and along key corridors. Nine volunteers and staff collected 18 bags of trash along Route 11 and Route 133 as well as in the park and entrances to trail heads. KTSP Park Manager Kevin Blanton was very appreciative of the Adopt-A-Highway efforts. This is one of multiple Adopt-A-Highway events that Friends of Jocassee engage in annually.

Come join us in 2025 when Friends of Jocassee and KTSP will work on trail maintenance and public area improvements. Projects tackled in prior years have enhanced the visitor experience by installing pollinator gardens, mulching the kayak launch and replacing fence posts in parking areas.



Here is what’s on the horizon for the remainder of the year:

## Adopt-a-Highway Litter Pickup:

Monday, September 9th, 2024

11:30 AM - 12:30 PM

Devils Fork State Park

## V.I.P. Day - Volunteer, Improve, Protect:

Saturday, September 14th, 2024

9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Devils Fork State Park

## Paddle Splash:

Saturday, October 5th, 2024

10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Devils Fork State Park

## FOJ Annual Meeting:

It had to be rescheduled due to Helene :(

Now in conjunction with Jocassee Santa

Saturday November 23rd, 2024

12 PM - 3:30 PM

Devils Fork State Park

## Jocassee Santa:

Saturday, November 23th, 2024

12:00 PM - 3:00 PM

Devils Fork State Park

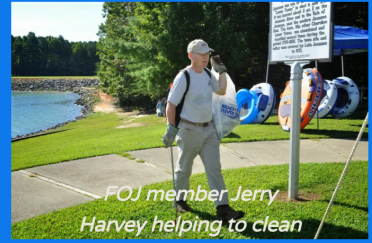
FOJ proudly maintains over 4 miles of roadways leading from Hwy 11 to Devils Fork State Park. We call it the "road to paradise" - help us keep it beautiful!

This is an annual collaborative litter pickup at Devils Fork State Park involving divers, hikers, and boaters. Hundreds of volunteers turn out annually to collect a significant amount of litter from Devils Fork State Park and Lake Jocassee.

Part of the Southeast Paddle Sports Championship Series, Lake Jocassee Paddle Splash is a race for kayaks, surfskis, canoes, paddleboards, and other self-powered craft. Beginner paddlers are welcome! Racers are grouped by age and boat type to keep the racing fair. An awards ceremony will be held at Jocassee Valley Brewing Co after the race.

Our Annual Meeting is a time where we get to thank our members for their support while keeping them informed on the progress we have made in the past year. We'll take care of some business and have some brief presentations before enjoying refreshments.

Meet Jocassee Santa and take a picture with your kids or pets! Santa will be set up at the day use area with a fabulous view of the lake as a backdrop. FOJ will provide crafts and refreshments.



*FOJ member Jerry Harvey helping to clean up around DFSP*



*Lots of paddlers at Paddle Splash*



*FOJ Annual Meeting attendees*



*Jocassee Santa 2023*

Thanks again to all of our members, volunteers, and event attendees! We greatly appreciate your participation, and hope you will continue to support us with your donations and time. Watch for our next newsletter and spread the word to your friends on all the good work that Friends of

your friends on all the good work that Friends of  
Jocassee is doing!

Join Now



*Friends of Jocassee (FOJ) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, tax-deductible public charity.*

[info@friendsofjocassee.org](mailto:info@friendsofjocassee.org)

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