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Volunteers needed to plant trees at state park

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One hundred trees will be planted Saturday at Chattahoochee Bend State Park's first-ever Arbor Day event.

The tree planting at the park in west Coweta County is sponsored by the Newnan Rotary Club, which has purchased the trees and will be doing a lot of the planting -- but more volunteers will be needed.

Saturday is also the regularly-scheduled volunteer day of the Friends of Chattahoochee Bend, and there is plenty of work to do on the trails as several bridges along the Riverside Trail were shifted out of place recently when the river rose and washed into the creeks the bridges cross.

Those interested in the tree planting should gather at the park's visitor center. Dave Smith, chairman of the Botanical Committee of the friends organization, said he'd like to see volunteers registered by 11:30 in order to have a noon start. There will be hot dogs and refreshments provided for up to 100 people.

"It only takes a few minutes per tree to become part of the beginning of a legend: The Great Oak Trees of the Bend," said Smith. "We will plant trees for the coming century."

"Bring shovels, rakes or post-hole diggers if you have them," Smith said.

Saturday's planting will include 50 white oak trees and 50 wax myrtles.

Smith said he's not sure how many volunteers will be needed, but "the more the merrier." Even if there's not work to do, you can observe the tree planting and check out the park.

Smith hopes to see yearly Arbor Day events.

"I don't know of a better place to celebrate Arbor Day than 2,900 acres of public land," he said. He hopes Saturday's event will bring the community together.

Tree planting is a major initiative of Rotary International.

The trail-building volunteer day begins at 10 a.m. and runs until 2 p.m. Volunteers should meet at the visitor center.

"Saturday's trail work will be a mixture of maintenance and new blazing," said Steve St. Laurent, trails committee chairman of the Friends of Chattahoochee Bend State Park.

Plans are to repair the bridges, as well as fix a few trouble spots on the trail, St. Laurent said.

"Otherwise, the trails are in really good shape considering the amount of rain we've had," he said. "We do emphasize quality over quantity when we're blazing, and only a few 'needs fixing' spots along seven-plus miles of relatively new trails is amazing."

New blazing will continue on the west end of the East-West Trail, and work may also begin on a "wet weather reroute" of the Riverside Trail that can be used until a proper bridge is installed at the first crossing.

Admission into the park is \$5 per vehicle. Membership in the Friends of Chattahoochee Bend includes an annual pass good for admission to all Georgia State Parks, and an individual pass for all state historic sites.

For more information, e-mail chattahoocheebendfriend@gmail.com or visit www.bendfriend.org.

To get to the park, take Hwy. 34 West/Franklin Highway to Thomas Powers Road (at Powers' Crossroads store). Go right on Thomas Powers Road and follow the signs to the park.

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