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THE GEORGIA WILDLIFE FEDERATION®



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Fall 2008

## Teaming with Wildlife

Project at Fall Line Sandhills Natural Area

By Shirl Parsons, Conservation Issues Coordinator

Using State Wildlife Grants and private funds, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) acquired 844 acres of former timber company property to create the Fall Line Sandhills Natural Area located in the Upper Coastal Plain in Taylor County. This area is a small component of the entire fall line sandhill community, which bisects Georgia, crossing the state from Columbus northeast to Augusta following along the fall line, and separating the Piedmont region from the Coastal Plain. Georgia's sandhill habitats harbor rare wildlife, but many of the habitats have been degraded and few acres are protected in any way.

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**C.T. Lyles, Junior Bass Busters volunteer, deploys rolls of aluminum flashing to reinstall drift fences for wildlife research.**



Alcovy River Swamp. Photo by Hank Ohme

## Georgia Wildlife Federation Hosts Alcovy River Land Owners Meetings

By Shirl Parsons, Conservation Issues Coordinator

Beginning in Gwinnett County north of Lawrenceville, the Alcovy River flows south into western Walton County, past Monroe and into eastern Newton County. It flows past eastern Covington to the south end of the county into Lake Jackson. The total length of the river is approximately 80 miles. Because much of the Alcovy River flows through sparsely developed areas, the river and adjacent swamps are generally unpolluted. The Alcovy river swamps

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# The Call



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**Editor:** Carol Hassell  
**Contributing Authors:** Jerry McCollum, Christina Marr, DeAnna Harris, Shirl Parsons, Robert Phillips, Sam Stowe, and Terry Tatum  
**Photography:** Hank Ohme, Robert Phillips, Carol Hassell, GA DNR and Sam Stowe  
**Layout:** DeAnna Harris

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## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

# Current Economic Gloom is a Perfect Opportunity

Throughout Georgia revenues are flat or down. Business is off. Unemployment is up. The news seems uniformly dismal these days with each new report triggering calls for more reductions in spending by the state government. Governor Perdue has called for all department heads to submit three budgets for the coming fiscal year — each reflecting deeper cuts and reductions (6 percent, 8 percent and 10 percent). A recent press release from Chris Clark, the Executive Director of the Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority, announced that \$40 million for reservoir development had been swept back into the general fund to be redirected to other uses; the \$10 million in funds allocated for land conservation evaporated also.

But while the state adjusts numbers on its budget spreadsheets, nothing has changed for Georgia's environment: A handful of local governments and water authorities are dreaming and planning for new reservoirs. Metro Atlanta generally decries the bright orange line of exposed Lake Lanier shoreline created by the drop in lake level — yet no one talks of re-examining land use or other controllable factors affecting water consumption. And various threats to a healthy environment go unchecked because the funding and staffs of the Department of Natural Resources and the Environmental Protection Division have been decimated by years, if not decades, of previous departmental budget cuts demanded during better economic times.

But back to water: arguably one of the biggest threats of all — unrestrained, unplanned water consumption — continues. The General Assembly passed a significantly weakened statewide comprehensive water management plan in the 2008 session with no statutory teeth. Then, they immediately passed legislation to provide funding for reservoirs without a requirement that they first conform to any sort of master plan to protect adequate water resources for other affected Georgians.

Is there any good news? Yes, there is a silver lining to this torrent of dismal news — a perfect opportunity, if only we'll take advantage of it.

Think about this: If your company or employer needed to purchase some hypothetical system to sustain the organization's lifeblood products and could choose between a system that is tremendously expensive and would take nearly a decade before delivering any results whatever, OR a simple process that cost a fraction of the first and could begin delivering benefits immediately, which would the company choose?

No one has a "right" to unlimited water consumption. Landowners are guaranteed reasonable use of the water that flows past their property. All other citizens are ensured water by Georgia's water

*continued on page 4*

# Buckaramas® 2008



Georgia Wildlife Federation's highly successful 2008 Buckaramas® were *the* places to be in late July and early August for all area hunters, anglers and conservationists. We again hosted a record number of vendors who provided plenty for show visitors to see, delight in and purchase before the fall hunting season gets underway. Displays, handouts and experts showcased the State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP), Georgia's strategy for ensuring habitat and species protection. The state's Department of Natural Resources also was on hand to talk about hunter safety. Proceeds from these important shows fund GWF's habitat and wildlife conservation programs.

Pictured (below, left): The top four deer heads from the 2007 season were displayed prominently at the Atlanta Buckarama. (Right): Throngs of hunters jammed four display halls to enjoy the sights, sounds and shopping at the Perry Buckarama. 🍁



## Habitat Steward Workshop Held at Alcovy Conservation Center

*By Shirl Parsons, Conservation Issues Coordinator*

**G**eorgia Wildlife Federation recently hosted a Habitat Steward Workshop presented by the National Wildlife Federation to train teachers and others who are interested in establishing wildlife habitat in their schoolyards or their own backyards. Trained stewards can also work in their neighborhoods to establish a community wildlife habitat by teaching others to create and enhance habitat in their backyards. Among other things, participants were taught about the importance of pollinators, which native plants are best, and different ways to provide water for wildlife.

Anyone can create wildlife habitat in their own backyard by providing wildlife with food, water, cover and a place to raise their young. To learn more about backyard habitat visit our website at [www.gwf.org](http://www.gwf.org). 🍁

Tiger Swallowtail on buttonbush.  
Photo by Hank Ohme



*Teaming with Wildlife.....continued from page 1*

On a hot Saturday in July Teaming With Wildlife (TWW) groups met at the Fall Line Sandhills Natural Area to help DNR repair drift fences damaged in spring tornadoes. Participants also learned about the important work being done by DNR in this natural area. DNR's Wildlife Resources Division will restore the property for high priority wildlife such as the gopher tortoise, gopher frog, Bachman's sparrow, southeastern kestrel and the striped newt. Many imperiled plants will also benefit including pondberry, sandhills golden-aster, and Pickering's morning-glory. In addition, gopher frog eggs collected here will be used to restore populations at other protected sites.

Drift fences allow DNR to study the movements and population trends of reptiles and amphibians. Stretches of aluminum fencing are installed in a cross pattern with pit traps located in the center and at each end of the cross. When reptiles and amphibians encounter the drift fence they are forced to change their course and fall into the pit traps. DNR checks the traps daily, recording and then releasing their "catches." TWW members worked with DNR to remove the old fences and install new fences. Groups participating in this project included Junior Bass Busters, Georgia Chapter of the Bass Federation, Georgia Chapter of the Sierra Club, Macon College and Georgia Wildlife Federation. 🍄



**DNR staffer Nathan Klaus guides a trencher, the first step to reconstructing drift fences.**

*President's Column.....continued from page 2*

law. But if the overall total amount available in a river basin dwindles — for whatever reason — we all share the responsibility to use less.

Current budget shortfalls demand that wildly expensive options for solving the water dilemma before it's too late are now off the table. Yet, so far, the most economical approach — implementing real conservation — has been given lip service at best.

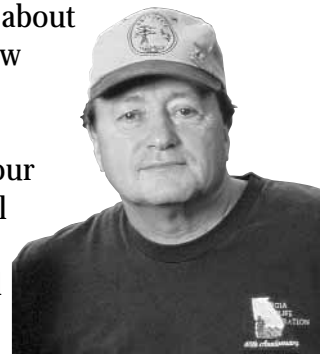
On average it costs between 50 cents and \$1.50 for 1,000 gallons of water through conservation and efficiency steps, compared with \$4,000 for the same 1,000 gallons of water gained through reservoir construction, according to the Georgia Environmental Protection Division. The choice between these two options should be a no-brainer.

Moreover, a true conservation and efficiency strategy could begin to yield results almost immediately through a suite of water-saving steps that could be started in the very near term to cut water use statewide: water harvesting, purple (gray water) pipes or dual water systems, elimination of water leaks from public and private water systems, real conservation water pricing, xeriscaping and improved agricultural practices, to mention a few. On the other hand, reservoir construction would take eight to ten years before any results could be expected.

Our current season of economic gloom is a perfect opportunity for us to get serious about this seemingly novel approach to an environmental challenge that actually might provide new business opportunity AND can diminish the impact on the public purse. What are we waiting for?

On another note, we say goodbye to two fine GWF staff members: Sarah Barmeyer, our Water Issues Coordinator, is off to Washington, DC, where her attorney husband Wilson will join a law firm. And Christina Marr, Volunteer Coordinator for the Mill Creek Nature Center, returns to school — actually Brenau College in Gainesville — to obtain an advanced education degree. We wish them both well.

Finally, I hope you'll join me out in the unique and very special outdoors that is Georgia as the summer winds down. And, as you're hiking trails, watching birds or readying for a hunt, please keep in mind that only by speaking up on behalf of this fabulous habitat can we ensure that it stays functional. 🍄



*Jerry L. McCollum*  
**Jerry L. McCollum**  
President & CEO

## Mill Creek Nature Center Update

By Christina Marr, Volunteer & Program Coordinator - MCNC

Even though May is officially "American Wetlands Month," June and July have been all about wetlands at Mill Creek Nature Center! On June 7th, 30 local Girl Scout Leaders descended upon Mill Creek Nature Center to take part in a "Wetlands Patch" preview workshop (see photos, right). Several years ago, a Wetlands Patch was created by a partnership of the Georgia Wildlife Federation, Newnan Wetlands Center and the Clayton County Water Authority for the Girl Scout Council. Offering this program at Mill Creek Nature Center will be a wonderful resource for local girl scout troops as it is not always easy to find a wetland that isn't on private property. Girl Scout leaders made a Wetlands Mystery Book, created an imaginary plant or animal that would be adapted to live in wetlands, and answered questions while they became Wetlands Watchers. Everyone enjoyed the activities and the tour of Mill Creek Nature Center. We hope to see more girl scouts and their leaders taking part in this unique environmental learning patch.

A Wetland Monitoring Workshop has been held in July the past few years at Mill Creek Nature Center to introduce new volunteers to wetlands and the techniques used to monitor the habitat. This July, instead of hosting a workshop, a monitoring session was held that included both experienced volunteers as well as new recruits. The new volunteers were introduced to the wetlands and learned how to monitor the wetlands from experienced wetland monitoring volunteers like Suzy Downing, Susan Eller and Dianne Crossman who have been monitoring the wetlands over the past two years. All the data that is collected over a year's period is sent to Georgia Adopt-a-Stream which keeps the information in their database. These new recruits at Mill Creek Nature Center will help collect data during the next year and will gather important information about the wetlands' health (amount of water, plant life and soil conditions). If you would like to join the efforts of wetland monitoring at Mill Creek Nature Center, please contact Carol Hassell at GWF (770-787-7887) or Suzy Downing at 770-682-0071. 🍄



*Alcovy River.....continued from page 1*

provide habitat for an abundance of wildlife including 11 different species of salamanders, many species of frogs, deer, raccoon, otter, beaver, mink, muskrat, swamp rabbit and squirrel. An array of crayfish species supports many of these higher species. Many types of fresh water mussels have been found in these clean waters. Birdlife in the swamps is indicative of an older growth forest with nesting wood ducks, red-bellied and pileated woodpeckers, and barred owls. Others at home in the Alcovy greenway are blue herons, waterfowl, and red-shouldered hawk. Fish include large-mouth bass, red-bellied sunfish, and catfish.

The Alcovy River corridor is a special place that must be protected from the negative effects of suburban sprawl pervasive in so many areas of Newton and adjacent counties. Although certain areas of the river are open to the public, the majority of the area is under the stewardship of private landowners.

As part of the Alcovy River Riparian Buffer Project, Georgia Wildlife Federation, Newton County, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources and Keep Covington/Newton Clean and Beautiful recently hosted two meetings for land owners along the Alcovy River in Newton County to provide information about incentive programs and conservation options for permanently protecting their land. Held at the Georgia Wildlife Federation's Alcovy Conservation Center, the meeting included speakers from the Georgia Land Trust Service Center, Newton County, DNR, and the Georgia Wildlife Federation. Landowners learned about the importance of the Alcovy River corridor and were given information about their options for permanently protecting their land, including the use of conservation easements. These workshops were financed in part through a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency under the provisions of Section 319(h) of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act, as amended.

For more information about the Alcovy River greenway visit our website at [www.gwf.org](http://www.gwf.org). 🍄

# Get To Know A Right Whale

*Edited from the Georgia Wildlife Web, by the University of Georgia's Museum of Natural History.*

Only about 300 North Atlantic Right Whales (*Eubalaena glacialis*) are alive today, according to the University of Georgia's Museum of Natural History. The Right Whale has been listed as Endangered by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. All Right Whales are protected from hunting by international agreements involving all major nations.

These behemoths — adults attain lengths ranging from 40 feet to 57 feet and weigh 40 to 50 tons — are dark brown to black, with white patches in the mid-belly and on the chin.

Right whales are known as baleen whales, lacking teeth, but instead having a baleen, or series of overlapping, long, fibrous-edged plate-like strips, which hang from the roof of the mouth. The baleen acts like a sieve and captures food — tiny plankton — as water is expelled by the whale's tongue. Right whales have about 250 pairs of black to dark brown baleen plates which may reach up to 6 feet in length.

The Right Whale lacks dorsal fins and ventral throat grooves or pleats characteristic in other whale species; pectoral fins are short, broad, and rounded.

Breeding occurs in the late summer and fall, with a single calf born 12 months later at the southern end of the whales' north-south migration routes, in the Atlantic Ocean just off the coast from the Florida-Georgia state line. The calf is about 15 feet in length at birth, and nurses for about one year before being weaned. An adult female gives birth only once every 3 years.

This migratory species inhabits most of the oceans of the world, including both the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico. These whales move along the south Atlantic coast between early January and late March as they migrate north for the summer, and do not return until late summer or early autumn.

The name "right whale" was given to the species by early whalers because they thought it the "right" or "correct" target to hunt. It swims slowly, making it relatively easy to hunt. It was abundant and not afraid of ships. It did not sink when killed and produced large amounts of whale oil. Migrating close to shore with females and calves frequenting inshore waters, the Right Whale was an easy target for the whaling industry through the 1800s, until its numbers became so low that it was no longer profitable to hunt. Maximum life span for this species has been estimated at about 40 years, although collisions with ships are now the main cause of mortality.

*Editor's Note: GWF calls special attention to this highly endangered gentle giant with our newest tribute to the holidays. The Right Whale is one of two native Georgia species to be featured on our original holiday ornaments. See page 7 for details.* 🦋



Photo by Georgia Department of Natural Resources

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Gift orders received before November 30 will be shipped the week of December 1 unless otherwise noted by customer. All others shipped as received.

	<b>COST</b>	<b>QUANTITY</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>QUAIL</b>	\$18 each		
<b>WHALE</b>	\$18 each		
		<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	
		<b>TAX (7%)</b>	
		<b>TOTAL</b>	

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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Number ornaments to this address: \_\_quail \_\_whale

**PAYMENT** (Make checks payable to Georgia Wildlife Federation)

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Name on Card: \_\_\_\_\_

Special Instructions: \_\_\_\_\_

ORNAMENT 1:    Quail or Whale (circle)

Shipping Name and Address:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Gift Message:

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ORNAMENT 2:    Quail or Whale (circle)

Shipping Name and Address:

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Gift Message:

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ORNAMENT 3:    Quail or Whale (circle)

Shipping Name and Address:

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Gift Message:

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ORNAMENT 4:    Quail or Whale (circle)

Shipping Name and Address:

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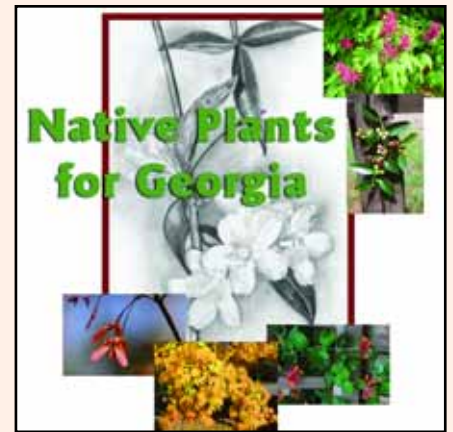
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## New Native Plant Resource

**A** new publication from the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension and the school's Department of Horticulture should be a welcome addition for every gardener or any homeowner who wishes to establish a backyard wildlife habitat. Titled *Native Plants for Georgia, Part I: Trees, Shrubs and Woody Vines*, the 164-page book is the work of an outstanding group of experts on the state's native plants, including Gary Wade, Ph.D., Extension Horticulturist; Elaine Nash, Naturalist; Ed McDowell, Master Gardener, Amateur Botanist and Wildflower Photographer; Brenda Beckham, Master Gardener and Plant Enthusiast; and Sharlys Crisafulli, Horticulture Program Assistant. Over 400 color photographs delight the eye and provide a resource for garden designers using natives. Best of all, it's available online. Go to [http://www.caes.uga.edu/publications/subject\\_list.html](http://www.caes.uga.edu/publications/subject_list.html) and search for publication number B 987. 🍌



## Teaming with Wildlife Coalition Helps to Clear Hearn Nature Trail

By Shirl Parsons, Conservation Issues Coordinator

**T**hirty years ago the Hearn Nature Trail on the Oxford College campus was established and has served many generations of the Oxford community as an outdoor classroom and a place to observe the native flora and fauna of Georgia. However, with the passage of time, non-native plant species began to overgrow an estimated 85 percent of the forest floor. Lesser-used parts of the trail were engulfed by species such as Chinese privet, Elaeagnus, English ivy and kudzu.

In 2006 Oxford began a project to restore the area to its original state and develop a long-term restoration plan. Members of the Teaming With Wildlife Coalition including the Junior Bass Busters, Georgia Bass Chapter Federation, Keep Covington/Newton Beautiful, the Georgia Botanical Society and Georgia Wildlife Federation joined with Oxford College recently to help remove invasive species from a portion of the trail. Oxford set a goal to be a model of best practices for invasive species removal and has held workshops and demonstrations for the faculty, staff and students to train them in the removal of invasive species. They are planning a rededication of Hearn Nature Trail in the fall. 🍌

Above, right: Erik Oliver of Oxford College wields a walk-behind bush hog to eliminate tough invasives such as Chinese privet.

Below: David Waller, volunteering for Keep Covington/Newton Beautiful, cuts back unwanted vines.



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# 2008 FFA Wildlife Camp

By Robert Phillips, Volunteer Coordinator, Alcovy Conservation Center

The Georgia Wildlife Federation staff has often discussed how times have changed. Most of us grew up in the outdoors either hunting, fishing, camping, hiking or just enjoying watching nature in all of its glory. Today's technology has certainly changed the way the current generation passes time. The television, iPod, computer and cell phone brought us, at the touch of a button, an extraordinary amount of information, but these modern day instruments have hijacked our youth from the fields and woods that once renewed so many of us spiritually. The extraordinary national success of the book, *Last Child in the Woods*, by Richard Louv indicates that GWF staff members are not the only ones concerned by this modern day turn of events.

GWF has long recognized the problem and has often partnered with like-minded organizations to serve up the solution. In 2008 GWF partnered with Georgia Power, the American Fisheries Society, the Georgia Bass Chapter Federation, and the state Wildlife Resources Division of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources to assist Georgia youth in attending one of several week-long FFA Wildlife Camps in Covington, Georgia. During the week youth are tested physically and mentally. They are offered the opportunity to shoot rifles, catch and clean fish and learn outdoor cooking skills. They learn those skills that make their outdoor time enjoyable and at the same time are challenged to conserve this outdoor heritage for future generations.

I would like to thank our partners of 2008 and extend an invitation to anyone who wishes to sponsor our Georgia youth in one of the week-long camps during 2009 to contact Robert Phillips at 770-787-7887. Help us challenge our youth, conserve wildlife and Georgia's outdoor heritage.

This year a surprise visitor, Governor Sonny Perdue, showed up at the docks of the FFA camp located on the Alcovy River. Governor Perdue (standing, center below) graciously took time to have photos taken with the Yellow Yaks team. 🐾



## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**Sept 27:** Junior & Cadette Girl Scout "Wetlands Patch" program at Mill Creek. 9am-12pm. Call 770-787-7887 or [chassell@gwf.org](mailto:chassell@gwf.org) to register.

**Oct 4:** Intro to Adopt-A-Stream, Alcovy Conservation Center. 10am.

**Oct 11:** WingSong Gardens Work Day at the GWF Alcovy Conservation Center, Covington. 9:30-12:00.

**Oct 11:** Rivers Alive, Mill Creek Nature Center. Contact [chassell@gwf.org](mailto:chassell@gwf.org) to volunteer and for information.

**Oct 11:** Rivers Alive, Alcovy Conservation Center. Volunteers meet at Covington Square, 8:00am.

**Oct 23:** Cornish Creek Trail Workday at GWF Alcovy Conservation Center, Covington. 9:30 - 12:00.

**Oct 24:** Cornish Creek Trail Workday at GWF Alcovy Conservation Center, Covington. 9:30 - 12:00.

**Oct 25:** Biological Adopt-A-Stream Workshop, Alcovy Conservation Center. 10am.

**Nov 7-9:** HemlockFest. Benefit music festival to raise awareness and funds to help save the eastern and Carolina hemlock trees. Visit [www.lumpkincoalition.org](http://www.lumpkincoalition.org) for more details.

**Nov 8:** Chemical Adopt-A-Stream Workshop, Alcovy Conservation Center. 10am.

**Nov 8:** Adopt-A-Stream Monitoring of Cornish Creek, Alcovy Conservation Center, Call 770-787-7887 to register. 12 noon.

**Nov 13:** Alcovy River Workday at East End Road, Covington; 10:00 - 1:00.

**Nov 14:** Alcovy River Workday at East End Road, Covington; 10:00 - 1:00.

**Nov 15:** Junior Girl Scout "Wildlife" badge program at Mill Creek. 9am-12pm. Call 770-787-7887 or [chassell@gwf.org](mailto:chassell@gwf.org) to register.

**Nov 22:** Alcovy River Workday at East End Road, Covington; 9:30 - 3:30.

**Dec 4:** WingSong Gardens Workday at GWF Alcovy Conservation Center, Covington; 10:00 - 12:00.

**Dec 5:** WingSong Gardens Workday at GWF Alcovy Conservation Center, Covington; 10:00 - 12:00.

**Dec 13:** Cornish Creek Trail Workday at GWF Alcovy Conservation Center, Covington; 9:30 - 3:30.

*For more information on GWF Volunteer opportunities at the Alcovy Conservation Center, call 770-787-7887 or email [rphillips@gwf.org](mailto:rphillips@gwf.org).*



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