

NEWS RELEASE

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Poignant exhibit, events highlight Georgia's forests

The trees do the talking in "*Southern Wild Lands: Exceptional Remnants of the Great Eastern Forest*" opening this month at the Fernbank Museum of Natural History. The exhibit by well-known nature photographer Kathryn Kolb conveys poignant messages from the heart of Georgia's most ancient forests to the urban population, reminding us of our roots and responsibilities.

The exhibit and opening reception July 22, 5:30-7 p.m., are part of a series of events spearheaded by The Wilderness Society, to raise public awareness about the importance of wild lands in the Southeast. The mission of the Society, a national non-profit organization founded in 1935, is to develop a nationwide network of wild lands so that future generations enjoy the clean air and water, beauty, wildlife, and opportunities for recreation and spiritual renewal provided by the nation's pristine forests, rivers, deserts, and mountains.

The exhibit continues through Sept. 18 and will be followed by a gala dinner October 1 at Clark Atlanta University, featuring keynote speaker, the Honorable John Lewis. The dinner will recognize the work of Congressman Lewis, the renowned civil rights activist and conservationist, and celebrate The Wilderness Society's publication of "*Why Wilderness? What the Last Remaining Wild Lands of the Southern Appalachians Mean to the People of the Southeast.*" Congressman Lewis, who wrote a moving preface to "*Why Wilderness?*" will speak on the value of wild lands in the Southeast. Other presentations at the dinner will include an address by Frank Peterman, Director of Public and Political Awareness for the Eastern Forest Program of The Wilderness Society, on the topic of wilderness and African American involvement in today's environmental community.

The series of events will continue with in-depth seminars, meetings, and hiking tours, bringing together members of local and national environmental organizations, urban and rural community leaders, decision-makers from government and private institutions, scholars, journalists, and other interested members of the public.

The seminar series will follow the dinner later in 2005 and in 2006. Topics will include the historical value of wilderness to African Americans from the 17th through the 19th centuries, the role of wilderness and the concept of freedom in America, the congruencies of the civil rights and environmental movements, and an introduction to the exceptional wild lands remaining in the Southeast today.

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