

# Opinions

Everybody has one...

## Hazard Mitigation Planning

Disasters can happen anywhere and at any time. Dealing with disasters is a full-time job for the Union County Fire Department and Emergency Management Agency (UCEMA). The UCEMA follows the fundamental principles of emergency management when dealing with disasters. These principles include prevention, preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery. Mitigation is a major aspect of emergency management and involves community participation and planning.

Mitigation is commonly defined as sustained actions taken to reduce or eliminate long-term risk to people and property from hazards and their effects. This is referred to as hazard mitigation.

Hazard mitigation focuses attention and resources on community policies and actions that will produce benefits over time. In order to do this, UCEMA has developed a Hazard Mitigation Plan which is updated and approved every five years.

The plan is a guide for UCEMA and the community. Included in the plan is a profile of Union County; the hazards that may affect our area; and mitigation strategies that may be used to reduce the impact of these hazards on our community. Union County uses the plan to obtain grants and other funding to carry out the hazard mitigation strategies.

The current plan was updated in late 2014 and was approved by Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA) and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in 2015. A Hazard Mitigation Plan update involves input from government organizations, public safety, private organizations and the general public.

It is now time to update the current plan and UCEMA has received a grant to help with the cost of the update. UCEMA will host a Kick-off meeting Wednesday, January 30 at 10 am. The meeting will be held at Headquarters Station located at 507 Shoe Factory Rd. The purpose of this meeting is to introduce participants to the planning process and to begin gathering information for the update.

There will be several meetings during the year which will evaluate the current plan; update vital information; and update the hazard mitigation strategies for the next five-year cycle. Once the plan has been completed, it must be evaluated and approved by

See Dyer, page 5A

**Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief**  
David Dyer



## Faith v. Science

John Lennox is a math professor (emeritus) at Oxford. If you were to hear him speak, you'd agree that he is affable, unassuming, and disarming. And smart. He holds seven academic degrees, including three doctorates.

In his latest book, "Can Science Explain Everything?" he tells a story from early in his career. The Soviet Union's university in Novosibirsk invited him to lecture. The faculty welcomed him, but were perplexed by his belief in God. So they filled an auditorium to hear him explain.

He told them that the great pioneers of modern science were men of faith. Galileo, Pascal, Newton, and others had foundational impact on the modern sciences of mathematics, astronomy, physics, and chemistry. Their faith was not an incidental detail. Their biblical worldview made modern science possible. Lennox quoted historian Edwin Judge: "The modern world is the product of a revolution in scientific method... Both experiment in science and the citing of sources as evidence in history, arise from the worldview of Jerusalem, not Athens, from Jews and Christians." His audience realized that scientific atheism had denied them these significant details.

As science discovers more of the intricate details of nature, only a relentless ideological commitment can stifle the obvious evidence of a Designer. Yet the modern zeitgeist would still drive a scientific wedge between people and our Creator. That's not new. In the oldest book in the Bible, God poses questions to such revisionists. "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding, who set its measurements? Since you know. Or who stretched the line on it? On what were its bases sunk?" (Job 38:4-6).

Jesus was there, and He will forever know more science than we do. "By Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible... all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together" (Col. 1:16-17).

Many notable scientists reject the ideology of scientific atheism. In the 20th C., over 70% of Nobel Prize Laureates in chemistry and physics were Christians. So don't be fooled by the

See Fowler, page 5A

**All Things New**  
Wayne Fowler



## Commissioner's Questions

**Q. Does the Union County Development Authority assist with new restaurants and/or businesses wanting to locate in Union County?**

A. They absolutely do. Most of the work is done in the background providing data, assisting with potential site selection and helping them understand the local process. The Director of the Union County Development Authority spends countless hours assisting in just about any new establishment.

**Q. Does it matter if a new restaurant or business moves into the city versus the county?**

A. No, because we are all glad to support and assist where ever a business chooses to locate. However, if it is a business going to locate in the city, they will often know about it first because of the required permitting process. Once a location is chosen, then the county is involved with the construction permitting.

**Q. We have heard numerous rumors of certain restaurants that are going to locate in Union County. Can you verify any of them?**

A. No, I cannot. Often, I do not know the answer, but in the end, all new businesses want to make their own announcement regarding their future location and opening date. The county and the Union County Development Authority respect that.

**Q. How complicated is it for a national or regional chain business to locate here?**

A. It is a very complicated process for any new chain restaurant or business wherever they locate. If the new business is a chain, there is an extremely long and complicated approval process before they ever choose a community to locate in. Then rarely does a chain organization purchase and buy their own real estate site. They usually have a development company that searches for property and often more than one company. This company usually deals with the local authorities and or property owners. Often, the development company will purchase the land and build the building and lease it to the new business.

**Q. When can we expect to hear from any new businesses or restaurants that will locate here?**

A. All I can tell you is that because we are a thriving com-

See Paris, page 5A

**Q & A from Union County Commissioner**  
Lamar Paris



## Drug Free Mountain Life

### How to Identify Drug Paraphernalia

A critical part of understanding teen drug use is awareness about drug paraphernalia—the items kids use to hide or consume drugs.

You may find some of these items in your child's bedroom, car or backpack and question what they are for: plastic baggies or small paper bags, cigarette packages and electronic-cigarettes, or extra makeup bags. Other unusual items might be small glass vials and pill bottles, lipstick dispensers and candy or gum wrappers.

Certain drugs require specific paraphernalia to use. Marijuana use would require rolling papers, cigars used to fill with marijuana to make a blunt, pipes (metal, wooden, acrylic, glass, stone, plastic, ceramic), bongs (a filtration device to smoke marijuana), roach clips (a metal holder for a marijuana cigarette) or E-Cigarettes (to smoke marijuana concentrates).

See Drug Free, page 5A

The DRUG FREE MOUNTAIN LIFE campaign supports an overall safe community by providing information, education and support services to children, families, and community toward prevention of illegal substance abuse.



## Chamber of Commerce

The Chamber Awards Night is fast approaching and I hope everyone has purchased a ticket or reserved a table. You will have an opportunity to meet our new Board members and help us to say thank you to several members that are rolling off the board. We will also be recognizing our ambassador and business of the year. As a special treat we will recognize a very special person that has become the face of our community and exemplifies service. Please come join us January 24th at the Community Center for an evening of fun.

The Chamber's mission statement is to positively impact our community and members by facilitating tourism, economic and cultural development. One means of achieving these goals as a Chamber of Commerce is through business education which leads to business growth. At the Chamber, we have been fortunate to hear numerous speakers share a wealth of information on business marketing. Here are a few key points

See Chamber, page 5A

**Blairsville - Union County Chamber President**  
Steve Rowe



## Letters to the Editor

### Social Security and Medicare

Dear Editor,

Incredibly, the U.S. national debt is now \$2 trillion higher than the day President Trump took office. This is in large part due to his reckless tax policies that benefit mainly wealthy Americans and multinational corporations - and have done little to boost workers' wages or positively impact retirees. Despite promises that his law would pay for itself and give a tremendous boost to our economy, it's actually reduced national income because a third of the tax cut went to foreign nationals. What's worse, it's now putting massive pressure on lawmakers to rein in soaring budget deficits. And Social Security and Medicare are always the first targets for deficits hawks.

Bottom line: the Trump-GOP tax cuts have ballooned our national debt and now threaten the future of Social Security and Medicare. The tax law has been a big bust for everyone but corporate executives. And so any move by President Trump or his allies in Congress to slash earned benefits to pay down soaring budget deficits must be met with stiff resistance by American workers and retirees - those who have paid into these programs their entire working lives and who deserve to have their benefits paid in full in their retirement.

Just saying,  
Jim Morris

### Mending Wall

Dear Editor,

While listening to Trump's press conference following his meeting with Congressional leaders dealing with funding for his beloved wall, or fence, or barrier, I saw a parallel between this wall and a gated community here in the good old USA. I was also astonished at his inability to speak cohesively. His performance sounded more like a James Joyce stream of consciousness novel than a press briefing.

A typical gated community has an entry point guarded either by a possibly armed guard or a gate with electronic keypad opener. Often, the gate will have surveillance cameras watching out for interlopers.

The main difference between that and entry points along our border is the degree of search processes used to keep unwanted people, drugs, guns, etc., from entering the USA. The similarity is that things appear to look better on the other side, therefore the gate, whether the motivation is jobs or thievery. And let's not forget the implicit elitist hiding behind that wall. Robert Frost had it right: walls do not make good neighbors. (See his poem, "Mending Wall," 1914).

See Schilling, page 5A

## RC&D

### Smokey's Tips for Safe Debris Burning

Spring is coming, (I promise)! It always has and this year should be no exception. Spring is the time for us to emerge from our winter hibernation, shake off our winter coat and start cleaning our yards to get rid of all the debris, leaves, limbs, and pine straw that has collected since last fall.

The usual method to do this is to pile it in the yard, light a match and watch it burn. While this debris burning is easy, quick, and smells good, it is also very hazardous for our houses. All it takes is one spark from the burn pile to fly up and land on a leaf covered roof and you can be the subject of a 911 call which brings the bright red rucks with flashing lights, sirens, and water hoses. How embarrassing and devastating!

A glowing ember from your burning pile can travel up to a mile with the right wind and land where it is not detected and cause a fire that you or your neighbor may not be aware of until it's too late. Debris burning is Georgia's #1 cause of wildfire, and it accounts for over 50 percent of all wildfires in the state and burning leaf piles in your yard is the most common cause of these wildfires. All debris burning requires a FREE burn permit from the Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) for the burner be free of liability if the fire escapes and destroys your neighbors house. Burning forests, agricultural fields or land clearing, requires direct GFC notification and their approval before you can strike the match. Burning of household garbage is prohibited and not permitted by the GFC and the fire department.

A major cause of wildfires is burning with improper weather conditions. Permits are obtained by calling your local GFC county office or dialing 1-877-OK2-BURN. It's free and releases you from liability if your leaf pile turns into a raging inferno. Fires should not be initiated before 8 a.m. and should be completely extinguished before dark.

Burning permits are for Hand Piled Natural Vegetation and existing small garden spots only, including leaf piles on the premises where they fell, existing small clearings to plant vegetables and flower gardens, vegetative debris disposal from storm damage, weed abatement, and disease and or pest prevention. This permit does not include the burning of debris generated by machine clearing of an area for establishing a garden spot or other clearings. If your unpermitted fire gets out and damages your neighbor's house, you can be held liable, or if it burns your

See Riley, page 5A

**RC&D Executive Director**  
Frank Riley



## The Grand Old Man

Clifford Hyde was originally from the Shoal Creek area of Dawsonville, Georgia. However, he was involved in a fight in Atlanta and thought he had killed a man. So he fled Georgia for Alabama sometime around 1890 and raised his family in the town of Phil Campbell. He was my Dad's grandfather. I can remember him as a white headed old man that wore a gray Stetson hat and round wire rimmed glasses. He was less than 6 feet tall and only weighed about 150 pounds.

When my great grandfather was 75 he came down with some kind of ailment which caused him to lose his drive. He felt listless and really just wanted to lie around all the time. He asked my Dad to take him to see the doctor. They drove to the doctor's office in Haleyville. When his name was called Clifford went into the examination room and told the Doctor about his problems. The old Doctor examined him and left the room. He was gone about 5 minutes. Upon his return Doc Underwood told him he was going to give him the newest medicine. The doctor further explained that if he would take the medicine correctly he could expect to live another 15-20 years. My great grandfather died in 1968, which was 15 years after his doctor's visit where he received nothing more than cherry Kool-Aid. Dad and his family knew the Doctor had given him Kool-Aid. But, he thought it was a wonder drug and everybody was told about this drug. He said, "This stuff is a miracle". Doc Underwood's Office was bogged down with requests for this special Kool-Aid.

As the old fellow aged he became known as the "Grand Old Man" of Phil Campbell. Each Saturday he visited 3 places in town, the Barber shop, the Pool Hall and the Old Men's bench in front of City Hall. One of his best friends was the local Chief of Police, Mr. Looney. Mr. Looney enjoyed sitting with and listening to all the old men on the Old Men's bench. He was especially fond of Clifford and anytime a still was busted he would bring a pint to his old friend.

As Mr. Looney aged he became a little slower and the City Council decided he needed some help. So, a young deputy was hired. The young man didn't know about the arrangement between Mr. Looney and Clifford. One Saturday my father drove 85 year old Clifford to town. They were in the pool hall and Clifford was entertaining the younger folks with his stories. He reached into his coat pocket and pulled his flask from the pocket. He took a swig about the time the young deputy walked by the front door. Clifford had just placed the flask back into his

See Cummings, page 5A

**Around The Farm**  
Mickey Cummings



## Working with Wildlife

Wildlife can be part of what makes living in the mountains so beautiful. When you see deer serenely grazing in a nearby field they look very peaceful. However, if those same deer are eating the plants around your house or garden they can seem like a menace. Let's talk about wildlife and some steps that you can take to protect your property from wildlife.

To start off I want to say that to have success in managing wildlife can take a lot of hard work and perseverance. There is no magic bullet. These are living creatures with a mind of their own. You may end up having to redefine what success is for you. For example, having healthy soil means that you will have more earthworms and grubs in the soil. Those earthworms will attract moles. So sometimes we have to reevaluate what success is going to be realistically.

The best action model to use when trying to manage wildlife is H.E.R.L. H.E.R.L. stands for Habitat modification, Exclusion, Removal or Repellent, and Lethal control. Habitat modification means making your space less attractive to wildlife. This can include things like mowing the grass and removing brush or debris piles. Tall grass and piles gives cover to mice and mice are a food source for snakes. Therefore, removing those habitats will make your space less welcoming to snakes. Cutting dead limbs and removing trees eliminates habitat for bats, flying squirrels, and woodpeckers.

The next step is exclusion. Exclusion is using fences or other barriers to keep wildlife out. When using a fence make sure that it works for the specific wildlife that you're trying to exclude. A fence for deer will need to be eight to ten feet tall. A fence for wild hogs may only need to be three to four feet tall, but very sturdy. A fence to keep rabbits out may only need to be two feet high, but should also be buried at least six inches so that they can't dig under it. If you are working with wildlife that burrow the fence will need to be buried to be effective. Around your house make sure that doors, window, pipes, wires, and cables are well sealed to keep wildlife from coming indoors.

Removal involves trapping the animal and moving to another location. The issue with removal is that it only treats the symptom and not the problem. Safety is a concern whenever you are moving a wild animal. Another concern is legality. There are laws regarding the transportation of wildlife. For example, it is illegal to transport wild hogs in Georgia. Repellents are products that you can use to scare or discourage

See Williams, page 5A

**Watching and Working**  
Jacob Williams



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