

Opinions

Everybody has one...

New Outdoor Burning Info

Last week, you may have seen an article talking about the changes that have been made concerning Georgia's outdoor burning notification system. The article also talked about the responsibilities of people who are burning. These changes took effect on July 1, 2021, and it is important that everyone understand them.

In the past, if a person wanted to burn leaves and yard debris, they were required to obtain a burn permit through the Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC). That involved going online or calling 1-877-OK2BURN to obtain a burning permit number. Senate Bill 119 changed the law concerning burning. The law no longer requires a burner to inform the GFC online or by phone about their intention to burn leaf piles and yard debris. In fact, the notification system to obtain a permit for these types of burns will no longer be available.

The change in the law did incorporate five safety standards that must be followed by persons who are burning. A GFC awareness campaign has been launched by the commission. The main theme is asking people to "Take Five" before the burn and to remember the acronym "S-S-T-A-R" representing the five points of the burning safety standard.

The first "S" represents Space. There must be 25 feet or more between the fire and woodlands. The second "S" also represents Space stating that there must be 50 feet or more between the fire and any structures. The "T" represents Time. Burning can only be conducted from sunrise to sunset. The "A" represents Attendance. A person responsible for the fire must stay onsite with the fire until it is completely extinguished.

The "R" represents Reasonable Precautions. The concept of reasonable precautions is to have tools and measures in place to prevent the fire from escaping. These include things such as a continuous pressurized water source on site; man-made or natural barrier to contain fire; hand tools or fire-containing equipment on site; weather awareness such as red flag warnings, High Fire Danger designation, and other hazardous conditions such as low relative humidity, high winds, etc.

The change in the law may have eliminated the need for a burn permit on certain burns but it did not change what you are

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Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief

David Dyer



Washington's Prayer

At the end of the Revolutionary War, George Washington's desire was to retire to his estate on the Potomac River. I can see why. Mount Vernon is situated on a picturesque and productive land, quite suitable for a retired soldier and gentleman farmer.

In his 1783 letter to the governors of the states resigning as commander of the Continental Army, he expressed hope for the country's future. He wrote that his prayer was that Americans would "demean ourselves, with that charity, humility, and pacific temper of mind, which were the characteristics of the Divine Author of our blessed Religion, and without an humble imitation of whose example in these things, we can never hope to be a happy Nation."

In modern English, he was saying that for the new country to work, its citizens must act toward each other with the love, humility, and peace that Jesus modeled. For the lives of 25,000 American soldiers not to be lost in vain, the new nation must succeed. To that end he believed we would do well to imitate Jesus. We still need that, and Christians can lead the way.

Jesus loved by caring for poor, disenfranchised, and suffering people. Government social programs are no substitute for that kind of love. Christians still do heavy lifting in this area and do it with a personal touch. Jesus also loved by telling the truth. American culture is courting destructive ideologies and Christians must speak the truth in love, and not repeat popular deceptions.

Jesus, God the Son, showed humility by stepping into the world He made. He put others before Himself, even unto death on the cross. Christians model humility by seeing the value of every person and respecting all people as God's image-bearers. Not every disagreement is an argument that must be won. "With humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves" (Phil. 2:3).

We need a peaceful state of mind. Jesus lived a peaceful lifestyle motivated by a higher purpose. Through Him we are reconciled to, and have peace with God. We are also reconciled to one another (Eph. 2:14ff). Racial, political, and interpersonal strife cannot coexist with the peace of Christ.

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All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Q. What is Pickleball?

Pickleball is a cross between tennis, badminton, and ping pong. It uses a ball a little smaller than a tennis ball, but it is hard plastic with holes in it similar to a wiffleball. The paddle is similar to old "hand ball" paddles and are solid wood or one of the many other lightweight graphite products on the market now. The paddles are smaller than a tennis racquet but larger than a ping pong paddle. The pickleball courts are smaller than a tennis court, but the game idea is very similar.

Q. Why have I never heard of this sport?

A. This game was invented in 1965 by three dads, whose children were bored with the other summertime activities. It has just recently gained in popularity across the United States, including here. The game was named Pickleball after one of the original family's dog, whose name was Pickles. The dog would chase the ball and run off with it while the children were playing. Thus, the name Pickleball. The game has become extremely popular over the past 10 years. It can be played by people of all ages, and Pickleball tournaments can now be found throughout north Georgia.

Q. What size and layout is a Pickleball court?

A. These courts are the same size as a doubles badminton court which is 20 feet by 40 feet. You can basically put two Pickleball courts on one tennis court. The net height is a little different than the net for tennis. It is 36 inches at the edges and 34 inches in the center. Courts can be specifically designed for Pickleball, but existing tennis courts or badminton courts can be converted into Pickleball courts. The game can be played with 2 or 4 people.

Q. Can this game be played indoors on a basketball court?

A. Yes, it can. You can have four Pickleball courts on a typical basketball court with proper striping.

Q. Where is Pickleball currently played in Union County?

A. Union County built a new Pickleball Complex behind the Health Department and adjacent to the new Union County Sports Center. The contemporary design features 8 pickleball

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Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



Hire a Vet

Coming up on July 25, and since 2017, we will be celebrating National Hire a Veteran Day. Founded by Marine Corps Veteran Dan Caporale, Hire a Veteran Day was brought into being as a call to action for employers to recognize what veterans have to offer.

Also in 2017, the HIRE Vets Act was passed, and as a result, the HIRE Vets Medallion Program was created "to recognize employers that demonstrate outstanding commitment to hiring and retaining veterans."

Thousands of veterans each year make the transition from military to civilian life and have much to offer in the civilian job market. The VA official site VA Careers is available for job seekers, with many types of employment available, including positions in senior leadership, IT, training and more. You never know how your military service may translate into a civilian career.

Veterans who explore the possibility of

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Military Musings

Janice Walters-Taylor



Letters to the Editor

Out of Touch

Dear Editor,
Biden's Department of Veterans Affairs is enacting a new policy that will pay for gender change surgery for active duty and reserve personnel as well as veterans.

According to VA Secretary Denis McDonough, paying for the expensive surgeries will allow "transgender vets to go through the full gender confirmation process with VA at their side." This is obviously an effort by the Biden administration to make diversity and inclusion a priority as opposed to the readiness of our troops for combat.

See Groza, page 5A

Broken Relic

Dear Editor,
Mr. Chip Rogers, the former Georgia Senate Majority Leader, wrote the following commentary about property taxes for the Georgia Public Policy Foundation in 2009. This was after the mortgage industry crash in 2008, and housing prices fell also, but not their assessments so much.

"Georgia's property tax system is a broken relic of a bygone agrarian-based economy. It

See Sims, page 5A

Re: "A Letter to America"

Dear Editor,
Just wanted to commend Lucinda Guthrie for her honest letter in the June 23 paper. Everything she said is true and I say hear, hear.

Joni Gesvain

Lucky or Blest?

Dear Editor,
As a Christian who believes that luck could be the draw of the card, buying a lottery ticket or going to the casino could bring someone luck, if you win. There is always a chance you could be lucky at these types of games, but I have never read in God's Holy Book the Bible that luck ever played a part in God's creation plan or that luck was part of God's overall plan for this universe. Some folks may say, "You were lucky that you didn't get sick or die from some type of illness or even the COVID, which has taken its toll." Well, I can assure you it wasn't luck that saw my wife Janie and I through our time with COVID a few weeks back, it was the hand of God intervening on our behalf — a blessing, not luck, a miracle indeed from a loving Father in heaven.

Why were we spared while others were not? Only God has the right to give and take life as pleases Him. None of us deserve God's blessings, but He does shower us with blessings un-

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Nature's Bulldozers

Feral or wild hogs are not something most of us usually think about until one morning we look out at our manicured yard or hay field and see that and it looks like a bulldozer had moved across it during the night.

Wild boar, feral swine and Eurasian boar are members of the same biological species — *Sus scrofa*. Pigs, or swine, were first introduced to North America by Spanish explorers in the early 16th century. Some escaped; some were released intentionally. The actions of these explorers led to the number of wild pigs now present in America. Pigs were initially favored by early North American settlers because of their lack of required care. Settlers raised pigs with free-range practices for centuries.

In the early 1900s, the introduction of the Eurasian species of boar for sport hunting resulted in this group's interbreeding with free-ranging domestic pigs readily present. Due to the cross breeding that occurred and unique features of pig biology, the pig population expanded considerably. This caused immeasurable economic and ecologic damage across the United States. Due to the extent of interbreeding between these two subspecies, the Eurasian boar and free-ranging domestic pig are now considered by most experts to be the same animal — the wild pig.

Unclaimed free-ranging populations of wild pigs quickly increased and spread throughout the United States. Major contributing factors for the success of wild pigs are short reproductive cycles and large litter sizes. Since these animals descended from domestic stock, they were selected for their high reproductive potential.

Wild pigs are the most fertile large mammal in existence. They have a gestation period of 112-115 days, or about 16 weeks. Females can begin reproducing at 6 months of age. A typical sow will give birth to two litters per year consisting of four to six piglets per litter. Under the right conditions, a sow may produce up to 13 piglets in one litter. Doing the math, one sow can contribute over 50 pigs per year when her offspring start multiplying, because she can produce four to 13 piglets every 115 days!

While large litters were an ideal trait in a domestic hog, this characteristic has persisted in feral strains and is a major cofactor in the explosion of the wild pig population. Wild pigs travel in groups called sounders consisting of two or three related adult females and their offspring. Males, especially larger boars, are often solitary. It is common for members of a

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RC&D Executive Director

Frank Riley



The Swimming Hole

My grandfather, Columbus, was raised with a bunch of his cousins and friends just outside of Pihl Campbell, Alabama, in a little community called Trapptown. The people of this little community were extremely close, and they managed to enjoy life even though the country was in turmoil due to the Depression. The boys of the family enjoyed playing baseball, fishing in the creek, coon hunting, and in the summertime, they swam at the mill pond on Cummings Creek.

During the 1930s, parents were very conservative with their children. You never saw a girl wearing a pair of shorts. Young men and women didn't go on dates by themselves. Boys and girls didn't go swimming together. The young people around the little community of Trapptown had different swimming times for the "Swimming Hole on Cummings Creek." Actually, the boys didn't even wear bathing suits. So, the boys swam from 1:30 until 3:30. After the boys left, the girls would swim until 5:30. This arrangement allowed the boys and girls to swim for the same amount of time, and it worked well for most of Coon's teenage years.

But then Coon began to notice girls. There were three girls in the community who were sisters. Even though the girls had been a part of Papa's life since he could remember, he'd never noticed them. But, one day of a sudden, Coon noticed the Lauderdale Girls, and they were beautiful. That is when the trouble began.

One particularly hot day during the Dog Days of August, the boys were having a great time at the swimming hole. When it came time for the boys to get out of the water so the girls could swim, they refused. The girls hollered at them from the top of the bluff, "Your time is up. It's time for us girls to swim." Papa said, "We just laughed and kept swimming." The problem with these girls was this: not only were these girls pretty, but they were also smart.

While the boys were still swimming, the Lauderdale Girls slipped down to where they had left their clothes. The eldest girl knew Papa was the ringleader of the boys. So, Sarah placed her underwear in the bib pocket of his overalls. After a while, Coon and his brothers got out of the water, put on their clothes and made their way home. By the time they got home it was suppertime. When Papa and his brothers walked into the house, their mother, Laura, told them to take off their dirty clothes and place them on the back porch. Coon was bad about leaving items in his pockets. So, his mother went through his pockets after he had

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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Cicada Damage

As the summer begins to wind up and the temperatures become hotter, folks around the county are beginning to take notice of our dense green foliage this year, which is mostly due to all of the rain we've had this last winter and spring. It has made the moisture content in the soil easier for the plants to get at, and therefore they are taking full advantage of it. Lately though, concerned citizens have been bringing in pictures, descriptions and even whole branches of trees and shrubs whose ends are dead or dying. Most reports are on the western end of Union and Towns, around places like Jones Creek, 325, and Loving Road. The most frequently asked about (and most noticeably damaged) species of plants are the White Oak trees, but there are also less frequent reports on other oak species, some apple and pear trees, and blueberry plants in particular.

No instances we have seen point to a disease, lack of nutrients, or worm damage, as the symptoms can be similar and can easily be mistaken for these problems. Instead, we can safely say that these injuries are caused by the 17-year cycle of the cicada, commonly known as Brood X. This damage occurs when the mature female cicada "oviposits," or lays her eggs, between the bark and cambium layer of wood in the tree's branch. As the larvae grow inside the branch, they feed on some of the sap that would usually flow to and from the leaves of the plant. In turn, as they grow, they get large enough to break out of the stem and subsequently fall to the ground, burrow near the tree, feed in small amounts on the root system "until next time," and the cycle repeats.

The damage often looks unsightly to homeowners and passers-by, but in terms of a 30 plus year old white oak, the damage is minimal, especially considering the great start to the year they had. Symptoms will not spread to other trees or even other parts of the same tree, as it is a one-time injury caused by the cicada. Adversely affected foliage and branches generally fall off after a good thunderstorm once the cicada larvae hatch and fall out. A sure-fire way to tell if it is in fact cicada damage is found when the underside of the branch looks like it was hit with a cheese grater. It will have periodic tears about 1/2 of an inch long with open ends where the larvae escaped; usually around 12 to 36 inches back from the tip of the branch. Within 6 inches or so back from the tear closest to the trunk, branches will usually have very little or no damage.

Thank you all who reported this damage, and care for the place you live and work enough

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Blairsville - Union County Chamber President

Steve Rowe



Watching and Working

Jacob Williams



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courts, and you will find them being utilized every day unless the weather is not cooperative.

Q. What type equipment is required?

A. You only need the paddle, the ball, a net and comfortable clothes and shoes.

Q. Is there an organized group playing this sport in Union County?

A. Yes there is. You can find them on Facebook when you search for "Blairsville Pickleball."

Q. Is this sport designed

Fowler... continued from Page 4A

Washington wrote, "I bid a last farewell to the cares of office and all the employments of public life." Six years later, he consented to be the first President of the United States under the new constitution.

If there is a lesson in this change of heart it is that a citizen's duty is never done. Even more, a Christian's duty

for adults?

A. Anyone can play this sport, but mostly adults play it. Some middle and high schools have incorporated it into their physical education program. It is a great sport for older adults who want to stay active, but it is not as intense as tennis. It is a competitive sport, with organized local, regional, and national tournaments.

Q. Is Pickleball a sport that is "Here to Stay"?

A. Yes. Many people are very passionate about the game.

Chamber... continued from Page 4A

All you have to do is pick up the North Georgia News or turn on the radio to know there is a lot going on in our State and here in our community. If you want to hear it directly from Commissioner Paris or our new Representative Stan Gunter, be sure to reserve your seat today. There promises to be some great information and we hope to have time for a few

questions. Contact the Chamber offices today to purchase your ticket.

If you want to know what's going on in Blairsville be sure to check out our website at www.visitblairsvillega.com or stop by the Chamber office and ask Sheila for some brochures.

Remember, it's always better in Blairsville!

Groza... continued from Page 4A

Should the taxpayers have to pick up the tab for soldiers or veterans that are searching for a cure for their gender dysphoria? Apparently the current administration thinks so. The Democrats' obsession with gay, lesbian, and transgender at every opportunity has now spilled over into the military.

The Biden administration's priorities are obviously all out of whack. How much longer can this nation survive being run like this? It's as if the out of touch Democrats are running the country into the ground on purpose. Are they really that incompetent?

Tim Groza

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fails every test of what constitutes good tax policy. It is not transparent, it is not easy to understand, it is not fair, it is not flat and, worst of all, it does not facilitate accountability.

"The most logical plan would be to scrap this 19th-century taxation model and move to one designed for a 21st-century economy. Sadly, few in elected office are willing to embrace this much-needed change, so the least we can do is add accountability. Property tax assessment caps offer real accountability.

"Currently in Georgia there are two major variables in the mathematical equation to determine a property owner's tax liability. The first variable is assessed value, as determined by the assessor. The second variable is the tax (millage) rate, determined by the local governing body.

"This year, Georgia legislators have proposed capping increases in assessed value at a maximum 3 percent per year. This effectively removes one of the variables in the equation.

"Why is a property tax cap a good idea? Because it would require elected officials to publicly cast a vote if they want to raise your property tax above 3 percent. This is real accountability – forcing elected officials to actually vote whether to raise or lower taxes. With no caps in place property taxes can rise dramatically simply by increased assessments.

"Opponents suggest such caps are not fair. They claim when a property has increased in value, based upon the opinion of a government employee, the property owner should be forced to pay more in taxes.

"It is important to note that no other form of taxation is based on an "unrealized" gain. Owners of stock don't pay a tax based upon the most recent stock quote. Instead, tax is paid on the actual market value of the stock at the time of sale.

"Perhaps the most troublesome feature of the current property tax system without assessment caps is that taxpayers essentially are punished for the actions of others. We would never accept this from other forms of taxation. Can you imagine an income tax law where you're required to pay more because your neighbor received a pay raise? This is exactly what happens under the current property tax system.

"Consider this scenario. Mr. Smith and Mr. Jones live

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a government job post-service also get the benefit of adding to their tenure years the number of years they served in the military. It's worth a look-see if you are in the job-seeking position.

Until we muse again, I bid you, "At ease!"

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sounder to exhibit cooperative nursing, during which piglets from all the females will suckle from one sow while the others stand watch for predators. This group behavior can be considered a contributing factor to low mortality rates of the wild pig.

Another trait that has made wild pigs so successful is the ability to utilize a variety of habitats. These animals are highly adaptable and inhabit a variety of habitats, including mountainous areas, forests, salt and brackish swamps and marshes, old growth pinelands, semiarid brush habitats, as well as many other habitat types. Since their introduction to North America, wild pigs have colonized more than 40 of the 50 states.

Wild pig populations are large and growing; their populations are present at uncontrollable densities in some areas, especially in the Southeastern states. In addition to other factors, the wide-ranging diet of wild pigs has helped make this species incredibly adaptable.

Wild pigs are opportunistic omnivores. They will

Cummings... continued from Page 4A

left them on the porch. She found the girl's underwear in his pocket. She grabbed the first thing handy which was a broom and marched into her son's bedroom.

There stood her son trying to put on a clean pair of britches. Later he told me, "All I heard was 'Columbus Cummings.' I looked up and was struck across the top of my head with a broom handle." After striking him, she held up the Lauderdale girl's underwear and shook them at her son. He tried to explain what happened to his mother. But each time he opened his mouth he was struck with the broom again and again. Later that evening Lon came into Coon's room to give him the "Father and Son talk." Many years later, he told me that his Momma and Papa always believed that he was guilty. But he always maintained his innocence.

He told me he had five to six knots on his head where his Momma had struck him with the broom. And that he and the other boys were forbidden to go swimming for the rest of that summer at their favorite swimming hole. Each time he would meet the Lauderdale Girls at Church or at the Store in Trapptown, Sarah Lauderdale would say, "Coon, the water is mighty fine down at the creek," while smiling and tossing her auburn-colored hair over her delicate shoulder. You would think he would be mad at this gall. But he always said that she was too pretty to be mad at very long.

Williams... continued from Page 4A

to do so. If you have any questions or concerns about this or any other agriculture or natural resource issue, please feel welcome to contact your County Extension Office.

Dyer... continued from Page 4A

allowed to burn. Only hand-piled leaves or naturally occurring yard debris can be burned. Household garbage or other man-made materials can not be burned.

Everyone who performs burns of hand-piled leaves or yard debris should research the new law and burn safety requirements. For more information about the new notification system or the five safety precautions, please visit www.gatrees.org.

Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

Combs... continued from Page 4A

unknown on those who are His chosen ones. God led us to the right people in the medical field that had the right meds that got rid of our COVID in five days, twice a day pills and antibiotics plus Zinc. My wife and I believe in the power of prayer and the healing of God's sovereign will for each one of us. Luck has never been mentioned in God's word, but His blessings are throughout the Scriptures that assure His children that it wasn't by chance or luck that you and I were born; it was divinely ordained by God, His son Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

So, next time you think luck is on your side, think of what blessings you are missing not being a child of God. His blessings outnumber the stars beyond our wildest dreams.

Frank F. Combs

cles, wild pigs can be considered "nature's bulldozers." The most common form of damage caused by pigs is ground disruption because of hunting for food. Destruction of crops, yards of homeowners, and natural habitat is of concern, and damage of a great magnitude can be created overnight.

Wild hogs live all around us on higher elevations as well as in the valleys. Several years ago on my farm, wild hogs destroyed the last acre of corn

that the bears had left for later, and while they were at it, they destroyed the church cemetery all in one weekend. Wild hogs are not just wreaking havoc in farmers' fields, but also in homeowners' yards in some of the communities right here in the mountains, so nothing is safe from these ravaging gangs of nature's bulldozers.

For more information on feral hogs, contact Chestatee-Chattahoochee RC&D at info.ccrd@gmail.com.