

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Outdoor Burning

Fall is here. It's the time of year where we expect cooler temperatures and changing leaves. As those leaves fall, many people start gathering them up and burning them. Unfortunately, we have had some extremely dry weather and some drought conditions. Outdoor burning in these dry conditions can lead to wildfires. Union County Fire Department and Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) would like to remind everyone of some safety tips and the proper procedures for outdoor burning.

When burning leaves and other yard debris, you must first obtain a burning permit from the GFC. The burning permit is easy to obtain by calling 1-877-OK2-Burn or by going online at www.gatrees.org. The permit requires some basic information. If burning is allowed that day, a permit number will be assigned. There may be times where burning is not allowed and, in those cases, permits will not be issued, and people should not burn. Outdoor burning permits are for the burning of natural vegetative materials. It is unlawful to burn man made materials such as tires, shingles, plastics, lumber, household garbage, etc.

Once you have a permit, it is time to prepare. Make sure that you have enough time to commit to burning. Prepare tools that may be needed to help control the fire such as shovels, rakes and a water hose. When preparing the debris pile, make small piles and clear 25 feet or more around the pile. You should never use any flammable liquids to start the fire. Remain with the fire until all debris is burned. If small embers remain, extinguish them with the water hose before leaving the fire.

People should also check the weather to know conditions prior to burning. Drought or dry conditions eliminate the moisture in the leaves which promotes ignition. If a burning leaf or ember from a controlled fire were to get blown into another area, the dry leaves would catch fire and the fire would spread quickly. These wildfires can be difficult to control and extinguish.

Currently, Union County is in D1 - Moderate Drought conditions. What does that mean? The drought intensity is classified in five levels. The levels are: D0 - Abnormally Dry, D1 - Moderate Drought, D2 - Severe Drought, D3 - Extreme Drought and D4 - Exceptional Drought. With little or no rain, the drought conditions

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Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



Trusted Authorship

Mark Twain published a book in 2017. With a little help from Professor John Bird and creative collaborators Philip and Erin Stead, Samuel Clemens (his real name) scored a bestseller 107 years after his passing!

Bird discovered Clemens' handwritten notes while researching old files. Clemens had written 16 pages of story fragments for a fairy tale intended for his daughters. The Steads stepped in to complete and illustrate the story, published as "The Purloining of Prince Oleomargarine," a title completely worthy of Clemens' wit.

So, Clemens wrote a few personal notes, and the Steads applied their literary and artistic acumen to produce an interesting story. A skeptical view of the Bible is like that. Maybe a notable person wrote a few words a long time ago, but many others added to it. So, it's an interesting, if not implausible story. I've heard other skeptical thoughts: Since people wrote the Bible, their thoughts can't be more true than ours, and, it's been translated so many times who knows what the real story is?

Why does it matter? Because if what the Bible says is true, it is life changing, with eternity in the balance. When you begin to find it trustworthy, you can begin to hear what it says about God and you. So let me offer a small serving of food for thought.

The oldest manuscript of the ancient writings of Roman historian Tacitus date 700 years after the original. The oldest copy of Homer's Iliad dates to 400 years after the original. James Madison wrote the U.S. Constitution 230 years ago. Yet the authorship and content of these documents are hardly questioned. The Bodmer Papyri contains writings about Jesus that date to within 130 years of the original. Yet the authenticity of John's Gospel is suspect?

So what if we have what the Bible writers produced, if it's still fiction? Paul anticipated that objection and pointed out that many eye witnesses were still alive to authenticate his writing. "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one

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All Things New
Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Q. I'm new to the area and I love living here. How do I find out about the upcoming festivals and different things happening in our area?

A. Welcome to Union County! There are several different avenues you can follow to gather information. You can always read our local newspaper, North Georgia News, you can visit our local Chamber of Commerce website at www.visitblairsvillega.com, and social media is always a great source of information.

Q. The road system is very confusing to me. What roads in the county are state roads?

A. There are two main state managed highways in Union County and Blairsville: The North and South highway is considered US19/129 or State Route 11 (SR 11); The East and West highway is considered State Route 515 (SR 515), US Highway 76 or State Route 2 (SR 2). We also have Highway 325, also known as Nottely Dam Road, and it runs from Highway 515 west to US 19/129, going across Nottely Dam on the North end of the lake. Then there is Highway 180 that goes from Suches to Brasstown Bald, with a short portion of this highway running in conjunction with 19/129. In Suches, there is State Route 60 (SR 60) which runs from the Fannin County line and goes all the way to the Lumpkin County line. Then there is US Route 348, also known as Richard Russell Scenic Highway, which turns South off of State Route 180 (SR 180) and goes across Hogpen Gap to the White County line. Lastly there is a short portion of State Route 180 (SR 180) Spur that goes up to Brasstown Bald.

Q. What is the difference between a State Route (SR) and a US Highway (Federal Highway)?

A. In most cases, a US Highway is funded by the Federal Government, although the State has to pitch in a certain percentage on projects and maintenance. Whereas a State Route (SR) is funded and maintained by the State of Georgia.

Q. What is the difference between a county maintained road and a private road?

A. A "county maintained road" is a designation that is given to roads that have been accepted by the county for maintenance and are obviously for public use and maintained with public funds.

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Q & A from Union County Commissioner
Lamar Paris



Drug Free Mountain Life

Facts About Vaping

E-cigarettes are battery-powered vaporizers that simulate the action and sensation of smoking. Their use is often referred to as vaping because they do not produce tobacco smoke, but rather an aerosol (often mistaken for water vapor). They are also known as e-cigs, e-hookahs, e-pipes,

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.

tanks, mods, vapes, electronic nicotine delivery systems, or ENDS, and more. Some youth refer to vaping devices by their brand name such as JUUL, BO, Blu, and others. Nearly all e-cigarettes contain nicotine. Nicotine is highly addictive and can harm the developing adolescent brain, because the brain is still developing until about age 25, youth and young adult exposure to nicotine can lead to addiction and disrupt attention and learning.

E-cigarettes work by heating a liquid to produce an aerosol that users inhale into their

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Letters to the Editor

New Heavens - New Earth

Dear Editor,

In 2 Peter 3:12 of the Bible, the book refers to the heavens being on fire that shall be dissolved and the elements shall melt with fervent heat and the earth shall be purged with fire as well. But then in verse 13, it says: According to God's promise we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness. Today, righteousness does not dwell in the earth. It is not at home in this sinful earth. It's not at home in any capitals in the world. Yes, there is a small percentage of people who believe in Jesus Christ, and only those who have put their trust and faith in Him will be able to live under these new heavens and a new sinless earth full of righteousness. I look forward to the time when righteousness dwells upon the new heavens and new earth.

In view of the facts that are true in the above paragraph, what should we Christians be doing for the cause of Jesus Christ? We should not be standing on the sidelines twiddling our thumbs and indulging in criticism. Oh, how we find it easy to criticize others before we look at the plank in our own eye. God says: What are you doing with my Word? Are you hiding it under a bush or have you buried it only in your own heart? Every person sitting in the pew needs to say to themselves, is God pleased with my actions? Do they match up with God's Word? Don't judge others, lest God judge you. We are here to get the Word of God out to the lost and dying souls that are headed to hell.

The day of the Lord is coming soon. We can see the handwriting in our sinful society where life has no value any longer. In the new heavens and new earth, life will have eternal value, and every breath we take will be full of God's righteousness and His loving grace forevermore into all of eternity.

Frank F. Combs

Indian Summer Festival

Dear Kenneth,

On behalf of the Suches Volunteer Fire Department, Station 5, I would like to thank you for your generous contribution of time and material in the printing of tickets for our rifle giveaway at the upcoming Indian Summer Festival.

As you may know, all proceeds from ticket sales are applied to the operating budget of Station 5, and any savings in overhead expenses increases our ability to provide fire and rescue services to the people living in and visiting Suches.

I also extend thanks to Allison Caldwell of your staff, who helped in formatting the content and look of the tickets, as well as the rapid turnaround of our order.

Kind Regards,

1st Lt. Ernie Pruitt

Union County Fire Department Station 5

Urban Interface Dangers

Citizens are moving farther into "natural" areas to take advantage of the privacy, natural beauty, recreational opportunities and affordable living. Developers are building neighborhoods to accommodate the influx. As a result, fire departments are fighting fires along the Wildland-Urban Interface, or WUI, defined as areas where homes are built near or among lands prone to wildland fire.

Depending on the area of the country, fire departments might refer to wildland fires as brush fires, forest fires, rangeland fires, or something else; however, they are all part of the WUI and all pose the same threat to local assets. The increase in the WUI threat has been steep because of continued development and exposure.

The WUI is not a place, per se, but a set of conditions that can exist in nearly every community. It can be a major subdivision or it can be four homes on an open range. According to the National Fire Protection Association, conditions include (but are not limited to): the amount, type, and distribution of vegetation; the flammability of the structures (homes, businesses, outbuildings, decks, fences) in the area, and their proximity to fire-prone vegetation and to other combustible structures; weather patterns and general climate conditions; topography; hydrology; average lot size; and road construction.

The WUI exists in every state in the country, and in our North Georgia counties, everyone lives in the WUI since forests are all around us and the danger from wildfire is just as great here as it is out west where they have the spectacular wildfires that can consume 400 homes in an afternoon. We don't normally have conditions like that here but if we lose one home to a wildfire, it is a tragedy just the same for the folks who live there and are without a home after the fire. Wind-blown embers are a major cause of concern in the WUI. Most structures within the WUI are not destroyed from direct flame impingement, but rather from embers. Embers may precede the flaming fire front, carried by the winds that distribute burning brands or embers over long distances, sometimes up to a half mile or more depending on the winds. These embers fall, or are wind-driven into receptive fuels at structures, often going undetected for some time. As the fire front passes, these small embers may ignite incipient fires that spread to the home and then from home to home in a neighborhood.

The Gatlinburg fires in 2017 were caused by ember showers from the mountains above that rained down on the unprepared city and

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RC&D Executive Director



Frank Riley

Bingo

As you may know, one of my favorite friends is Patrick. Together, we have worked on many agricultural projects for close to 30 years. A few years ago, we began working together in the Union County Canning Plant. And yes, we have hunted, fished and camped together a few times. In all the time we have spent together, I must say there has never been a dull moment. If you come by the Canning Plant on any given day after we have slowed down for the day, you can find us laughing at one of Patrick's stories, one of which left us in tears after we had processed our last jars of the year at the Canning Plant.

Some years ago while working in his garden, Patrick watched helplessly as a dog walked in front of a passing vehicle on Skeenah Gap Road. Patrick rushed to find the dog badly injured and yet alive. He gathered the dog in his arms and placed him in the back of his truck. The dog was transported to the local vet's office, where he was treated and released to the caring hands of my friend. Patrick didn't even own Bingo; however, he had a sizeable investment in the dog. Slowly, Bingo recovered and became his old self, which was to cause some major problems for Patrick.

Patrick and I met that morning, as was our custom at 5 a.m., to turn everything on in preparation of opening the Canning Plant. As usual, a little after daylight, I went outside to check the propane level in the tank. After checking the propane level, I walked back to the entrance of the plant. Before walking in the door, I noticed some wires hanging from the back of Patrick's truck. He crawled under the truck and found that Bingo had chewed up the wiring. The investment in Bingo just went up again.

A short time later, Patrick's mother was walking to the mailbox when she was tripped by Bingo, causing her to fall to the ground. After a trip to the doctor's office, Patrick's mother was found to be okay other than a few bumps and bruises. The investment of Bingo went up again. Bingo has left the playful puppy stage. He is an adolescent now and prone to wander. I suppose he is looking for girlfriends. Over the past couple of months, Patrick has made numerous visits to the pound to bail Bingo out of jail. I guess we could call each of these bailouts investments.

A few years ago right before Christmas, Bingo came up missing yet again. Patrick was told Bingo was over in Fannin County, so, he called the number provided to him. A lady answered the phone and was on her way to the pound with Bingo. She agreed to meet him at a

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Around The Farm



Mickey Cummings

Chamber of Commerce

Fall has finally arrived! As we head into October, families are planning their trips for fall break, Georgia fans are celebrating after the Notre Dame game, and curious callers have started asking when the leaves will be changing.

Our Buy Local Extravaganza is kicking off our October events on Thursday, Oct. 3, at North Georgia Technical College from 4-7 p.m. Afterwards, make your way Downtown for Shop Late Thursday. Both events will showcase a fantastic group of vendors including amazing restaurants (providing some tasty samples), wonderful retailers showcasing their merchandise, and an array of other unique entrepreneurs who can't wait to tell you more about what their businesses can do for you.

We continue to celebrate our new businesses with wonderful ribbon cutting ceremonies, averaging about one ribbon cutting a week. We love being able to help introduce our new entrepreneurs to the community. This serves as

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Blairsville - Union County Chamber President
Steve Rowe



Drought

We have been going through a very dry period. Let's take a look at some of the numbers and data. I'm also going to talk some about how this dryness has impacted agriculture and natural resources in our area.

As of September 25 the United States Drought Monitor has spots in the Southeast listed as abnormally dry, with some pockets appearing as in moderate drought, and some small spots as in severe drought. Union and Towns counties are listed as abnormally dry for the most part. The southern tips of both counties are listed as moderate drought. Lumpkin, White, Habersham, and Rabun are all in moderate drought. Some pockets on the south side of Atlanta are in severe drought.

According to the US drought monitor abnormally dry conditions means that topsoil moisture is decreased and planting is delayed. Fire risk is also elevated. In the coming weeks, with no sure signs of rain coming, I'd expect all of Union and Towns to move into the moderate drought category. This category means that crops are vulnerable, soil moisture is low, gardens and lawns require more water, stream and pond levels are lower, and water temperatures increase. Water temperatures increasing can become an issue for fish, namely trout. Increased water temperatures means less dissolved oxygen in the water. This can present issues for all aquatic life. As our lakes are drawn lower you may start to see weeds appear in places where you haven't seen them before. Aquatic weeds will begin to appear because as water levels drop sunlight is able to penetrate to areas that were too deep to allow sunlight before.

From July 1 to September 25 we've had 8.47 inches of rain according to the georgiaweather.net Blairsville station. In 2018 and 2017 we had over 13.6 inches of rain in that same period. 8.47 is comparable to 2016 when we had 8.49 inches over that same period of time. 2016 was a drought year. We are not near the level of drought that was experienced that year as we've already gotten more rain than all of 2016.

The lack of rainfall that we've had has created issues with non-irrigated crops. Hayfields haven't been able to grow like the normally would, and cattlemen may need to begin feeding hay sooner than anticipated because pastures haven't been able to grow back after grazing because of the lack of rain. No rain has also made conditions more dusty, which can lead to problems for people with allergies.

There are a couple of silver linings to the

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Watching and Working
Jacob Williams



North Georgia News

Published since 1909 • Legal Organ of Union County

Kenneth West
Publisher/Owner

Shawn Jarrard
Editor

Derek Richards
Advertising Director

Todd Forrest
Sports Editor

Mark Smith
Staff Writer

Lowell Nicholson
Photographer

Publication No: 001505

Advertising, News deadlines Friday at 4 p.m. • Mail Service for all subscriptions except 30512, 30514 & 30572 - One Year \$40. In county, carrier delivered subscription is \$3. All subscriptions must be paid in advance. NORTH GEORGIA NEWS is published weekly by NGN/TCH, Inc., 266 Cleveland Street, Blairsville, Georgia, 30512. Entered as Second Class Matter as of Dec. 10, 1981, at the Post Office in Blairsville. NORTH GEORGIA NEWS is not responsible for errors in advertising beyond the cost of the actual space involved. All advertisements are accepted subject to the Publisher's approval of the copy and to the space being available, and the Publisher reserves the right to refuse any advertisement.

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