

Snow...from Page 1A

said. "It's time to be prepared."

Union County Sheriff Mack Mason said the most important job is for everyone to be on the same page.

"That's everybody, including the schools," Sheriff Mason said. "If this comes to pass, folks just need to stay off the road unless there is an emergency."

On Jan. 28, county road department workers split into two shifts to spread 500 tons of salt and gravel on county roads. With a couple of weeks of rest, they're ready to do it again.

The last winter weather event cost taxpayers around \$30,000, Paris said.

"These events don't come cheap, that's for sure," Paris said. "By the time you count labor, materials, overtime and equipment, our total cost exceeded \$30,000, with just the salt and gravel being around \$18,000."

During the last event, county road department workers salted and scraped approximately 495 miles of asphalt roads and 26 miles of surface treatment roads, Paris said.

"They were working around the clock from Tuesday around 10 a.m. until Friday at midnight," Paris said. "They did an outstanding job."

Gov. Deal said he would expand his state of emergency order to additional counties as conditions warrant.



Union County Sheriff Mack Mason, above, and Chief Deputy John George, below, will focus their efforts to stay out in front of the snowstorms that are predicted to be headed our way Tuesday-Thursday. Photos/Charles Duncan

Good Fire / Bad Fire - Prescribed Burning

For most of the past year, I have been preaching about protecting our property from wildfire by doing whatever we can to prevent fires, but this week, I will do a complete flip and tell you how foresters intentionally set fires in the forest to prevent wildfires. That doesn't seem to make sense... we set a fire to prevent a fire? Using good fire under controlled conditions for fuel reduction is called prescribed fire. "Prescribed burning means the controlled application of fire to existing vegetative fuels under specific environmental conditions and following appropriate precautionary measures, which causes the fire to be confined to a pre-determined area and accomplishes one or more planned land management objectives, or to mitigate catastrophic wildfires."

Georgia Prescribed Burning Act, 1992. Prescribed fire has many benefits, including helping our forest wildlife by removing brush, briars, and undesirable vegetation that they can't eat and creating an open forest floor where grasses and small plants can grow for them. Prescribed fire can also improve our water resources by reducing leaf litter and that can prevent rain water from filtering into the soil. Prescribed fire also helps reduce the threat of insects and diseases in the trees. All of these effects of prescribed fire will improve the health of our forests, wildlife, and reduce the chance of losing the trees and property to

an uncontrolled fire.

Prescribed fire is a safe way to apply a natural process, ensure ecosystem health and reduce wildfire risk. Healthy forests provide clean air and water, and diverse wildlife populations for Georgia's residents and visitors.

The Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) and other cooperators work with the Georgia Prescribed Fire Council (GAPFC) to encourage the exchange of information, techniques and experiences among practitioners of prescribed burning in Georgia. On average, Georgia prescribe burns about 1.5 million acres of forest lands each year. GAPFC advocates prescribed burning as one of the most environmentally and economically feasible methods for managing the state's valuable forest resources.

Professional foresters and other land managers throughout the state use prescribed burning for reforestation, aesthetics, and forest access. As a land management tool, prescribed fire is essential for managing wildlife species such as bobwhite quail, eastern wild turkey, white-tailed deer, many songbirds, the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker and many other fire-dependent species.

Prescribed burning is the only known forest management method which perpetuates the longleaf/wiregrass ecosystem, Georgia's most diverse flora and fauna ecosystem. Frequent fires, set by lightning strikes and Native Americans,

have shaped Georgia's ecosystems for thousands of years. Our forest ecosystems evolved with fire and continue to need the strategic application of fire that mimics this natural cycle. The plants and animals of the pine woods are accustomed to frequent fires and depend on these fires for their survival. Fire is as natural as sunshine, rain and wind in many plant communities including upland pine, pine flatwoods, marshes and wet prairies. Fire also benefits many of the rare animal species in our state that are declining. Some of these declines are caused almost totally by fire exclusion.

Smoke from prescribed fires is a sign that certain lands are being cared for properly. Great care is taken by prescribed fire managers to minimize any temporary inconveniences created by smoke. Smoke management plans for prescribed burns are designed so that smoke-sensitive areas like roads and residences, etc. are not negatively affected by the burn.

Smoke from prescribed fires does not contribute appreciably to air quality issues since the practice typically avoids times of stagnant summer air. However, uncontrolled wildfires usually occur during the summer when there is already a bad urban air quality problem. We can reduce the risk of wildfires and the resulting smoke or air quality problems with well-timed prescribed fires. No other tool can so effectively remove the



hazardous buildup of woodland fuels.

For more information about Prescribed Fire, visit www.garxfire.com or the Georgia Forestry Commission, at www.GaTrees.org. Frank Riley is Executive Director of the Chetatee/Chattahoochee RC&D Council. For more information on RC&D programs email www.frank.ccrd@gmail.com. NT(Feb12)Z10/CA

YHC Community Band to present special concert

The Young Harris College Community Band will present a concert featuring classical and contemporary music on Tuesday, Feb. 18, at 7 p.m. in Glenn Auditorium of the Clegg Fine Arts Building on the YHC campus. The concert is free and open to the public.

Directed by YHC Adjunct Instructor of Music Alan Denmon, the ensemble is comprised of talented local high school and adult musicians from the local community, and performs traditional band classics as well as entertaining "pops" music.

The program includes concert band standards in-

cluding "Song for the Winter Moon" by low brass performer and composer Walter Cummings, "The Iowa Band Law March" by march music bandmaster and composer K.L. King, and "Suite on Hungarian Folk Themes" by Leo Weiner.

The band will also present two original pieces composed by Towns County High School Band Director Frank McKinney titled "Vacant Man" and "Lake Chatuge." McKinney and wife, Cara McKinney, will act as guest conductors during the program.

YHC students performing include senior Allison Arnold of Young Harris, GA, bassoon, sophomore Kayla

Wentzek, clarinet, freshman Carli Kidd, bass clarinet, freshman Katie Rittenhouse, all of Blairsville, GA, French horn, and freshman Cameron Lejeune of Marble, NC, percussion.

YHC faculty and staff members performing include Assistant Professor of Music Karen Calloway, flute, Staff Accompanist Anita Guss, flute, Adjunct Instructor of Music Cheryl Star, flute, Adjunct Instructor of Music Mike Campbell, D.A., alto saxophone, Adjunct Instructor of Music Kerry Rittenhouse, trumpet, and Adjunct Instructor of Music Alicia Covington, French horn.

For more information, call the YHC Division of Fine Arts at (706) 379-5182. NT(Feb12)Z12/CA