

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Another Legend is Gone

The Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Program was created in the Agricultural Act of 1962 to assist local people in planning and carrying out activities that conserve natural resources, support economic development, enhance the environment, and improve the standard of living for all citizens.

RC&D
Frank Riley
Executive Director



All programs and assistance of the RC&D Council are available without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. RC&D Councils are 501(C)3 not-for-profit corporations. They are not governmental entities, so the typical policies and constraints of local, state, and federal government programs do not limit the types of issues they address or the means they use for economic development in their work areas.

The RC&D Council that serves the Towns/Union area is the Chestatee Chattahoochee RC&D that covers the 13 counties in Northeast Georgia. RC&D Councils have a high degree of independence to carry out activities that will achieve their most important goals. RC&D Council volunteers are leaders and community stakeholders involved in multiple roles in local government, school boards, churches, and other civic activities. These leaders identify unmet needs in their communities and create solutions that work.

The folks who make up an RC&D council are neighbors. At RC&D Council meetings they draw from their professional expertise and community connections to determine the needs of their RC&D Council areas, address those needs, and make their communities better places to live, work, and play. They know how to blend government programs with local needs to produce results. In essence, they know how to speak the government's language, and yours.

Ten and a half years ago, I didn't know what RC&D was, but I was soon to find out the hard way. I interviewed for the position of Executive Director of Chestatee Chattahoochee Resource Conservation & Development Council and low and behold I guess they were desperate because they hired me. There was one lone survivor still working there for a while and then she suddenly quit so I was totally alone trying to figure out what we did and how to do what I needed to do to survive. It was to survive or go hungry, so I dug in and slowly pulled the organization out of its slipping and sliding down.

It's amazing what you can do to keep from going hungry! We receive grants from USDA Forest Service and USDA NRCS. We write the grants and if successful, organize the work and pass out the funds and then go for another one and start all over again. The lady that hired me in 2012 was Jeanette Jamieson from Toccoa, GA, who was the ChestChat RC&D President, The Southeast RC&D President, and the National RC&D Vice President.

You might say Jeanette was all things RC&D. Jeanette had political and governmental contacts from Washington to Toccoa and all places in between. Some of you Georgians who are old as I am probably remember Jeanette from her days as a House floor leader for the House Speaker Tom Murphy. Jeanette knew where the skeletons were buried so when she needed a favor from the Gold Dome, she got it.

Sadly, all good things must come to an end and Jeanette passed away on Tuesday April 25. Here is her obituary. Ms. Mary "Jeanette" McCollum Jamieson, age 81, of Toccoa, passed away Tuesday, April 25, 2023, at her home. Born on November 28, 1941 in Kings Mountain, NC, she was the daughter of the late Robert Clarence and Modena Garland McCollum. Ms. Jamieson was a veteran public servant serving six years as a Stephens County Commissioner, 24 years as an elected member of the Georgia House of Representatives and had served as a City Commissioner and Mayor since 2014.

During her time in the Georgia House of Representatives, Jamieson was the first woman to chair a major committee and the first woman in Georgia's history to serve as the Governor's Floor Leader. She received the "President's Award for Innovative Government" from President George W. Bush for her role in Rural Development.

She served and currently serves on several Boards: Stephens County Soil & Water Conversation District, Toccoa-Stephens County Humane Shelter, and Resource Conservation & Development. She was a member of Confidence United Methodist Church, and she owned and operated Jamieson Accounting & Tax Service.

We will miss you Jeanette, all of that knowledge is gone forever, I'm just glad that I had the privilege to learn from one of the greatest, Jeanette Jamieson.

Letters To The Editor

Electric Franchise Fee in Young Harris

Dear Mayor Gibby and City Council Members,

I was recently made aware of the proposed ordinance to charge a franchise fee to the BRMEMC for use of the city right-of-way. As I understand it, the City will charge BRMEMC 4% of gross electric sales, which the BRMEMC will then pass on to its customers. This pass-through franchise fee will have a substantial effect on Young Harris College, as our electricity bills last year were approximately \$1.3 million. A 4% franchise fee will increase our electricity costs by over \$50,000 next year.

The College has made strong efforts to be a good partner with the City, and Mr. Bo Wright has worked to build relationships with council members and the Mayor to strengthen that relationship. To that end, it disturbs me that Mr. Wright nor anyone at Young Harris College was notified of this ordinance until its first reading at the April council meeting. As the largest customer of utilities in the city limits and given the partnership of the City and the College, I expected communication about something that would have such a large impact on our budget.

I understand that generating new revenue is challenging and important for all entities in this difficult economy. Moving forward, the College will also be looking for ways to generate additional revenue to offset these unexpected expenses, and I expect the City to be understanding of our needs in those endeavors.

Regards,

Drew L. Van Horn, Ph.D.
President, Young Harris College

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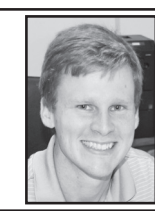


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Snakes

As the temperatures continue to rise, plants are blooming, leaves are expanding, and life is rustling in woods again. Some of the life includes snakes. I've already heard a few stories of encounters that people have had with snakes early this spring. Snakes are a natural part of the landscape that we're going to have to learn to live with. So, it's not going to be possible to completely eliminate all encounters with them. There are some things that you can do to make those encounters less frequent and safer for you and the snake.

UGA extension
Watching and Working
Jacob Williams



Most of the snakes that live in Georgia are non-venomous. There are 46 species of snakes in Georgia of which 6 are venomous. Of those 6, we have 2 of them in Union and Towns counties. Copperhead and Timber Rattlesnake are the 2 that we have in our area.

Copperheads can grow to be 4.5 feet long. They are usually light brown with dark brown hourglass shapes on the back. The narrow part of the hourglass is along the spine with the wide base on either side. They are mostly found in forested areas. They like spots with logs, leaf, and rocks for cover. They are capable of living in suburban areas with people around.

Timber Rattlesnakes can grow to be about 5 feet long. They have a color range from yellow to black. Their backs are covered in brown or black chevron shaped crossbands. They like to live along wooded streambanks. They like old debris piles, old burrows and rock crevices. They will also have the iconic rattle on the end of their tail.

Most people will talk about being able to tell if a snake is venomous from looking at the shape of its head. Generally speaking, venomous snakes will have a triangular shaped head. However, this can be difficult to determine in the wild without getting close and handling the snake, which is never advised. Non-venomous snakes can flatten their heads and appear to have more triangular heads too. Some of the markings on non-venomous snakes can be confused with copperheads.

To lessen the chance of having snakes around your home make sure that your dryer vent is covered with a screen to prevent snakes from wandering inside. Remove piles of debris, leaf piles, or wood piles, because those create habitats for snakes. Thick ground cover like tall grass or ivy can create hiding spots for snakes or the rodents, frogs, and insects that snakes like to eat. Keeping the space around your house clear will decrease the likelihood of a snake being present.

Most of the time people are bitten when they try to kill a snake. Non-venomous snake are protected by state law. If you are bitten 1) stay calm; 2) Get competent medical help as quickly as possible; 3) Keep the affected limb level with the body; 4) Do not cut, suck, or apply ice or a tourniquet to the wound. Wear closed toed shoes when walking in areas where snakes might be present.

There are no chemical poisons or effective repellents for snakes. Mothballs are not registered for use as snake repellent. They also can't hear, so any kind of repellent that uses sound isn't going to work. Make sure that the area around your house is kept clear and your house is sealed to that snakes can't enter your home.

If you have any questions about snakes please contact your local Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

United States Congressman Representative Andrew Clyde

Limit, Save, Grow Act

As our nation inches closer to a dangerous potential default on its debt, lawmakers in Washington are grappling with the best path forward. Americans are counting on us to act — and to no one's surprise, House Republicans are doing just that.

Recently, Speaker Kevin McCarthy unveiled House Republicans' sensible debt limit solution to strengthen our economy, protect hardworking Americans, and save taxpayers \$4.5 trillion over the next decade. Our plan, the Limit, Save, Grow Act, provides reasonable measures that avoid defaulting on our nation's debt and get our economy back on track.

The first critical piece of our legislation tackles the out-of-control spending problem that continues to burden you and your family with soaring inflation. Our plan would revert back to pre-inflationary Fiscal Year 2022 spending levels while also allowing for 1% growth per year over the next 10 years. By reining in Washington's runaway spending, House Republicans' bill will help save Americans roughly \$3.6 trillion and provide an essential first step in restoring fiscal sanity to the federal government.

Additionally, our Limit, Save, Grow Act claws back some of the most expensive policies enacted by President Biden and Congressional Democrats. These include reclaiming unspent COVID funding, defunding Biden's IRS auditing army, repealing Green New Deal tax credits from the so-called "Inflation Reduction Act," and blocking the President's student loan transfer scheme. All of these misguided policies come with hefty price tags that inevitably afflict American taxpayers, which is precisely why we must use this opportunity to deliver much-needed relief. For example, prohibiting President Biden's egregious executive action to "cancel" student loan debt will save Americans approximately \$465 billion.

Undoubtedly, any plan to address the debt ceiling must also work to grow our broken economy that has been beleaguered by President Biden's Big Government Socialist agenda. Our plan includes essential provisions, such as strengthening workforce requirements for welfare programs, which work toward this goal. In addition, the Limit, Save, Grow Act includes two major pieces of legislation already passed by House Republicans, the REINS Act and the Lower Energy Costs Act. These policies will limit the Biden Administration from implementing costly executive actions and unleash domestic energy production. Together, these measures will help grow our economy by pulling millions of Americans out of poverty, reducing inflationary unilateral actions, and diminishing our dependence on foreign adversaries.

Clearly, House Republicans have a plan to address the debt ceiling. Meanwhile, the White House and Senate Democrats continue to play politics, as they appear more interested in recklessly inching toward financial ruin than negotiating in good faith with House Republicans on a fiscally responsible, sensible solution.

Please know that I will continue working with my colleagues on this matter. (The Limit, Save, Grow Act passed the U.S. House of Representatives on Wednesday, April 26).

Careful As We Grow

There are interesting parallels between the world of today and the Gilded Age of the Robber Barons. When I say, "interesting," I mean ironic, sometimes amusing and often discouraging, as in the subtle and sardonic Chinese curse, "May you live in interesting times."

During the Gilded Age of the late 19th century, wealth was concentrated in just a few hands, as it is today. Conspicuous consumption and ostentatious materialism stood in stark contrast to abject poverty, as it does now.

The "gild" of the age referred to the popular use of a thin layer of gold plating to disguise inferior quality and workmanship, as the economic expansion of the times masked serious social problems. Today our gilding is pixelated, but the workmanship is Chinese plastic.

The social problems of today are a slightly distorted mirror image of the challenges our ancestors faced 125 years ago. Immigration, race, voting rights, money supply and tariffs occupied the headlines then, and the urbanization of America began in earnest, shifting political power and transforming ideologies.

The wheel of history turns, and it is not particularly mindful of what or who it runs over on its journey. It is said that history repeats itself, but I think it may be more accurate to say that the wheel bumps recurrently like that Walmart grocery cart.

Whichever metaphor you prefer, short of war, the majority of human life is lived away from the grind of the wheel or the bump of the cart. It is tempting to think otherwise when we study history, which reduces the depth and detail of human life to broad brush strokes of, at best a few primary colors, but usually black and white.

Here at home, where the morning mist is lifting from the valleys on a beautiful spring day, we are blessed to be able to live, if we so choose, off that beaten track, and in fact, is that not why we are here?

It was also true 125 years ago. Those of us who have ancestors who lived here then know that the great social and political upheavals of the time were far away. My own forefathers moved here when the area around Asheville became "too crowded," the government, too meddlesome and the taxes, too high.

Granted, war can reach out with its long tentacles and pluck anyone from their hiding place, but here the struggle of their time was the daily agreement with the earth to yield sustenance for labor spent.

Life here could be hard then, sometimes brutal. The old cemeteries around us hold more than their share of infant burials and the fading memories of lives lost to the lack of medical technology.

However, the stories of my own grandparents are lacking in any mention of problems sleeping at night. Certainly they had their ailments, but there were no stories of depression, or stomach ulcers, or the long list of modern obsessions which plague the youth, and the politics, of today.

Their lives were rich in spirit and in satisfaction, sustained by faith, purchased with calloused hands and the sweat of the brow.

Every life lived with discernment can be as rewarding, whether it is lived in the most populated city or the most remote hollow, and I'm not advocating an exodus of neo-Luddites from the entanglements of civilization. Rather, my concern is the preservation of places not civilized, not assimilated by the juggernaut of this urbanizing technocracy bumping along history's rutted road.

We need to keep our small towns. We need to preserve our wild places. There must be somewhere left, if not to hide, then to get out from under the wheel. There must always be an exit, an escape if you will, if not physically then at least in our hopes and imaginings.

This is a challenge today. The hive mind reaches out for us from every angle, compelling us to connect, to be at all times a part of the narrative. This is a new twist in the story of humanity, but the age old forces are still at work as well. Someone wants to build a house to sell on that beautiful ridgeline you gaze at over your morning coffee. Someone wants to widen the road. Someone believes that "if you build it, they will come."

Every small town has these "someones," the developers, the visionaries. They often do improve the living conditions of their communities, stimulate the economies, create jobs, all the things they say, every single time, they want to do.

But rarely do they stop to consider how much is enough. Rarely are the voices which say "enough," sufficiently loud to be heard. "More" is at the core of human nature. It is the fuel that powers the wheel.

Consider the once small town of Gainesville to our south, now part of the fourth largest urban area in Georgia, where traffic can be at least as frustrating as the slow moving parking lots of Atlanta. Consider the once sleepy mountain valley of Gatlinburg. It's a fun place to visit, but if we wanted to live inside a pinball machine we would be there.

Some growth is inevitable on a planet with an increasing population. That growth has slowed considerably, but like an oil tanker at full steam, it takes a long time to stop, and it will not stop within the lifetime of anyone reading this. Vast migrations of humans are occurring, not just at our southern border, but all across the planet as people flee from the grinding wheel of globalism and great power conflict.

We will grow here. That fact is baked in. But as we grow, we need to consider the state of the world. We need to realize what we have here, and understand how quickly that can be lost. Careful as we grow.

Outside The Box

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worldoutsidethebox.com

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