

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Letters to The Editor

Distraction and Deflection

Dear Editor,

The seaplane operators now tell us a good neighbor policy does not apply to them because they are a commercial operation. And their supporters have been busy defending the operation. Yet so much of what they say is distraction and deflection and doesn't change the basic facts:

Safety: Just because they have trained commercial pilots does not ensure safety. Conditions matter and commercial flights usually do not take off and land on a congested boating channel. There is no separation between the boating area and the plane's operating area to avoid interference. In fact, on August 17th, the plane while in the air (and off the water) came so close to a boat while overtaking it shortly after take-off that it had to change course (and force the boat to change course), touch down suddenly in front of another boat, and change course again before trying another takeoff. We're not the only ones concerned. The National Transportation Safety Board "has warned that seaplanes, which are able to take off and land on water, may no longer be a safe form of transport. It has asked the Federal Aviation Administration, a regulator, to upgrade its rules about seaplanes, which currently fall far short of safety regulations for other commercial aircraft." (Why Seaplanes are so Dangerous, The Economist, May 28, 2019)

Noise: Just because there are other sources of noise in the area does not mean the plane nuisance is acceptable. And the plane is much noisier than boats. That is a fact that needs to be conceded. How do we know this? We commissioned a study by an aeronautical engineer at Georgia Tech that shows the plane creates 90 dBA from 500 feet. We challenge anyone to sit 100, 300, 500 feet or whatever distance you choose from the plane when it's taking off. Then sit the same distance from any routine noise on the lake and tell us it's as noisy. Sure, there are outliers occasionally, but the plane is here every weekend creating this nuisance many times over.

Taxes: Just because some other business and property owners may skirt their taxes does not somehow excuse the seaplane operation. They all should pay taxes and that too must be conceded. It's only fair to the rest of us who do.

Tourism: Just because some passengers are from far away does not mean the seaplane is the reason they're here. The plane benefits from people who are already here for some other reason, i.e. already drawn to the area or live here or have family here. And we have no problem with the tourism that supports the local economy. But let's be realistic about the impact of the seaplane on tourism.

We are glad there is a robust debate, but let's try to ground on some reasonable common assumptions and not just glib arguments. The seaplane has negative impacts that must be addressed. For starters, let's acknowledge the seaplane operation has options other than taking off and landing in the exact same part of the same lake every single time.

Linda Dobson, Linda Rentz, Maureen and Greg Patrick, Robert Lew, Glenda and Frank Geddings, Vicki and Charles Butler, Christina and Douglas Nelson

Editor's Note: A signer of this letter video recorded the above-mentioned Aug. 17 incident on Lake Chatuge. When reached for comment, Wing-N-It Seaplane Adventures said the following: "Our commercial pilots maintain constant situational awareness and vigilance in all aspects of our flying. This video demonstrates how our trained pilot was able to observe a boat, coming from his side and behind, moving toward the airplane. Our pilot was able to assess this situation quickly and landed the airplane safely back on the water to evade the boat. He then powered away from the conflict and continued this safe takeoff." Official comments from Federal Aviation Ad-

Music to my Ears

Dear Editor,

This is in response to a previous seaplane letter. If you were seeking quiet and tranquil mountain living, why did you select a long established recreation area to live in? There are other locations available that are not designated and established as recreation areas.

TVA, and other agencies, wisely decided to make Lake Chatuge a multi-use facility to benefit as many of the public as possible. That was part of the justification for the expenditure of federal tax dollars spent on the project. The sounds and activities are indications that people are alive, active and enjoying the recreational facilities that our tax dollars built. TVA owns the lake. NOT The State of Georgia, Towns County nor the City of Hiawassee.

To ask or demand action from local officials is a waste of valuable time for those responsible and busy people. They have no responsibility or authority over Lake Chatuge. Lake Chatuge is a part of a complex chain of lakes, rivers, dams and hydro-electric generating facilities. Local authorities do not have the talent or money operate and maintain such a system. Can you imagine the total chaos if local governments did have control of TVA facilities?

Local officials are elected for relatively short terms. That would provide the opportunity for constant and confusing change throughout the TVA system. No thank you. IF Lake Chatuge was not here, and we decided to build it today, it would probably be an impossible task due to tree huggers, climate change advocates, DNR, EPA, environmental groups and "not in my backyards". Seaplanes and watercraft do not abuse Lake Chatuge by exploiting "loopholes" in regulations. Those rules are explicit and have been in place since 1944.

It is unfortunate that the letter writer is "jared" by anything that generates 90 decibels, like his wife's hairdryer, the blender that makes his afternoon smoothie, his lawn mower and the seaplane.

Considering The Ridges a menace (along with the other marinas) is to kill off a very substantial portion of the local economy. Count the number of boats at their docks and consider how much money those boat owners spend on their boats, buying gas, food, bait, fishing gear, motel bills cabin rentals, and enjoying their spare time on Lake Chatuge.

That "horrendous" noise the writer heard is the sound of money and a growing economy in our community. It most definitely is NOT the sound of failure of our local officials or local businesses. I am a person of varied interests and all these sounds are music to my ears.

John L. Holmes

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Fire Can Happen On The Farm

Fire is one of the land managers best tools when used properly and under controlled conditions, but when it is out of control or sneaking up on unsuspecting citizens who are not prepared it can be a death trap and a wave of destruction for any and all things in its path. We see houses and businesses destroyed by fire storms as the strong winds sweep the flames through the dry brush and forests into unprotected communities of homes in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). WUI is the area near our forests where folks move into so they can live with nature, not realizing that Mother Nature can also be a bad neighbor where a wildfire can consume all of your stuff in a matter of minutes as it moves through the neighborhood jumping from house to house showing no mercy except to those who have prepared and have made their property Firewise.



RC&D
Frank Riley
 Executive Director

The goal of our wildfire risk reduction programs is to educate the public and first responders about the dangers of uncontrolled wildfire and to develop emergency survival plans for the eventual wildfire that as the experts say is not a matter of if, but when one strikes as many of us experienced a few years ago. The result of the Fire Adapted Communities project is to help make the places where we live and work safer from the ravages of a destructive wildfire. A wildfire doesn't have to be a major spectacular event like we see on TV news in California, but a small one that destroys a home, barn, equipment shed, or a business is just as tragic to the families affected.

Most of the TV coverage we see about wildfires in the west shows hundreds of homes destroyed in a matter of minutes when a wildfire rolls through, but what we don't see are the farms and ranches that the fire had to burn through and destroy on its way to the targeted communities. Losses due to wildfire on farms and ranches can be staggering because of the high value of the equipment, livestock, crops, pastures, timber, water systems, and any other components of our farm businesses that farmers rely on to make their living to grow and produce crops to feed themselves and the rest of the world. Many of these farm assets are not insurable or not insured so the loss can be complete with no recovery possible. If these things were suddenly taken away by a wildfire, the farmers and families' lives would never be the same. It can be relatively easy to replace a home with insurance, but most parts of farms are irreplaceable, and a loss can destroy what their ancestors worked for generations to build and recovery can take many more generations or probably not at all.

Many just give up and move away rather than starting over. My Mother's Grandmother's house is still in use on our farm down on the river. It was built in 1892 and if it were to be destroyed there is no way to recover it. Back in the 80s the main family house here that was built in the early 1800s as one of the Unicoi Turnpike Inns, burned with all the original furnishings and that history is now only a memory and gone forever. This happens more than most people think all around the country. A small fire can get out of control and destroy a year's worth of hay, fences (\$10,000/mile), livestock, equipment, barns, and other essential parts of a farm quickly. Imagine if your yearly salary was taken away suddenly along with your home, what would you do?

A Fire Adapted Community is a way of life that can encompass a county, subdivision or a family farm and is a situation where "the population understands the threat posed by wildfires and takes the personal actions necessary to help minimize the risk". The Fire Adapted Communities program is a grassroots approach that concentrates on plans and activities that reduce risk before a wildfire occurs and the FAC concept works by neighbors talking to neighbors to spread the word and achieve the results. There are many opportunities for a wildfire around farms that can be seen every day, but most don't think about what could happen with one spark in dry grass during on dry, windy day. Farmers are usually too busy to cut the grass around the barns and structures, and don't always clear a "defensible space" adjacent to the foundations to stop a small grass fire that can quickly become a raging inferno in their hay barn with no way to put it out. Defensible space is an area (recommend 30 feet) around a structure where combustible materials are removed so a fire has nothing to burn and will stop before igniting a structure.

Most of our rural communities have volunteer fire departments and firefighters are not on duty 24/7 so when a call goes out to a farm fire, it takes some time for the firefighters to get to the station, get the trucks, and get to the fire and by that time it is usually too late. Defensible space can delay a fire and give firefighters time to arrive on the scene to control the situation or allow the landowner to put it out before it destroys what he or she has worked a lifetime to build. It is the little things that can make a bit difference.

We are sponsoring a Fire-on-the-Farm field day on September 21, at Jaemore Farms in Hall County, open to all. For more information on Fire Adapted Communities, Firewise, or Fire risk reduction, contact Chestatee-Chattahoochee RC&D Council www.info.ccrd@gmail.com the local Georgia Forestry Commission office.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR SHOULD BE E-MAILED OR MAILED TO: Towns County Herald, Letter to the Editor, PO Box 365, Hiawassee, GA 30546. Our email address: tcherald@windstream.net. Letters should be limited to 200 words or less, signed, dated and include a phone number for verification purposes. This paper reserves the right to edit letters to conform with Editorial page policy or refuse to print letters deemed pointless, potentially defamatory or in poor taste. Letters should address issues of general interest, such as politics, the community, environment, school issues, etc.

Letters opposing the views of previous comments are welcomed; however, letters cannot be directed at, nor name or ridicule previous writers. Letters that recognize good deeds of others will be considered for publication.*

Note: All letters must be signed, and contain the first and last name and phone number for verification.

Chiggers

If you've ever been out hiking, walked through a pasture, been fishing, or spent any significant amount of time outside, you've most likely encountered chiggers. If you haven't, then consider yourself fortunate, because you live a blessed life. Let's talk about chiggers, what they are, and what you can do to protect yourself from them.



UGA
 extension
Watching and Working
 Jacob Williams

Some people call chiggers red bugs because they are tiny red mites that are less than 1/50th of an inch long. Chigger are mites that are still in their larval stage. The larval stage is the only one that bites. The other stages of the chigger life cycle either lay eggs or prey on small insects. Chiggers like to live in areas that are full of brush and debris. They can be found in leaf litter. If you have areas with tall grass, they'll like that too. Chiggers mainly bite rodents and rabbits. So, if you have areas that make a good habitat for rodents and rabbits then there is a good chance that you'll have mites as well. Female mites will lay their eggs in the late winter, which will hatch in the spring. Chiggers will reach peak population in mid-summer and remain active until fall. They'll be killed off by a hard freeze.

Chiggers only bite, they don't bury under the skin. When they bite they inject their saliva which has a skin dissolving enzyme in it. As your skin cells dissolve, they drink it up. The saliva that they inject causes irritation, which makes you itch. Chiggers can stay latched on for three or more days, so if you have a chigger bite it's best to wash that spot with lather repeatedly, and then dab the spot with an antiseptic. That will kill most of the chiggers on you.

Chiggers typically like to bite in tight places. That means you'll often get their bites underneath your socks, in your waistband, or armpits.

Chiggers are susceptible to dehydration. Therefore, they like to populate areas with shade and high humidity. Removing brush piles and leaves, keeping grass cut, and removing bushes will eliminate areas that they like to live. Blackberry bushes seem to be a particularly favorite habitat. Contrary to popular opinion chiggers don't live in Spanish moss. We don't have Spanish moss here, but if you go to the beach, don't worry about them dropping into your hair from the dangling Spanish moss.

There are some chemicals that can be used as repellents or to kill chiggers. Products containing DEET will be effective at repelling chiggers, mosquitoes, biting flies, gnats, and ticks. You can also spray it on your clothing to keep them off your clothes. Oil of lemon eucalyptus can be used as a repellent, except for children under 3 years old. Products containing permethrin can be used on clothing to kill chiggers and ticks.

Chiggers are very aggravating to have, but hopefully this article has given you some options for how to deal with chigger bites and how to prevent them from getting on you. If you have questions about chiggers contact your county Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

On September 26 at 5:30 pm Union County Extension is hosting an education program on Radon in the Union County Civic Center. Please call 706-439-6030 to RSVP or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.



Towns County Community Calendar

	Every Monday:	
Bridge Players	All Saints Lutheran	12:30 pm
	Every Tuesday:	
Free GED prep.	Old Rec. Center	4 pm
	Every Wednesday	
SMART Recovery	Red Cross Building	7 pm
	Every Thursday:	
Bridge Players	All Saints Lutheran	12:30 pm
Free GED prep.	Old Rec. Center	4 pm
	Every Friday:	
Movers & Shakers	Sundance Grill	8 am
Alcoholics Anon.	Red Cross Building	7 pm
	Every Sunday:	
Alcoholics Anon.	Red Cross Building	7 pm
	First Tuesday of each month:	
Alzheimer's Supp.	McConnell Church	1:30 pm
American Legion	VFW Post 7807	4 pm
Hiaw. City Council	City Hall	6 pm
Young Harris Council	YH City Hall	7 pm
	First Wednesday of each month:	
Quilting Bee	McConnell Church	10 am
	First Thursday of each month:	
Stephens Lodge	Lodge Hall	7:30 pm
	Third Saturday of each month:	
Goldwing Riders	Daniel's Restaurant	11 am
	Fourth Monday of each month:	
Red Cross DAT	1298 Jack Dayton Cir.	5:30 pm
	Fourth Tuesday of each month:	
Lions Club	Daniel's Restaurant	6 pm
	Fourth Thursday	
Hiaw. Writers	Hiaw. Pk. Comm. Rm.	10:30
Hiaw. Garden Club	Clubhouse	12:45 pm
	Last Thursday of each month:	
Humane Shelter Bd.	Cadence Bank	5:30 pm

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Towns County Herald

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