

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Sweet November...

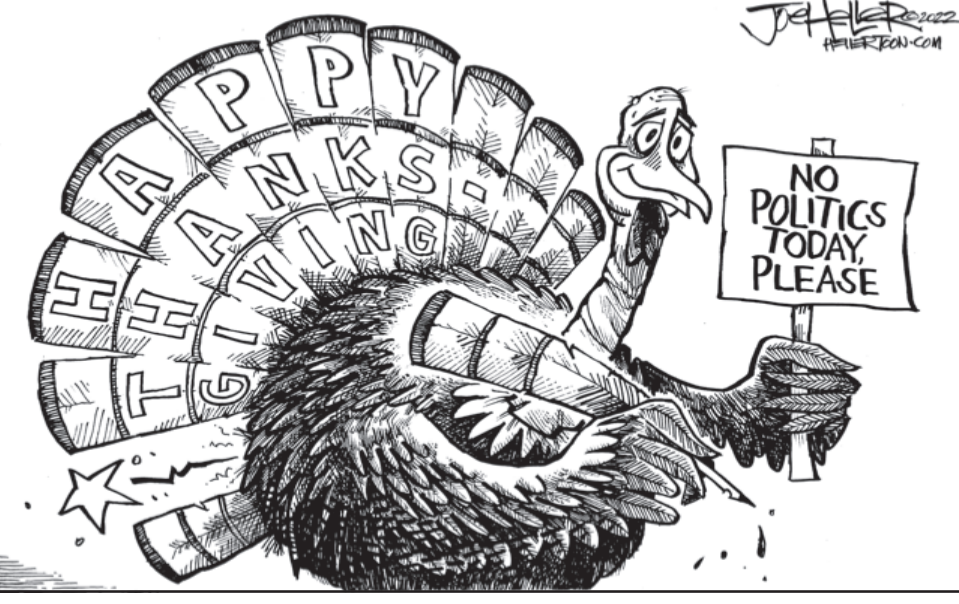
SWEET NOVEMBER IS FLEETING BY!
November has been a mixed bag with the weather. However November is always to be remembered as an eventful month. Let's not forget our very special United States Marine Corps! Not ever, for what and where would we be minus the Marines? This past November 10 was our Marine Corps 247th birthday. If you know or even if you do not know a USMC Veteran amongst us, give that fine man or woman a salute, handshake, a big smile and wish them a happy birthday. Plus let us all send up a solemn prayer for all those Marines on duty around this unsteady world. They do their best to keep it "steady"! As do all our men and women who have volunteered to serve the cause of freedom, liberty and PEACE, not just for our Sovereign REPUBLIC, America, but to serve as a shining light of freedom for peoples all around our God's green earth.



The Veterans' Corner
Scott Drummond
USCG Veteran

In addition the month of November is National Veterans and Military Families Month. If you think about it, those fine, mostly young Americans who stand and serve our America do not stand alone. Their families, wives, mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, children also endure the many sacrifices they share with those who don any of our SIX military services informs they wear every day of the year. This month we honor them all! We currently have over three million military family members. I cannot imagine how many Veteran family members we have in America. All the more reason to share brotherly love. Love and Honor of ALL our families, Veterans, and service members travels an eternal pathway to improving life for everyone. If I'm on the ball here, the DoD has established a "Military One Source" for service members families facing problems and adversity, at 800-342-9647 to speak with a consultant. That's something we did not have decades ago when those of us older age served our Country. These services, provided by the DoD, are available world wide. We older Veterans are so hard headed, it may have done no good, anyway. LOL!

Also concerning the weather, our annual Veterans Day ceremony was NOT 7807 on Sunnyside Drive. We had it indoors room only and a very special and superlative keynote speaker, Retired Major General Robert J. Williamson. Meeting him for my first time out in the pouring rain of our parking lot, I learned that he is a very friendly American Patriot, still loving our America, as should we all. We also honored those family members who could make it for recognition of their Towns County Veterans who have been called to their eternal Home by our Supreme Commander. May God Bless all of those mentioned this herein column and may God Bless America! And don't forget to have a happy and wonderful Thanksgiving! Semper Fi, Marines! -Semper Paratus



Letters To The Editor

Please Vote!

Dear Editor,
OK, Towns & Union County voters, you didn't come out for the midterm elections so now we are in a runoff.
Towns and Union Counties had 69% and 70% turnout respectively of registered voters for the election.
This type of turnout will allow the five counties surrounding Atlanta to dominate us and the other 152 counties in our state. Do we want that to occur? The only way those of us not living in metropolitan areas will have our voices heard is to go to the polls and outnumber them. Towns left 3,000 and Union left 6,000 votes on the table uncast. In our two little counties we wasted 9,000 votes.

Think what that amounts to over the other 152 non-metropolitan counties in our state. There were over 3 million votes uncast in this election, which is nearly as many as were cast. Who are we allowing to shape our future?

Please get out and vote in this runoff election and show our government what "The People" really want!

Early voting begins 11/28 and the election date is 12/6!
PLEASE VOTE!
Sam Wilson

Fire Learning Network

The Southern Blue Ridge Fire Learning Network: On December 6th, we will again attend the Southern Blue Ridge Fire Learning Network (SBR FLN) annual meeting. The SBR FLN is a gathering of natural resource managers who are dedicated to bringing fire back into our mountain environment.



RC&D
Frank Riley
Executive Director

Fire is a natural phenomenon that has occurred in our forests since the beginning of time and will continue long after we are gone no matter how hard we try to prevent it or ignore it. The Firewise and Fire Adapted programs don't try to prevent fire, but educate people who live in the wildland areas how to prepare and protect their property from the out-of-control wildfire that is coming to their backyard one day.

Partners in the Southern Blue Ridge FLN (SBR FLN) collaborate to develop, share and apply the best available science to restore fire across a vast, diverse region. Partners and stakeholders work in teams in the network's eight landscapes to set and achieve restoration goals in their fire-adapted pine and oak forests. Vegetation maps, models and tools developed by partners help build a cohesive vision and description of restoration needs. Landscape teams adapt a regional treatment prioritization tool and apply it locally, with each learning from other landscapes' work. The SBR FLN has also collaborated with the Cherokee National Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative, Central Appalachians FLN and LANDFIRE to adapt LANDFIRE models to this region. The models, along with a LiDAR-based forest structure analysis and the vegetation maps, have been used to estimate the loss of current vegetation from historic conditions across the National Forests of North Carolina.

This information is informing forest planning and National Environmental Policy Analysis (NEPA) projects in several landscapes. Fire history research on three SBR FLN landscapes is shaping prescribed fire regimes. Evidence that fire historically played a role in maintaining these forests—which are changing, due to almost a century of fire suppression—is also being used to build wider support for the use of controlled fire. Partnership burns across multiple ownerships have become common in most landscapes, and more are planned for the coming year.

A few years ago the SBR FLN regional workshop was held here in Hiwassee. Due to programs presented then, state agencies in North and South Carolina are now performing collaborative burning across state lines. Before this meeting a burn had to stop at the state line no matter what, so now that "my territory" thinking is over and states work together! A network of monitoring plots established by Forest Stewards enables partners to track the effectiveness of management actions. Consistent, long-term monitoring is essential, since it can take years—and multiple treatments—for the full impact of fire in hardwoods to become evident.

The second comprehensive assessment using these data has been completed and will be used to inform planning for future burns and other restoration work. SBR FLN partners include Georgia Blue Ridge Mountains, Great Smoky & Unaka Mountains Northern Escarpment, Central Blue Ridge Escarpment, Nantahala & Balsam Mountains, Southern Blue Ridge Escarpment, South Mountains, New River Headwaters, Network Partners Consortium of Appalachian Fire Managers and Scientists, Forest Stewards Guild, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Georgia State Parks; Wildlife Resources Division, Georgia Forest Watch, Greenville Water Land Trust for the Little Tennessee River, Mountain True National Park Service, Blue Ridge Parkway; Great Smoky Mountains, North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation, North Carolina Forest Service, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, South Carolina Division of Natural Resources, South Carolina Forestry Commission, South Carolina State Parks, The Nature Conservancy, Towns County Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network, USFS Chattahoochee-Oconee NF; Cherokee NF; Nantahala NF, Pisgah NF, USFS Region 8 Fire & Aviation, USFS—Southern Research Station, and Chestatee-Chattahoochee RC&D council.

Promoting Ecosystem Resilience and Fire Adapted Communities (PERFACT), a cooperative agreement between The Nature Conservancy, the USDA Forest Service, and agencies of the Department of the Interior supports the Fire Learning Network. This FLN has helped build the foundation of the Joint Fire Science Program's Consortium of Appalachian Fire Managers and Scientists, and continues to play a key role in providing opportunities for networking among scientists, managers and practitioners. This accelerates transfer of knowledge and feedback that supports adaptive forest management.

Well-attended workshops, collaborative projects, and tools shared by online seminars and other means have helped the SBR FLN build strong working partnerships. These in turn support the steady growth of the network, most recently with the addition of the Georgia Blue Ridge Mountains landscape. This landscape brings a new dimension to the SBR FLN, as it includes Towns County, an original member of the Fire Adapted Communities (FACNET) Learning Network.

For more information go to: www.nature.org. On June 22nd we will have the 4th annual North Georgia Prescribed Fire council (in person this time!) meeting at Chattahoochee Technical College in Jasper with a very good panel of speakers to talk about the benefits of prescribed fire in our forests.

The meeting will be announced late spring and all are welcome. We encourage private citizens to attend to learn more about the benefits of controlled fire in the forests. Go to <http://www.garxfire.com> to learn more about prescribed fire in Georgia.

For more information on either of these programs contact Chestatee Chattahoochee RC&D at: info.ccrd@gmail.com.

Oh Christmas Tree

Having a real Christmas tree can be a great tradition this time of year. There are a number of places that sell Christmas trees here. Let's talk about selecting a Christmas tree and Christmas tree care so that you can avoid a National Lampoon Christmas Vacation type situation.



Three trees grown in Georgia are firs, cypress, and cedar. Some things to consider when purchasing a Christmas tree are needle retention, strong limbs, fragrance, and dryness. Before you even leave to buy your tree it's a good idea to select and measure the space where you'll be putting your tree. A good spot is away from space heaters, fireplaces, or wood stoves. Measure how high the tree can go in your house. It can be difficult to gauge if a tree is going to fit inside when you're looking at it outdoors. Trees can appear small outside, and then seem to grow a couple of feet once you bring them inside.

When you are selecting your tree, it is important to make sure that you get one that is fresh cut. A fresh cut means that the tree will be able to absorb water more effectively, and therefore not dry out as quickly. Once the trunk of the tree has dried out you can cut off the bottom 1/2 inch to establish a new fresh cut. You really don't want your tree to be dry for more than 6-8 hours. When you are purchasing the tree give the limbs a good shake and see if many needles fall off. Then grab a branch of a tree and pull the branch through your hand. Ideally you don't want to see many needles fall off the branch. Also check for off color on any of the needles. If a bunch of needles don't fall off and the needles are a good green color you know that you have a healthy tree.

A dry Christmas tree can be a fire hazard in a house. If your tree has a fresh cut it should be able to last the entire Christmas season without drying out if you keep it well watered. There should always be water in the tree stand. Keep the water level above the cut on the tree so that the cut won't dry out and your tree is continually taking up water. Drilling a hole in the trunk does not improve water uptake. Using lights that put off heat will increase the drying of the tree. LEDs are a good option to reduce heat.

There are a couple of ways to dispose of your Christmas tree. You can use them for soil erosion barriers. If you have a pond you can sink them to create fish habitat. Chipping them to use as mulch in the garden is another good option.

Real Christmas trees are beautiful and a sound environmental choice. Trees are recyclable, produce oxygen and absorb carbon dioxide.

We have great locations to purchase a real Christmas tree around here, and this is the time of year to shop local, so I encourage you to check them out! If you have any questions about Christmas trees contact your County Extension Office or send me an email at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu. Merry Christmas and happy tree shopping!

Guest Columns

From time to time, people in the community have a grand slant on an issue that would make a great guest editorial. Those who feel they have an issue of great importance should call our editor and talk with him about the idea. Others have a strong opinion after reading one of the many columns that appear throughout the paper. If so, please write.

Please remember that publication of submitted editorials is not guaranteed.

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