

# Opinions

# Everybody has one...

## Drought Fire Danger

Last week, we provided a few fire safety tips for the fall season and we briefly discussed outside burning of leaves and debris. This week, we would like to keep everyone informed on the drought; the extreme fire danger that it is causing; what the fire department is doing to prepare and how you can help. I know that most of you are thinking that we are driving this subject into the ground but we want people to be aware that there is a real fire danger present.

**Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief**  
*David Dyer*



The drought in Georgia is severe and has caused several significant wildfires in the last few weeks. Union County has been classified by the National Drought Mitigation Center with a drought intensity of D3. 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. Most of Union County is a D3 – Extreme Drought. This places most of Union County in a Very High to Extreme Fire Danger rating according to the Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC). When we have a wildfire, it will be difficult to control and extinguish due to these conditions.

Union County Fire Department is always ready to respond to wildland fires. Over the last couple of years we have purchased equipment and conducted training to better prepare ourselves to fight wildfires. We have purchased personnel protective gear that meets National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards. Firefighters from all stations have participated in wildland firefighting training conducted by GFC. Each main fire station has a rescue/wildland vehicle that has the capabilities to access fields or small forest roads. We have also discussed the dangers and tactics that must be used in these conditions.

As prepared as we can be, it is still better to prevent. This is where the citizens of Union County can make a difference. Outside burning is dangerous in these conditions. Fire can get out of control in a matter of seconds. If you are considering outside burning, first get a burn permit. Burning debris without a burn permit can result in a fine. If the GFC is not allowing permits, then they have evaluated the fire and weather conditions and found them to be too dangerous to allow burning. If you do get a permit, be prepared and practice

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## What Every Parent Needs to Know About Heroin Addiction

Bad batches of dope, 15-year-old kids going to methadone clinics and massive amounts of overdoses are just some of the symptoms of a ridiculous, out-of-control opiate crisis. Back in the day, the worst of the worst kids smoked cigarettes, drank beer and maybe smoked marijuana. That was the scene in most high schools 20 years ago. Today, it's a much, much different scene.

*The mission of the Union County Anti-Drug Coalition is to support an overall safe community by providing information, education and support services to children, families and community toward prevention of illegal substance abuse.*

High school kids and some Middle School students are popping whatever pills they can find in their parent's medicine cabinet. OxyContin, Vicodin, Percocet and Xanax are causing massive addiction problems in kids and creating future heroin addicts. Some of these drugs are given by their doctors, or even by their families.

A lot of opiate addictions start out with a legitimate reason to take them, whether it be a sports injury, surgery or a painful, chronic medical condition. A person takes the drugs for a period of time, loves the way the pills make them feel and then the doctor cuts them off. They start to go through the vile withdrawal that comes with taking opiates.

So what do they do? They find someone they can buy pills from. And that works for a little while. They continue taking the meds and furthering their addictions. Pills aren't cheap, in fact, many of them sell for \$1 a milligram, so when someone buys an 80mg OxyContin, they're spending \$80 for one pill, and they need 3 to get through the day!

Obviously this adds up to a substantially expensive addiction. So they start stealing money out of their parent's wallet, selling their jewelry, electronics or any other worldly possessions they might have. When they run out of their own things to sell, they steal YOURS. Eventually, the pill addiction is financially unmanageable. So one day someone says "Why don't you just try heroin?" It's way cheaper and way stronger than Oxy's." This is how pills turn into heroin.

Now the heroin addiction begins. The athlete, the star student, the once "perfect" child is now strung out on street-bought heroin. An unthinkable situation for any family. In the addict's mind, it seems to be no big deal and a "natural progression." Here's how it gets justified: "I just snort it so it's really no big deal. I don't use needles, I'm not a junkie."

What these addicts fail to understand is that the world of heroin is much different and much darker than the world of pills. When they buy heroin, all they're getting is a white powder. It could be baking soda, rat poison, Anthrax or

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## Letters to the Editor...

### New Library Sculpture

Dear Editor,  
On October 19, 2016 I was proud to stand with the Friends of Union County Library as we presented a work of art by Al Garnto as a gift to Union County Library and to the community.

This delightful sculpture perfectly demonstrates that art does not have to be traditional to be meaningful. My personal opinion is that the fun nature of this piece conveys the message that our Union County Library is a vibrant and happy place, rather than a dull and outdated institution. As I watched the moving parts of the sculpture turn in the wind, I couldn't help reflecting on how much forward movement there has been (and continues to be) in our excellent library.

We live in a very serious world where bright colors and an unexpected touch of whimsy are a positive and uplifting diversion. When you see our sculpture, be prepared to smile, and enjoy this gift from the Friends of Union County Library.

Barbara T. Hale

## Halloween

Halloween, or "holy evening," for most is a masquerade party with candy as a reward, harmless unless you're concerned about the effect of sugar on the human body. For some, it is a day of celebrating a certain other-world spirituality. Myths and fables about not-so-holy ghosts and goblins, witches and black cats, jack-o'-lanterns and skeletons all hint at a fixation on death and evil in this world. No wonder churches prefer a fall harvest festival or Reformation Day event.

**All Things New**

*Wayne Fowler*



A witch doctor in Haiti once told me that October 31 is the day in which the veil between this life and the next is the thinnest. Thinking it culturally instructive to see a ceremony to conjure up a spirit, I considered attending a night festival in the nearby village of Liancourt on that date. But older, wiser folks convinced me I had no business there. Voodoo practitioners foster an aura of fear and mystery to build a marketable practice of folk justice and healing. The Christian worldview that acknowledges personal evil must allow the possibility that such occultic activities are not harmless.

The Bible describes an act of necromancy, or calling up the dead. It is a story easy to retell, but hard to explain. Israel's King Saul knew that God had forbade his people to use divination, witchcraft, sorcery, and necromancy, and had applied that law during his reign. Yet after he had turned away from God, and found that God would not answer his prayers for courage and wisdom in the face of the Philistine army, he decided to violate that command.

Saul disguised himself, and sought a medium, "the witch of En-dor." She hesitated, mentioning the prohibition. He persisted, wanting her to bring up the dead prophet Samuel. The apparition frightened the woman conjurer, and said that Saul and his sons were to die in battle the next day. Saul looked for an answer in the wrong place.

If occult activities are harmless, why would God prohibit them? To seek that kind of spiritual encounter is to acknowledge a spiritual power other than God, which is idolatrous. The Bible explains that spiritual evil does exist with the purpose to steal,

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## Commissioner's Questions

**Q. We heard the county was opening a new medical clinic in Suches this week. Do you have any information on this?**

A. Yes. In cooperation with Union General Hospital, and Union County Government, a new medical clinic will have the ribbon cutting on Monday. We are very grateful to Union General, who will be providing the clinic services to the Suches Community.

**Q. When does the new shotgun range on Hwy 515 open?**

A. We have been delayed for several months because of Corp of Engineer permits. We had hoped to have it open this year. However, while we do not yet have the final permit, we have been notified to expect it soon. Once the final permit is received, the bids for grading will be advertised for 4 weeks prior to opening bids. So just be patient and we hope that with decent weather, maybe we can have it ready for Spring.

**Q. I went over to the Transfer Station (affectionately known as the dump), and where I had been able to take several bags of garbage for a couple of dollars, they told me the minimum to cross the scales was \$10.00. Why did this go up and is it fair?**

A. Yes, it is fair, but it is also a significant increase for some who have been getting a really good deal. The garbage fee has been \$1.00 per bag and \$1.25 for a large bag for several years. But what had happened over the years is that some people would save up, bring 10 to 12 bags, and instead of paying by the bag, they would cross the scales and have it weighed and would only pay based on the commercial rate. Therefore, we had started to get cars coming over here from North Carolina, Fannin and Towns so they could dump their garbage for less than where they live and that was obviously a problem.

This procedure was never supposed to be allowed, but the company handling the transfer station gradually slipped into it over time. We watched one day and one specific example was a man came in, crossed the scales and paid for 2 large bags of garbage in the back of his pickup, and paid the lady at the booth \$2.50. About 10 minutes later, a lady came in a minivan, crossed the scales and

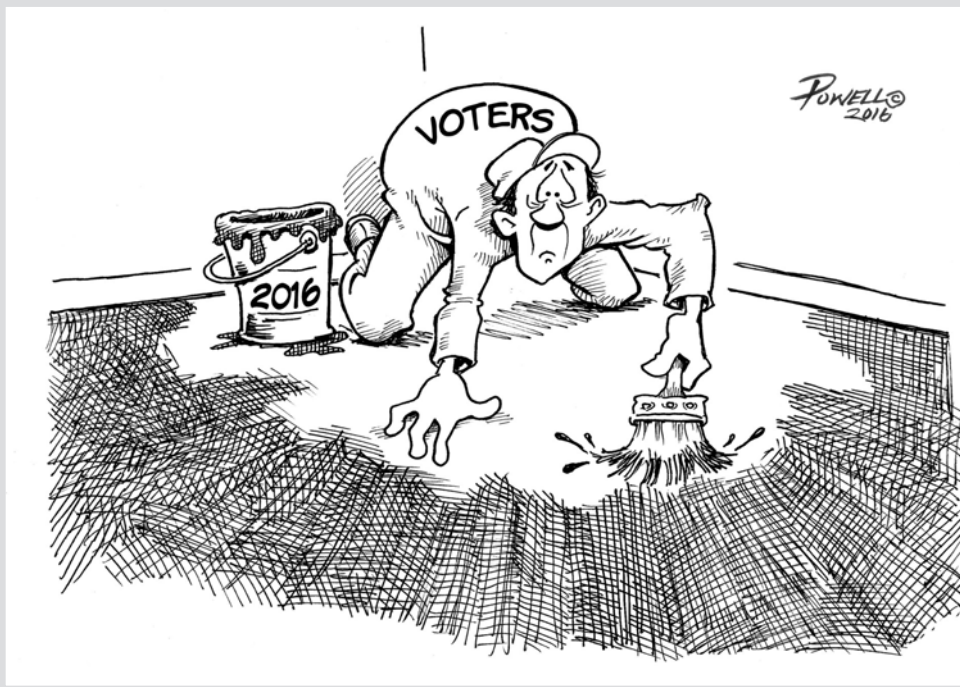
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**Q & A from Union County Commissioner**

*Lamar Paris*



## Wildfires in North Georgia October 2016



## Ag Income in Union County

Think back with me to 1938. Those of you who were living during that time will remember that America was in a bad way. Times were exceptionally hard in the Southern Appalachians. However, President Roosevelt began putting the country back to work through a series of social programs sponsored by the Federal government. I found an example of one of these programs in the files at the Extension Office.

The following came from a transcript of a radio show called the "Farm News and Views" conducted by Cooperative Extension on WSB out of Atlanta. The participants in the show are Paul E. Paris, Union County Farm Supervisor and James L. Owenby, Union County Farmer. For those of you who do not know Paul Paris was the father of present day Commissioner, Lamar Paris.

Let me give you a little more background information. The Farm Security Administration was a forerunner of the present day Farm Service Agency. This agency administered a program called the Rural Rehabilitation Program. The program was designed to help small farmers of America get back on their feet after the Great Depression. The program provided a low interest loan to small farmers across America. Participants agreed to develop an economic plan that would help them to generate more cash flow and the ability to pay back the loans. Union County was the first county in Georgia in which all the loans were repaid in full by the participants. James L. Owenby was one of the farmers of Union County.

Mr. Carl Hancock was interviewing Paul Paris and James Owenby. He started the program by telling listeners that Union County was the first county in Georgia where all the Rehabilitation loans were repaid in full by all participants in the program. He further stated "that these loans had been repaid without the aid of King Cotton, because not a single stalk of cotton is grown in Union County". So, Mr. Hancock went on to introduce Mr. Owenby by stating, "Mr. James L. Owenby is 40 years of age, has a wife and six children." Mr. Hancock asked Mr. Owenby to tell the listeners about his cash crops and his farm.

Mr. Owenby said, "Well, I guess I did fairly well with that old plug mule I was working at the time. I made \$120 from 2 acres of beans, and \$51 from 1 acre of potatoes. I only made \$10 from my cabbage, but, I sold a hundred dozen eggs for \$20 and I took in \$14 from the sale of a few gallons of syrup. In all, I figure I made \$215 last year." Mr. Owenby also stated that he knew he could have done better if he had a good pair of mares. So, he was able to use his profit to buy two brand new mares for his farm. Mr.

Officials caution smokers discarding cigarets  
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**Frank Riley**

*Executive Director of RC&D*



**Around The Farm**

*Mickey Cummings*



## Black Walnuts

No doubt many of us are currently hearing the ominous "thuds" of black walnuts falling all around our homes and yards. Though they may seem unsightly when they start to decompose in our yards and provide hazards for our lawnmowers, these nuts can provide a tasty reward to those persistent enough to crack them.

Black walnut trees are native to our region and have compound leaves, with many leaflets arranged on a main stem. These trees are also considered monoecious, meaning they have both male and female flowers on the same tree. Trees can begin to fruit when they are about five years old, but it often takes ten to twenty years for a tree to put out a full crop. If you have black walnut trees that are less than five years old, make sure they are watered adequately over the summer. As always, it is recommended that a soil sample be taken if the tree has had trouble bearing fruit or if you are planning on transplanting a young tree. This way you can be sure that you are giving your tree adequate nutrition when you fertilize it.

Walnuts will start to drop in late September, but we will see the height of harvest in mid-October to November. The nuts found inside the green and brown husk are highly prized, but processing these is not for the faint of heart! It takes two pounds of unshelled black walnuts to make one cup of useable nutmeat. If you do want to harvest your walnuts, it is important to remove the husk once it is ripe. To determine ripeness, press on the skin of the husk, and if your finger leaves an indentation, the nut is definitely ripe.

It is important to hull, or remove the husk, from walnuts because if the husk is left on while they are cured, walnuts will become discolored and have an odd flavor. The dye produced by walnut husks stains clothes, wood, and skin, so take appropriate precautions when hulling the nuts. Applying pressure to the sides of the husk by pounding side to side with a hammer is usually sufficient to knock the husk off a fully mature walnut, but make sure to wear safety glasses. You can also soften the husks by mixing three parts nuts to one part water and a handful of gravel and stirring vigorously. Do not compost the removed husks as they produce a chemical called juglone which can be harmful to other plants.

After you have hulled the walnuts, wash the unshelled nuts. The shells also stain, so wash them outside. A garden hose and a bucket do the trick just fine, and this also helps determine which nuts are good: if they sink, keep them, and if they float, throw them away as they likely have insect damage. Once the nuts are clean and dry, cure them by storing them in a cool, dry place away from sunlight for about two weeks. Nuts are properly cured when the kernel breaks with a crisp snap. You can then store the nuts until you

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## New Overtime Standards

The U.S. Department of Labor unveiled the new standards to its overtime rule on May 18, 2016. These changes impact the exceptions under the Fair Labor Standards Act and its regulations. The changes will impact some businesses, including non-profits and those with seasonal or part-time workers. The proposed changes are slated to take effect December 1st and include raising the minimum threshold for salaried employees from \$455 to \$913 per week or \$47,476 annually to be exempt from being paid overtime. The Department of Labor is making allowances for bonuses, incentives and commission structures to count towards the \$47,476 annual salary, but there are guidelines and restrictions on that as well. The way the law is currently written, employees that make \$455 per week and meet the

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**Blairsville - Union County Chamber**

*Regina Allison*



**From the Ground Up**

*Melissa Mattee*



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