

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Swim Call

...Aboard USCGC Kimball: Submitted by Ron W, USCG: We share one of the most amazing events many of us have ever experienced at sea: Completed operations for the day, no vessels around for miles, weather was perfect, we were a zillion miles from land. We had not been off the ship for weeks, were at that point where every day feels like "Groundhog Day," and were looking for something to break up the monotony. Swim Call! We had a fully vetted and tested plan we've used before, conducted safety briefs, established communications between various stations, launched our small boat with extra crew and a dressed out swimmer and stationed 50 yards off the ship, set an armed shark watch, opened and manned the Rescue Station, and put an accountability system in place. It was perfect! THEN! Bridge personnel reported "Shark!" over the radio. Right out of a Hollywood movie, a 6-8 foot shark surfaced at the Rescue Door, swimming toward 30-40 people in the water about 30 feet away. Everyone on the Flight Deck had a bird's eye view. A review of video shot by a crew member reveals it was likely a Long-Fin Mako or Pelagic Thresher Shark.

ME1 Cintron, our shark watch, was on the Flight Deck and immediately locked on target...literally! Our animal-lover Chief who wants to save every animal she finds yelled "Shoot it!" While some crew went for the Jacob's ladder on the Fantail, others went for the open stern notch at the ship's stern, and a large group swam for the small boat. ME1 Cintron fired a well-aimed burst right at/on top of the shark to protect shipmates just feet away. It turned away for a few seconds then turned back. We kept directing people out of the water while keeping a clear line of sight on the shark. ME1 fired bursts as needed to keep the shark from his shipmates with amazing accuracy. The shark would wave off with each burst but kept coming back toward our shipmates. No panic like the 4th of July scene from JAWS, everyone realized what was happening, they moved with a purpose! Everyone stayed focused and worked the problem. The small boat quickly looked like a vessel overloaded with SAR survivors. Others threw heaving lines to shipmates in the water and helped them aboard via the stern notch. The only injury was a small scrape OS3 Berk suffered while climbing aboard, scraping his opened jaw shark's teeth jaw tattooed knee!

We have hundreds of years at sea between all of us and no one has seen or heard of a shark actually showing up during a swim call. This goes to show why we prepare for any and everything. We just didn't think it would be a swim call shark attack! BRAVO ZULU to ME1 Cintron who likely saved one or more of his shipmates from a shark attack!! It was a team effort with everyone doing their part to work the problem. This is a sea story each of us will be retelling for YEARS! - Semper Paratus

Letters to The Editor

Dog Lovers Should be Glad

Dear Editor,

Yesterday our seven pound dog consumed a ghastly amount of chocolate due to our mistake. Without a doubt, she would be dead had it not been for the efforts of the veterinarian at a local Hiawassee vet service "Forever Friends." It took two trained and highly motivated people to save the dog's life. The first was the first line receptionist who answered the phone, who didn't put you on hold, who spoke clear English, who didn't tell you to bring the dog in for "consultation". She simply asked "How much the dog weighed and how much chocolate did the dog eat?"

Armed with these two bits of information, this young lady went to the vet, Rinday Barrett, and came back with the recommendation of three tablespoons of hydrogen peroxide to induce vomiting.

It worked, and how. Dog lovers should be glad this service is available in Hiawassee. I know we are.

Richard P. Kreiss

Climate Change is a Global Emergency?

Dear Editor,

If one reads the Biden-Sanders Unity Task Force Recommendations (go to joebiden.com for the full manifesto) it is clear that Joe Biden wants to convince the American people that "climate change is a global emergency" which requires "decarbonizing" American industries and eliminating carbon dioxide emissions to "net zero." In other words, he intends to implement the Green New Deal. And as a result, you guessed it, the U.S. will have to rejoin the Paris Climate Agreement, and contribute to the United Nations slush fund which gives grants to China, which, of course, doesn't contribute one penny.

Old Joe wants to install 500 million solar panels and 60,000 wind turbines to create energy for our country. This foolish policy will eliminate fossil fuel power by 2035. The biggest whopper of all is that the document claims this will result in lower electricity bills. As we all are aware, America's prosperity has been built on cheap fossil fuel energy. If Biden's plan is implemented, this will all end. Where will much needed power come from when the sun doesn't shine and the wind doesn't blow?

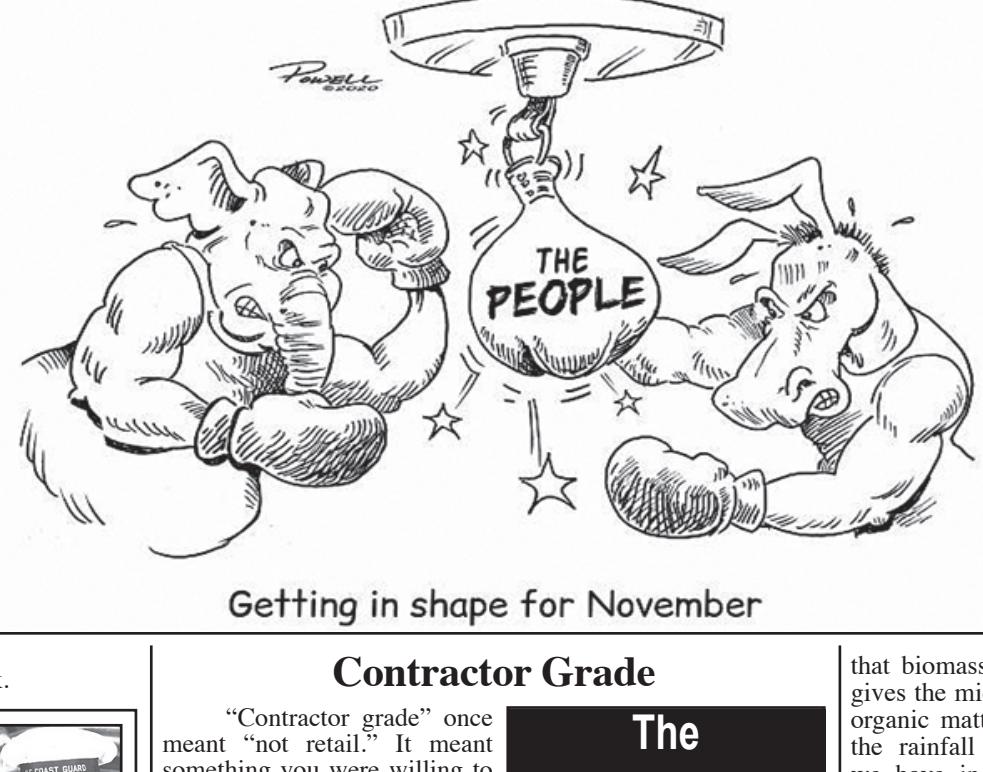
And the experience of countries such as Australia and Germany is that switching to wind and solar drives up the cost of electricity. Closer to home, in the state of California, electricity prices are 60 percent higher than in the rest of the United States since they mandated zero emissions by 2045. And now they are experiencing "brown outs" across the state. Sounds a lot like Venezuela don't you know.

Also, Biden's pie-in-the-sky environmental program claims that high-paying fossil fuel jobs amazingly will be transformed into new climate jobs such as building wind turbines and electric cars and climate-retrofitting 4 million homes. Another fantasy propagated by the far left.

And finally, to pay for all this environmental retrofitting of our economy, Biden promises to raise taxes. Now that we can be sure of if he is elected President.

Tim Groza

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Getting in shape for November

Contractor Grade

"Contractor grade" once meant "not retail." It meant something you were willing to pay more to have because you needed it to work right every day, day after day. Today, contractor grade simply means "costs more." It's a label that marketers know will convince the weekend warrior to pay more because he thinks he's getting a better quality tool.

Meaning changes because language is dynamic. It responds to new discoveries, political and social changes. Just after the Civil War, democrat meant "opposed to political and civil rights for African Americans," while republicans were still the party of Abraham Lincoln, who preserved the union and freed the slaves. Today the words, "democrat" and "republican" have several meanings and, depending on your intention and affiliation, can be either badges of honor or pejoratives. Those of us who value actions over words might suggest that for elected officials, republican and democrat might as well mean "contractor grade."

For much of our history, education did an admirable job of preparing citizens for public discourse. We learned a common language that served as a forge for our melting pot of cultures and races of people. There were regional and cultural differences, but we aspired to a public discourse that was more formal and precise than what we have today. We can read letters from the most humble of private soldiers during the Civil War, and they are far superior in style and substance to the vast majority of what we see in print today.

It has been a long journey from the epic poems of Homer to the tweet, and from the language of Shakespeare to gangster rap. Along that journey, words lost their precision as our values and our concept of good and evil became relative as well. While the quality and influence of education diminished, the impact of information technology increased to the detriment of understanding and public discourse, and this has become a direct threat to our free society.

An additional hazard is inherent in the increasing control of information by a decreasing number of entities. We flip through countless channels and click on myriad websites under the illusion of infinite variety, but most of us are unaware that 90% of what we see and hear is controlled by half a dozen giant corporations that not only inform our vision of reality, but have an almost seamless interface with government.

Thus we are subject, not only to the efforts of a small group of people to monetize as many aspects of human behavior as possible, but to their political preferences as well. Today, the majority of corporate media leans decidedly to the left, and while you might celebrate this bias today if it's consistent with your own views, you might not be so agreeable should these dominant entities decide to support a dictator or a demagogue tomorrow. Meanwhile, whether by the diminishing quality of education or the increasingly populist posturing of the political-media class to maintain power, the vernacular has ascended and public discourse has devolved to a lower grade-school level of comprehension.

From the ubiquitous smart phone to the White House to the headlines served up by the behemoths of mass media, we talk at, not to each other with language that has become puerile, inflammatory and replicated endlessly like so many dollars that have lost their value. The appeal to populism, not only in language but in most realms of human endeavor, has lowered our standards more than it has lifted people to a higher state of being. "That's elitist!" shouts the angry voice of protest from his mother's basement, certain that he has been victimized by someone. "Absolutely," we answer quite calmly. In a republic, democracy is an engine, not a rudder. We own the ship but we want elite, not popular helmsmen. We vote them into position, and when they fail, it is our responsibility to replace them.

But we never really replace them. The ship's crew has mutinied. We choose from a pre-selected menu of career politicians and celebrities. The ones who win are the ones who best appeal to our fears and prejudices, and we are becoming powerless to avoid that because everything we know about the world is served up by various outlets all belonging to the same small group of interests. We know something is wrong, but we keep making the same choices over and over again because we don't know how to do anything else. Millions of people now get most of their information from social media or allow themselves to be guided by "influencers," celebrities that are judged worthy of allegiance not by ability, education, training or accomplishment, but merely by popularity: actors, ball players, YouTube stars – reality show hosts. Every candidate is now required to weigh in on the struggle between victims and their persecutors, because we are all, we are told, one or the other. Somewhere between the extremes, the vast middle ground of reasonable people don't have a lot of time to think about what's ailing the country. They're too busy earning a living or trying to get enough sleep to continue that pursuit. When they do have time, even their entertainments are corrupted with the constant noise of breaking news and unending and "unprecedented" dramas.

Weary of the pursuit of the ever shrinking dollar and distracted by the drama, we remain blind to the unobserved movements of the humorless, cashless, cancel-cultured social credit serpents attempting to establish themselves at the root of our consciousness, punishing thought crime and shaming into submission any who would dissent.

Whichever side prevails in the staged drama of the current election cycle, the corporate behemoths will remain, and we'll get hosed again, enduring another four years of contractor grade government, poorer, dumber and more frustrated than we were the previous four years, and with a diminishing capacity to change that. It's tragic, and it's comic, because both sides recognize the same problems, but blame the wrong parties. If only they could listen to each other long enough to recognize that they have similar goals.

Cover Crops

I have talked about cover crops briefly in the past, but this week I'd like to go into more detail. Planting cover crops year after year provides many benefits to the soil. Let's talk a little more about what a cover crop is, why you should plant one, and how to go about doing that.

A cover crop is a crop that you plant to cover the ground. (How's that for using the word in the definition?) Most of the time cover crops are planted in the fall and grow through the winter to be terminated in spring before you plant your garden. There are summer cover crops that can be grown, but I'm going to focus on winter cover crops, because of the time of year right now. Typically, a cover crop is a cereal grain (e.g. rye, or wheat), brassica (e.g. forage turnip or wild radish), or a legume (e.g. clover or vetch). You can also plant combinations of the three.

Cover crops benefit soil health in a multitude of ways. One of those is that cover crops help build organic matter in the soil. A cover crop like rye produces a lot of biomass, when

that biomass is tilled into the soil before spring planting, it gives the microbes in the soil material to work on to turn into organic matter. Because of the rainfall and heat that we have in the southeast, organic matter will decompose faster than it's created. Therefore giving those soil microbes materials to turn into organic matter will allow you to increase your organic matter over time.

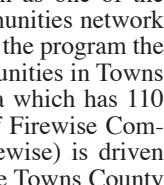
Cover crops also reduce erosion. After pulling the crops that you had planted in the summer the soil may be left bare. A cover crop will protect that soil, and hold it in place to keep it from washing away. Cover crops can also reduce weeds. Some crops like rye will release chemicals that are like a natural herbicide. You can also use cover crops as a natural mat, that blocks sunlight, and so make it more difficult for weeds to grow. Certain cover crops like brassicas that produce a large taproot can be used to alleviate compaction. That large taproot will break up the soil and can penetrate hard layers in the soil.

All of these attributes make cover crops very beneficial to the soil. So how do you grow a cover crop? The ideal time to plant a cover crop is around Labor Day. If you're planting a cereal grain, you'll want to plant 3-4 pounds of seed per 1000 square feet. Brassicas need 1-2 pounds of seed per 1000 square feet. Legumes need a quarter pound per 1000 square feet because the seeds are very small. Legumes are able to fix nitrogen because they have a symbiotic relationship with bacteria. Therefore, it's important to inoculate your soil with the appropriate bacteria if you're putting out legumes. Allow the cover crop to grow throughout the winter. Depending on the cover crop that you use, you may need to add some fertilizer. 2-3 weeks before planting your summer plants, you'll need to terminate the cover crop by cutting it and tilling it into the soil.

If you have questions about cover crops contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

Appalachian RC&D FAC Coalition

RC&D
Frank Riley
Executive Director



The Chestattee/Chattoochee RC&D Council (Chest-Chatt) is a non-profit organization located in Northeast Georgia whose original work area was the 13 counties in that corner of the state, but in the past few years Chest-Chatt has grown to cover all 159 Georgia counties plus 54 counties in western North Carolina and Southwestern Virginia. Our focus is Wildfire education and helping small farmers with programs and assistance. In 2013 Chest-Chatt was chosen as one of the original 8 Pilot hubs for the Fire Adapted Communities network and since then has worked with partners to make the program the best in the state and now has 24 Firewise Communities in Towns county the leading Firewise program in Georgia which has 110 total. Georgia is 6th in the nation for number of Firewise Communities. Our Wildfire education program (Firewise) is driven by a group of dedicated citizens that make up the Towns County Firewise Citizen's Coalition. The results of the Towns Coalition's efforts over the past 5 years was a 40% drop in wildfire calls the first year and 90% drop the second year and the years since have shown similar trends. These results prove that the Fire Adapted Communities (FAC Net) Learning Network concept, that uses Peer to Peer communication, works and our results prove that citizens must drive the programs to be sustainable.

In 2015, Tony Tooke, the new USFS Region 8 Forester, visited Towns County to see for himself what we had been doing with our programs. For the previous 9 years Mr. Tooke had worked with the US Forest Service in Washington DC and when he saw what our group was doing, his comment was "this is exactly what I would like to see move all the way up the Appalachian Mountain chain to Virginia, can you do it?" Our answer was, "Yes Sir, it only takes money and a lot of dedicated people". The dedicated people are in every community and the trick is to find them and organize them into what we have here.

RC&D councils have several things that make them a natural fit for our program development in the Appalachians; they consist of local citizens who are public servants, business owners, farmers, and with diverse and varied backgrounds; they are established in the areas where they serve; and they are all eager to find community service projects for funding to keep the doors open. These citizens run organizations can make Firewise happen in the local community just like they have in Towns County. There are 6 RC&D councils along the string of Appalachian Mountains from Georgia to Virginia. That was 5 years ago, and our work has been so successful that the US Forest Service has just re-funded our group for the third time since our start in 2015. We now have funds so we can keep our wildfire education (Firewise) programs going to help the citizens protect their homes from devastating wildfires. These RC&D councils have met Mr. Tooke's challenge and are now recognized as the wildfire education "experts" in their areas. This area covers a continuous area of Appalachian Mountains where everybody lives in the Wildland Urban Interface and are in need of what Firewise and Fire Adapted Communities must have to offer.

The 6 RC&D Councils in this project make up the Appalachian RC&D FAC Coalition whose mission is to spread the good things that Firewise has to offer the citizens who live in the Appalachian Wildland Urban Interface. Smokey's message that "Only You can Prevent Wildfires!" holds true because we cannot do it, only YOU can. For more information on the Appalachian RC&D Coalition, contact Frank Riley, Executive Director Chestattee/Chattoochee RC&D Council: www.chestchattrcd.org or www.appcofac.org or check us out on Facebook.

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