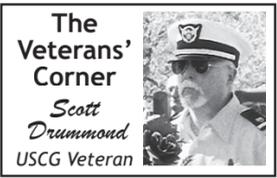


DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

# OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

## Towns County Veterans Day

Friday, 11 November, 2016 1100 AM, at our beautiful little Towns County Veteran Memorial Park we will celebrate our freedoms and liberties as Americans once again. All Veterans, active duty, reserve forces, families, friends and supporters of our military and our United States of America come and honor our nation and be honored. We will also honor the loved ones of deceased Veterans of Towns County who now have their beloved Veterans' names memorialized upon our Memorial wall for 2016. There will be an unveiling of monuments for honoring our Revolutionary War; our War Between the States; Korean War; and our Vietnam War. There will be an individual flag dedication for each branch of our armed forces, i.e., Army, Navy, United States Marine Corps, United States Air Force, United States Coast Guard, all flanked by a POW/MIA flag to be raised by Zadie Cunningham in honor of her brother, Grover Cunningham, who lost his life at the Battle of Tarawa, while serving with our USMC, and whose remains have yet to be returned home to Towns County. We will also place into service a brand new 12' by 18' "Old Glory" on the thirty year old 60 foot flagpole at the rear of the park. This will be absolutely astounding! Pam Leslie Towns County High School outstanding Soloist, sings our National Anthem. Our Veterans and indeed all residents of Towns County are indebted to our retiring Commissioner, Mr. Bill Kendall for his love, dedication, perseverance and going "above and beyond" his personal call of duty for all of this including how he has maintained our small north Georgia Mountain county with its very unusual demographic structure and limited resources.



The Veterans' Corner  
Scott Drummond  
USCG Veteran

We will also be honored to have as our guest speaker Colonel Charles A. Cunningham, USAF (Ret.). After serving our nation for 22 years in the USAF he now resides in Murphy, NC. Also participating will be the Old Unicoi Trail Chapter 3117 GA of the Daughters of the American Revolution; Blue Ridge Mountains Chapter, Georgia Society, Sons of the American Revolution; Smith's Legion Chapter, 2699, United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC); and Private David W. Payne Camp, 1633, Sons of Confederate Veterans. These folks are dedicated to maintaining the history of America and will be dressed in 18th century attire and will honor Towns County by unveiling the new monuments.

We have many groups and individuals to thank for their efforts in this forthcoming event including our VFW Post #7807; VFW Post 7807 Auxiliary; American Legion Post #23; American Legion Post #23 Ladies Auxiliary; Sons of the American Legion; Marine Corps League, Unicoi Detachment #783; Army-Navy Squadron #66. For more detailed listings of names please pick up one of the flyers which will be handed out by the many volunteers at the event. Most of all, we owe thanks to each and every Veteran who has ever served our United States of America and our Heavenly Creator.

Semper Paratus

## Prepare for approaching wildfire

**WARNING:** This may sound like a broken record, but I can't say it enough: Pay close attention to what's going on around you here in the mountains of North Georgia right now. If you smell smoke, any smoke, check it out, call it in, and get away from it.

We are now in an extremely dangerous weather situation in our area that can lead to events that can change our lives and our community forever. This is the dangerous wildfire conditions that we have been warning you about for years that can quickly create the perfect wildfire storm fueled by the extremely dry weather combined with heavy leaf fall and low humidity with constant winds. This is a recipe for disaster and all it takes to start the chain of events is one small spark.

Many wildfires are started by such simple things as the safety chains on a trailer dragging on the road, a mower hitting a rock, a power tool creating sparks, or many other seemingly harmless events that in normal weather would not be an issue. Now more than ever we need to follow the Ready-Set-Go evacuation guidelines that our Firewise team promotes: Ready - prepare your home and property to resist fire, be Firewise: Set - be aware of changing conditions and be prepared to leave your home: Go - as soon as you suspect something is not right, Go, do not hesitate, get out of harm's (and firetrucks) way and let the emergency folks get in and do their job to protect your life and property. The last thing you want to do is get caught in a traffic jam with flames and smoke blowing over your car which prevents the emergency trucks getting in and you can't get out...not a good situation to be caught in.

Water has for most of recorded history been the method of putting out fires and in many of the areas that we live in getting enough water to fight a fire is difficult. Many of our fire engines can pump 1,000 gallons per minute and only carry 1,500 gallons so the water can be gone in 1.5 minutes. In cities and towns across the United States, fire departments have had years of experience creating adequate water supplies for fighting structural fires. Networks of fire hydrants and water mains provide quick access to a plentiful supply of municipal water.

But what happens if you remove the hydrants and water mains, spread the homes and businesses far apart, add county roads and terrain, and dot the land with other types of structures? This is a more realistic picture of rural areas and the wildland-urban interface, and it is in these areas that water supply and distribution present an urgent challenge.

This is all the more reason to prepare our property before a fire approaches so it can resist a fire. If you are in a situation where a wildfire is approaching and you decide (or must) shelter-in-place and ride out the storm, there are steps that you can take to prepare to survive the fire. 1. Call for Help - Use a cell phone if your electrical power has been interrupted. 2. Close all entrances, windows and other openings - This includes doors, garage doors, windows, vents and any other entrances to your residence or garage. Close shutters, heavy drapes, Venetian blinds or other window coverings. This action is recommended to prevent sparks from blowing inside your house and igniting there. 3. Have tools & water accessible - Have a shovel, rake and long water hose accessible. Fill buckets and other bulk containers with water. 4. Dress to protect yourself - Wear cotton/woolen clothing including long pants, a long-sleeved shirt, gloves and a handkerchief to protect your face. 5. Wet down the roof - If your roof is combustible, wet it down with a hose. Place the ladder you use for this task on the side of the roof opposite the fire. 6. Turn off residential fuel - If you use natural gas or propane, turn it off at the tank or the meter. 7. Prepare automobiles - Back as many vehicles as possible into the garage. Then close the garage door. In the event you evacuate, close the garage door behind you as you leave. If you do not have a garage or if the garage is full, park vehicles so they are heading in the direction of the evacuation route. 8. Evacuate the family - If evacuation becomes necessary, take your family and pets to a safe location as soon and as quickly as possible. You can't save your home with the tools most homeowners have so get out of the way and let the professionals get in and do their job without having to deal with you.

Keep your eyes, nose and ears open for changing conditions and if you suspect something's not right, call 911 and leave the area.

For more information on the wildfire situation, contact the local Georgia Forestry Commission office, the US Forest Service or Frank Riley, Executive Director Chestatee/Chattahoochee RCD Council at info.ccrd@gmail.com.

### 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.

**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.**



RC&D  
Frank Riley  
Executive Director

## Beavers

Most of our wildlife is frantically searching for places to bed down before the impending winter, and beavers are no exception. These rodents, the largest in the country, are incredibly efficient builders and can often frustrate property owners. However, they do serve an important role in the environment, so by understanding their habits, you can be better equipped to prevent beaver damage on your property.

Many are familiar with the beaver's thick, warm fur coat and broad, flat leathery tail. The idea that they use their tail for building is incorrect, though: they use it to warn others of danger by slapping on the water, and for stability both in the water and on land. They live in small familial units called colonies that usually consist of a mated pair, juvenile beaver, and young offspring. They breed from October through March, so you may see an increase in beaver activity right now. They are highly territorial creatures and have special oil-producing glands that aid in territory marking and attraction of mates.

Beavers are herbivores and in the winter, they have a voracious appetite for any woody vegetation available. Some favorite foods are poplar, sweetgum, ash, pines and fruit trees. In the spring and summer, they feast on tender new growth of various plants, and have even been known to eat crops such as corn and use the stalks in their dens. They also make food caches in the late fall as winter approaches. Houses near lakes may have trouble with this as floating docks provide the perfect underwater storage area for freshly chewed limbs and saplings that the beavers can eat throughout the winter. The difference between these caches and normal wood and brush buildup washed in from rivers is that most of the bark on the wood will have been chewed off.

Beavers are known for their lodges, or large pile of sticks, but they only build these if nearby banks are unsuitable for den building. A beaver will often construct many dens because banks tend to flood and destroy much of the construction. Though they are not for shelter, dams are also constantly constructed for several reasons. Dams help to control the water flow around the lodge or dens. They provide a barrier against predators and play an important ecological role by providing habitat for numerous waterfowl and aquatic plants.

Though many consider beavers a nuisance, the ponds they create can actually be quite useful. They are an important source of wetland habitat. Ponds also help to replenish water tables in times of drought. Producers can even use beaver ponds as valuable sources of irrigation for their crops. However, sometimes, beavers can do more harm than good. They can cause flooding of fields and roadways, and their constant appetite and need to chew can cause excessive damage to valuable trees, shrubs, and crops. Beaver activity can also damage man-made ponds as they make dens in the banks.

If beavers are damaging your property, the most cost effective and long term solution is exclusion. A sturdy fence will deter beavers from entering and destroying your land, as well as keep out other pest animals. If the damage is on a large scale, then you can use a drainage device designed by Clemson University, though this is costly and labor intensive. Finally, if exclusion does not work, contact a professional, such as a licensed trapper, to remove them from your property. However, it is still important to take preventative measures after the beavers have been removed to ensure they do not return to damage your property.



UGA extension  
From the Ground Up  
Melissa Mattee

## Letters to The Editor

### Letter to the Editor:

*The Other Side of the Story*

I read with interest the article about the newly dedicated park at the top of Bell Mountain off Shake Rag Road. As usual, there is another side of the story. No one disputes the beauty of the view from the top of the mountain, but the manner in which the road was opened is another story: Shake Rag Road with its colorful history has always been a private road. It was built as a narrow ten foot wide curving access to Buck Ridge and above that to a few homes. Owners were told it was a private road and was marketed by the real estate community as a dead end. Seeking the quiet of the private road and the enjoyment of hikes to the top of the mountain, we purchased a home.

Without notice to property owners and renters, without a traffic study, without widening the private lane, an almost secret decision was made to open a public park at the top of Bell Mountain. Suddenly, the private road was deemed property of the County. No DOT study since the DOT doesn't study private roads. Suddenly, work crews were at the top of the mountain paving access, building platforms and making parking lots. At first it was the trucks and heavy equipment groaning up this mountain, but once the word was out, traffic has become a nightmare for those who live here. Most drivers are not familiar with yielding and in many cases, there is nowhere to go. "Watch for Pull Offs" a little sign says... and one wonders if there will be diapers in the road. These "Pull Offs" are shallow unsupported asphalt half-moons periodically placed along the road. They are very narrow and not long enough to fully remove a car from the oncoming traffic.

Residents now have hundreds of cars going both up and down the mountain each weekend and many during the week as well. Trash is thrown along the road. Loud music, screeching brakes and smelly exhaust day and night has changed a quiet private road into a less than pleasant environment. There have been many "near misses" because people are driving faster than is wise on a ten foot strip. Those who live here would like to see the other road which has fewer residents, a lower grade used as the main entrance to the new park. Kanuga is wider, has a better base to handle the traffic load and is easily accessible off 175. Is this a County Road or a private one? Why was it not considered?

So while the new park may be considered an asset to Towns County, better longer range planning, consideration for tax paying property owners and residents and proper access would have been appreciated.

Kaaren Nelsen, Owner

### To the Editor:

*Stewardship - the key to hemlock survival*

Gratitude is much on our minds as we approach the Thanksgiving season - families, friends, the beautiful part of the country we live in and its bountiful natural resources - and our responsibility and privilege to protect these treasures. But part of this picture is in grave danger. Millions of our hemlock trees, the magnificent signature evergreens that provide a unique and critical habitat for many animal and plant species, are being killed by an invasive insect, the hemlock woolly adelgid. Without timely intervention, their loss will have devastating and long-lasting results. There is, however, a way to avert this disaster. Trees on private land can be saved by a treatment process that's safe, effective, economical, and easy enough for most property owners to do themselves. Volunteers can also help save the hemlocks on our public lands. So if you're truly grateful for our beautiful natural surroundings and want to do something to help preserve them now and for the future, please come to a training class taught by Save Georgia's Hemlocks from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday, November 12 in Hiawassee. To register, email donna@savegeorgiashemlocks.org or call 706-429-8010.

Sincerely, Donna Shearer

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*Powell 2016*

We can't say it enough, Vets.

## Towns County Community Calendar

Bridge Players	Village Condos Clubhouse	12:30 pm
Bingo	Brasstown Manor	9:30 am
Free GED prep.	Old Rec. Center	4 pm
SMART Recovery	Red Cross Building	7 pm
Free GED prep.	Old Rec. Center	4 pm
Bridge Players	Village Condos Clubhouse	12:30 pm
Alcoholics Anon.	Red Cross Building	7 pm
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Chamber Board	1411 Jack Dayton Cir.	8 am
Historical Society	Old Rec. Center	5:30 pm
Mtn. Comp. Users	www.mcug.org	6 pm
Planning Comm.	Courthouse	7 pm
School Board	Auditorium	7 pm
Unicoi Masonic	Lodge Hall	7:30 pm
Basket Weavers	SC Fire Hall	10 am
Board of Elections	Old Rock Jail	4 pm
Mtn. Comm. Seniors	Senior Center	1 pm
Democratic Party	Civic Center	5 pm
Square Dance Club	Rec. Center	7 pm
Hospital Auxiliary	Cafeteria	1:30 pm
Water Board	Water Office	6 pm
YH Plan Comm.	YH City Hall	5 pm

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## Towns County Herald

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