

Food Pantry...from Page 1A

presents. Assistance through the Food Pantry is income based, and is for Union County residents only. Families can get supplies through the Food Pantry once every two months, and those interested can stop by to fill out an application. Proof of income and residency beyond a driver's license – such as a recent utility bill or a lease agreement – will be required to complete the application. Sullivan purchases 90 percent of the pantry's food from Food City, formerly BI-LO, on monetary donations made to the pantry. "We bag and box our stuff up," said Sullivan. "We get paper bags from Food City, and we'll put, for instance, green beans, corn, peanut butter, jelly, usually ravioli. During the winter months we give out soup. We try to put some canned meat in there if we have it available, like canned chicken, canned tuna, anything like that. Cereal, rice, ramen – the bag is usually full." The above items are for

households sized one to two, whereas families of larger sizes will get more food. Ninth District Opportunity is a nonprofit entity that contracts through the federal government to implement assistance programs at the local level, though no federal funds are funneled to the Food Pantry. Also under Sullivan's umbrella with Ninth District Opportunity is a housing assistance program and the Low Income Heating Assistance Program, a one-time payment for people who qualify based on income to either a propane company or the power company. As far as donations to the Food Pantry, Sullivan said that residents of Union County are already doing a terrific job, though donations are always appreciated. "We have some really marvelous givers," said Sullivan. "We've got one guy who comes in every week with three or four cans – every week. And he may need it himself. It's like a can of green beans, a can of corn,


a can of soup and something else, whatever he finds that's on sale. "We appreciate everything they do. I couldn't begin to tell you what some of these folks do. As long as it's in date, we give it out. If it's out of date, we can't." In November alone, Sullivan was able to help 63 households totaling 169 people, 52 of them children and 18 seniors. "And I gave out 2,460 pounds of food – that's not much," said Sullivan. "I would love to be able to triple that." Those looking to apply for or donate to the Union County Food Pantry can stop by the Blairsville Civic Center Monday through Friday, from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., unless the day falls on a federal holiday. For donors wanting to see what's in need, Sullivan invites you to call her office at (706) 745-6596. Monetary donations made in the form of a check must be filled out to Ninth District Opportunity, Inc., and in the memo line, must say Union County Food Pantry.

Rain, Rain Go Away

Rain, rain go away. We have been singing this children's song but it hasn't worked so far. We have seen some incredible weather in the last few weeks. Flooding is a major concern and can be very dangerous. Flooding is the one of the leading weather related causes of death in the United States. Union County Emergency Management Agency/Fire Department has responded to several flooding incidents over the last couple of weeks. We want people to be safe so we are providing some guidance on preparing and dealing with flooding emergencies. According to Ready.gov, basic safety tips for dealing with flooding or rising water are to follow the Turn Around, Don't Drown! ® advice. Avoid walking or driving through flood waters. Just 6 inches of moving water can knock you down, and 2 feet of water can sweep your vehicle away. If there is a chance of flash flooding, move immediately to higher ground. If floodwaters rise around your car but the water is not moving, abandon the car and move to higher ground. Do not leave the car and enter moving water. Avoid camping or parking along streams, rivers, and creeks during heavy rainfall. These areas can flood quickly and with little warning. The National Weather Service may issue Flood Watches and Flood Warnings.

Knowing the difference can depend on your response. A Flood Watch = "Be Aware." Conditions are right for flooding to occur in your area. During a Flood Watch, the following are suggested steps to take. Turn on your TV/radio. You will receive the latest weather updates and emergency instructions. Know where to go. You may need to reach higher ground quickly and on foot. Build or restock your emergency preparedness kit. Include a flashlight, batteries, cash, and first aid supplies. A Flood Warning = "Take Action!" Flooding is either happening or will happen shortly. During a Flood Warning, the following are suggested steps to take. Move immediately to higher ground or stay on high ground and evacuate if directed. Avoid walking or driving through flood waters. Turn Around,

Union County Fire Department



Fire Chief David Dyer

Don't Drown! Return home only when authorities say it is safe. Be aware of areas where floodwaters have receded and watch out for debris. Floodwaters often erode roads and walkways. Do not attempt to drive through areas that are still flooded. Avoid standing water as it may be electrically charged from underground or downed power lines. Photograph damage to your property for insurance purposes. For more information, please visit <http://www.ready.gov/floods> or our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/ucfd1 for the latest information and updates. Union County Fire Department... Our Family Protecting Your Family.



Flooding...from Page 1A



Flooding at Pegasus Landing covers bridge

rushing dangerously past, seen and unseen. "There were numerous tree branches that had floated by, anywhere from 2 feet

to 10 feet long, and you're looking at probably 6 inches around," said Schmidt. "The one camper where we rescued the two people, they had lost

a 20 pound propane tank and numerous other items that were around their camper."

Union County first responders spent Christmas Eve and Christmas Day monitoring road conditions and working closely with the National Weather Service.

"The south end and west end of the counties are usually what get hit the hardest in flooding," said Schmidt. "We've had numerous road closures due to the flooding, whether it be rivers or creeks washing out debris, or it has washed away some of the roads."

In the event of flash flooding, Schmidt said residents should not attempt to swim, walk or drive through flood waters, and should call 911 to report any hazardous areas or emergencies.

"We've done some training on that boat," said Union County Fire Chief David Dyer, who added that the rescue raft had been a donation to the department. "We've had a few flooding incidents here in the last couple of years, so we've practiced how to get these people out. And that's one of our biggest concerns, is to get people out before it gets dark and before it gets bad."

Unhealthy forest conditions drive need for Coopers Creek Watershed project

Gainesville, GA (December 19, 2015) – The Forest Service is providing the public with an early preview of the draft analysis, proposed plans and maps for the Coopers Creek Watershed project in Union County. For more than five years, analysis has been conducted in the watershed to determine its condition and health. Currently, six of seven ecosystems within the 29,600 acre project area are more than 50 percent departed from healthy forest conditions. Additionally, less than one percent of the project area has the young forest essential for songbirds, deer, wild turkey and ruffed grouse.

"Largely due to the lack of fire and other active management, the forest is out of balance and unhealthy," said Blue Ridge District Ranger, Andy Baker. "Just like any community, a healthy forest is diverse in both tree age and composition – it's what resiliency is all about."

Key modified proposed action information: Prescribed fire is planned on an average of 2-4 thousand acres every year over ten years to help restore historic conditions and oak stands in the forest.

More than 1,834 acres would be allocated as old-growth forest with an average stand age of 120 years old. This incorporates public desire to conserve old growth.

There is no 'clear cutting' whatsoever and more than 90 percent of the project area would see no thinning at all.

Approximately six per-



Group Meeting

cent (1,679 acres) of the project area would be improved through commercial thinning with an average of 20-60 trees per acre remaining.

Three percent (912 acres) would be improved through noncommercial thinning with an average of 20-60 trees per acre remaining.

Young, open forest would be established across the project area to create essential habitat for songbirds, ruffed grouse, wild turkey, and other wildlife.

"We've listened to public concerns and have been out on the ground numerous times with our partners to help inform this project" added Baker. "Together, we are working toward the healthiest possible forest and sustainable solutions that match the scale of the problem."

In accordance with federal regulations, the Forest Service will offer a 30-day formal comment period on the draft Environmental Analysis, which will begin with a legal notice published in the paper(s) of record. The legal notices are expected to be published during the week of January 4, 2016. All comments

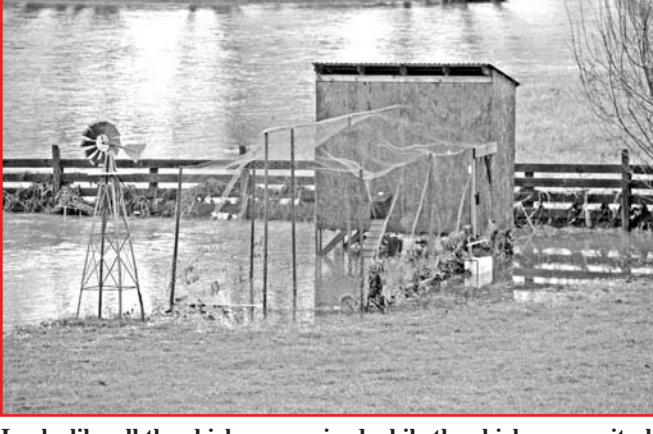
meeting 218 standards will be analyzed and incorporated into future analysis. A final Environmental Analysis and draft Decision Notice is expected in the spring of 2016. A 45-day formal objection period will follow at that time.

Get the latest forest news and alerts by texting 'follow chattoconeeNF' to 40404, 'liking' us on facebook, following us on twitter @ChattOconeeNF or taking advantage of our mobile app for your smartphone or tablet.

The Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests provide the finest outdoor recreation opportunities and natural resources in Georgia. Featuring nearly 867,000 acres across 26 counties, thousands of miles of clear-running streams and rivers, approximately 850 miles of recreation trails, and dozens of campgrounds, picnic areas, and other recreation activity opportunities, these lands are rich in natural scenery, history and culture. The mission of the USDA Forest Service is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. N(Dec30,Z3)gg



Road washed out from flash flooding in Union County



Looks like all the chickens survived while the chicken coop itself did not fare as well

Commissioner...from Page 1A

combined will see a budget increase of about \$284,000.

Most of that increase comes in the form of salary and wage increases, according to Commissioner Paris, which helps Union County remain competitive amongst other counties, and therefore helps Union County Sheriff Mack Mason to maintain vital personnel.

The commissioner also expects an increase of a little more than \$100,000 in grants in the 2016 budget, and health insurance costs are up in 2016 over 2015.

"We're proud of the budget," said Commissioner Paris. "Everyone has held their expenses down as much as possible. We've included a salary increase (for county employees), 3 percent for next year, which we think employees deserve that. That'll probably start in March or April."

Commissioner Paris recently ran a notice in the North Georgia News called "2015 Report on Projects Funded Through Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax," which covered SPLOST funds utilized up to Oct. 31, 2015.

The county is required by state law each year to make available an update as to how SPLOST money is utilized.

The report takes into account original SPLOST estimates, current estimates based on sales tax receipts, as well as identifies what projects and how much SPLOST money has been spent on them in the past year, and since the beginning of the SPLOST.

In this case, the commissioner published reports concerning SPLOST III and SPLOST IV.

Collections for SPLOST III began in 2009 and ended earlier this year, and SPLOST IV began around the same time as the end of SPLOST III. For SPLOST III projects,

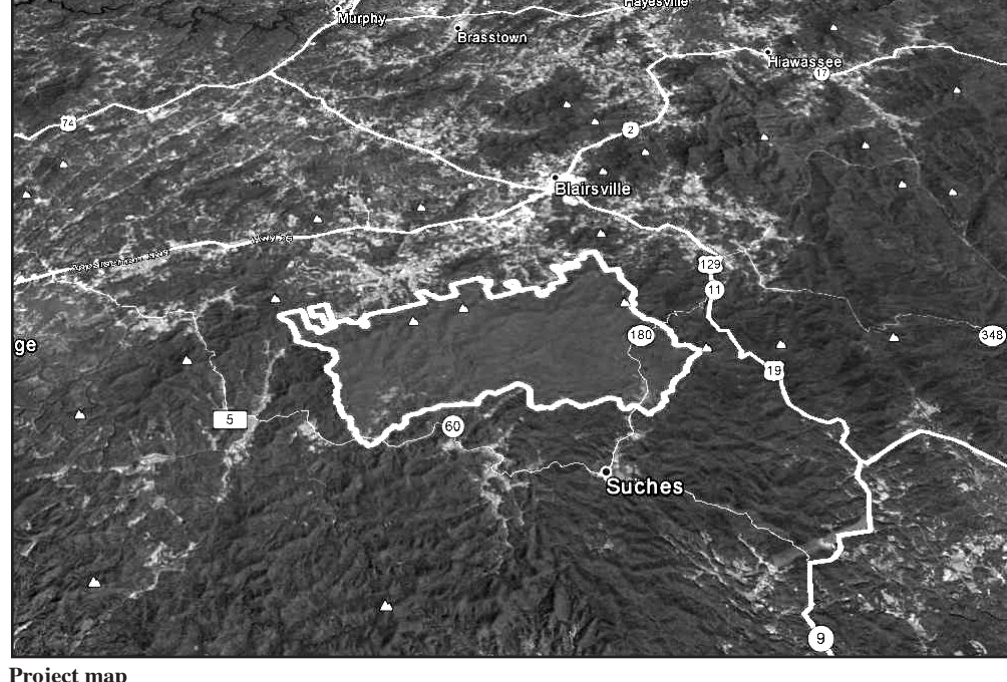
a total of \$20,419,015 has been collected – which was reported incorrectly earlier this year as \$22,276,936. The larger number was an early projection of SPLOST IV collections and was mistakenly used for SPLOST III collections, and the SPLOST IV estimated costs have since been revised to \$20,720,945.

Of the \$20,419,015 collected during SPLOST III, \$18,022,126 have been utilized toward SPLOST III projects, with \$1,248,838 of that money being used in the last year mainly for infrastructure, parks development.

The City of Blairsville receives SPLOST funds through the county, and from SPLOST III, the city received \$1,296,607, with a total expended to date amount of \$856,745. The city still has \$439,862 of available SPLOST III funds, the bulk of which have been set aside for water/sewer facilities and equipment.

As for SPLOST IV funds, the city has received \$53,742 of an estimated \$1.5 million to be distributed over the next six years, with proceeds to be spent primarily on infrastructure.

At the end of the December county meeting, Commissioner Paris wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.



Project map

Parkinson's meeting location change

As of January 1, 2016 the Blairsville area Parkinson's Disease Support Group (PDSG) will change its meeting location from the Southern Bank & Trust to the Cabin Coffee Co. of Blairsville at 44A Town Square, 706-745-0073, www.cabincoffeecompany.com. The monthly meeting day (second Wednesday of each month) and meeting start time (3 p.m.) remain unchanged. For more information: Chuck Esposito terraesp@windstream.net; 706-747-2183.

Cruce named to GC Dean's List

Emily Cruce of Suches completed courses with exemplary marks and made the Dean's List for 2015 fall semester at Georgia College in Milledgeville, Ga. Students making the Dean's List completed at least 12 hours of coursework with a 3.5 GPA or higher. N(Dec30,A1)SH

Hope House

Hope House is a faith-based, non-profit benevolence center to help Union County residents and homeless in times of critical need. Hours of operation: Monday 9 a.m.-12 p.m. & Thursday 1 p.m.-4 p.m., located at 178 Brackett's Way, Blairsville, (706)781-3090. N(Dec30,Z1)CA

AARP Smart Driver Class

AARP Smart Driver Class to be hosted by the Union County Senior Center of Blairsville, Thursday, January 7, 2016. Sign in time is 8:30 a.m. The 6 hour course starts promptly at 9 a.m. ending at 4 p.m. The course fee is \$15 for AARP members and \$20 for non members. Pre-registration is recommended to secure your place in the classroom. Telephone the instructor Rosemary Kerr at 706-745-7046 Monday through Friday from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. Please speak clearly when leaving your name and telephone number for call back confirmation. The Union County Senior

Center, 95 Senior Center Drive, is handicapped accessible. You will learn defensive driving techniques, proven safety strategies, new traffic laws, rules of the road and new vehicle technology innovations. No tests to pass or writing required. The AARP Smart Driver Course is opened to all licensed drivers. AARP is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for all, as we age. At the end of the course you will receive your AARP Smart Driving Certificate. You may also qualify for a multi-year discount on your automobile insurance. N(Dec30,Z1)gg