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TOWNS COUNTY CIVIC ASSOCIATION (TCCA)

*"Addressing the issues and concerns affecting the citizens of
Towns County and its environs."*

Newsletter Volume 3/ Issue 2 March 2025 - **Special Addition TVA**

Some of What Your TCCA Is Doing:

- ***Alternatives to TVA Plans to Lower Lake Chatuge.** - The TVA is in need of doing some work on the Lake Chatuge Dam spillway as there are signs of deterioration. Their preliminary plans are to lower the lake level for these repairs to 10 ft. below winter drawdown which would bring the lake down 20 ft. If this is done, the drawdown will make of the lake unusable especially in the Towns County area. If done as planned, the economy of Towns County and the surrounding area will be adversely affected. The TCCA is working with a number of groups, the Commissioner and Save Lake Chatuge and others, to prevent this from happening. See Special Article #1 for more details.*
- ***Looking into the possibilities of renovating or building a new Post Office for both Young Harris and Hiawassee.** – From several reliable sources within the post offices and from citizens, we have learned that our two municipalities and county have outgrown the current sizes of our post offices. Growth in the area and the increased volumes of mail order purchases has pushed our facilities to the limit.*
- ***Possible Improvements to County Recycling Center.** – Recycling is a growing trend across America and so too in Towns County. Many improvements have been made but many believe we can do better. We are working with Commissioner Bradshaw on possible ways to better our facility.*

MESSAGE FROM ONE OF OUR CITY OR COUNTY LEADERS



Towns County Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw: I would like to take this opportunity to thank the community for stepping up and helping the county to combat Parrot Feather. Mountain True has reported that Parrot Feather is under control. However, we are now facing a new problem with TVA proposing to possibly lower Lake Chatuge 10ft below winter pool for up to 8 years.

Although the county believes that dam maintenance and safety is of the utmost importance, we do find this plan unacceptable. The dam was built in less than a year, and the county is certain that the TVA can come up with a more economic-friendly plan.

I have already taken steps to try and influence TVA toward this objective. I have contacted Congressman Andrew Clyde (as well as senators Ossoff and Warnock). Congressman Clyde and I met with TVA representatives and both of us made it clear that the plan that has been presented is totally unacceptable and could lead to an economic depression in Towns County. I have also contacted Tom Barnett, TVA's Vice President of the River Mgmt. & Dam Safety Program and clearly outlined the benefits that Towns County's tourism provides to the state and region. I also pointed out how reliant the county's economic health is on our tourism industry and this plan could lead to local businesses closing and unemployment skyrocketing. I serve as vice president of the ATVG which is the Association of Tennessee Valley Government and have called upon them to use any influence they have to convince TVA to develop a maintenance plan that will not disrupt our local tourism traffic. I plan to continue working closely with Andrew Clyde who has pledged to do everything he can to stop the proposed TVA maintenance plan from proceeding, and with the TVA in developing a maintenance plan that will ensure the safety of the dam and our citizens but will not destroy our local businesses and force our communities to face a huge financial crisis.

I also urge Towns County citizens to reach out to the TVA and your elected officials and register your disapproval for the plan that is being considered and suggest they look at other maintenance plans and avenues.

SUMMARY OF COUNTY MEETINGS ATTENDED BY TCCA BOARD MEMBERS

(Summary of meetings taken place since last newsletter)

City and County Government

City of Hiawasse:

- Only Jay Chastain qualified for Mayor's seat and only Scott Benson qualified for the Council seat; therefore, there will be no need for a special election on 6/17/25. Chastain will be on the ballot in the Nov. election but Scott Benson will be in four years on the Council. *(March Highlights)*

City of Young Harris:

- Announced that no one, except a Public Works employee, should open a water meter cover. This is because of the potential to cause damage to the new meter which could result in the property owner paying repair expense.
- 5 sewer lines have been worked on. *(March Highlights)*

Commissioner's Meetings:

- Commissioner Bradshaw signed an agreement for the County to conduct the City of Hiawasse's elections this year, each year they will negotiate a new agreement. *(March Highlights)*
- This year the Recycling Center at the Transfer Station has been recycling glass to give to Union Co. for their glass recycling machine, and Commissioner Bradshaw said soon we will be putting up more recycling signage and recycling more kinds of plastics. *(March Highlights)*

County Planning Commission Meetings:

- The party proposing a Rehabilitation Center at The Retreat on Hwy. 17/75 need to present a state audit to the Planning Commission. *(March Highlights)*

City and County Utilities

T.C. Water & Sewer Authority:

- The new service pickup passed inspection and the purchase was completed. *(March Highlights)*
- The Authority's '07 Ford Ranger was placed up for sealed auction. All bids opened and witnessed by the Authority members. The highest bidder was Harold Allison. *(March Highlights)*

Blue Ridge Mountain EMC:

- March winds caused outages on 5 different days *(March Highlights)*
- 58K meters in use, using 120 million kilowatts in Feb. 4.7+6 miles of fiber cable installed with 18K users, which makes that profitable for EMC. *(March Highlights)*
- EMC had 93 new EMC customers in 4 counties. *(March Highlights)*
- Discussed future drawdown of the lake to improve safety of Chatuge Dam. *(March Highlights)*

Health and Education

Board of Education:

- The Ag Center Construction should be finished by June 2025 *(March Highlights)*
- Air conditioning will be installed in the big Gym in the summer of 2025 *(March Highlights)*
- Certain areas of the school floors will be repaired/replaced *(March Highlights)*
- An Ag Barn will be built in the summer of 2025 *(March Highlights)*
- Replacements for the various staff resignations and retirements has taken place *(March Highlights)*

Community Interest

Lake Chatuge Chamber of Commerce:

- Acoustic Sunset Concert opening day is May 8-Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds. Downtown Development Authority Summer "FUNdraiser" will feature Jimmy Buffett tribute show at Georgia Mountain Fairground's Anderson Music Hall on July 19. *(March Highlights)*

Note: The information presented in the above comments from the SUMMARY OF COUNTY MEETINGS may not necessarily reflect the final decisions from the noted office meeting. Summaries are as submitted by Board attendees and edited for this publication. Future newsletters will reflect updated information as it becomes available.

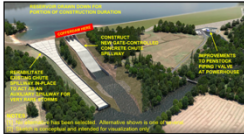
SPECIAL FEATURED ARTICLE #1

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

This Is A Better Option To Keep From Draining Lake Chatuge For 8 YEARS!

WHAT ARE WE ASKING TVA TO DO?

Install a Cofferdam to allow a New Spillway to be constructed while keeping normal lake levels. Retain the existing spillway as phase two after the new spillway is completed. This approach offers many advantages.



TVA, our Congressmen and Local Officials agree this should be a viable option. TVA told us that formal Public Comments are critical for this option to be considered. A Cofferdam could potentially be built over winter draw down with lake levels returning to higher levels during construction.

How Can You Help?

SUBMIT COMMENTS TO TVA

Comments are the most important thing you can do. TVA Does want to hear from the community.

ATTEND THE TVA MEETINGS

May 8th - Clay County NC
May 17th - Towns County GA

The TCCA, Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw, and the Save Lake Chatuge organization are already active in addressing this issue against TVA using local Congressman Andrew Clyde, MountainTrue and others. The TVA have a history of not being very cooperative with concerns like this at Lake Chatuge (Parrot Feather for example) and other lakes within their system. Therefore, it is pretty much up to us. Without a doubt, if Lake Chatuge is dropped 20 ft all year for up to 8 years, the economic impact on Towns County and the area around Lake Chatuge will be devastating. Towns County and specifically Hiawassee is dependent on our tourism industry. The Lake Chatuge Chamber of Commerce has stated that the impact of this TVA project will definitely impact all the restaurants, local businesses, hotels, camping and all other tourist related activities.

The Lake Chatuge alternative plans as outlined on their website <https://www.savelakechatuge.org/> is basically a plan the TCCA has discussed earlier this month and the TCCA fully supports this plan. It should prevent the lake from being draw down to the 20 ft level below winter drawdown and still allow for the work to be completed on the spillway. All parties agree the work needs to be done but none of the TVA plans discussed would prevent the 20 ft drop but this plan does. So please support!

Following the recommendations of Save Lake Chatuge and leave your comments at the <https://tvaforms.wufoo.com/forms/mr3qjkzlsxdgwy/>

Additionally, TVA schedule to meeting dates addressing this issue is below. Please attend and voice an opinion and support all of our efforts to prevent this 20 ft draw down for up to 8 years.

TVA's Public Meeting Schedule Addressing the Drawdown Issue:

5/6 & 5/15 Virtual Meetings 5:30-6:30 p.m. This will include a question-and-answer session with subject matter expert presenters. Link to register for online meeting: <https://tva.com/newsroom/regional-mountain-dams-safety-initiative/chatuge-dam-safety-modifications>

5/8 Clay County from 5:30-7:30 pm at the Clay County School Cafeteria, Hayesville, NC

5/13 Towns County from 5-7 p.m. at the Town County Recreation Center, 150 Foster Park Road, Young Harris, GA

TVA's Planned Alternatives:

TVA is currently seeking public input on proposed changes to Chatuge Dam to address potential risks to the dam's spillway. [Public comments](#) are being accepted through May 28, 2025, and can be emailed to nepa@tva.gov.

These options are:

- A. **Alternative A: No Action** – TVA would not perform any modification of the Chatuge Dam spillway, valves or embankment and would continue to maintain these components in their current condition. TVA would continue to monitor and inspect the spillway, repairing joints and sealing cracks in the spillway slab and walls as they are identified; however, the risk of spillway damage and failure would continue to exceed TVA's risk tolerance.
- B. **Alternative B: Remediation in Place** – Repairs would take place on the existing spillway while the dam remains in operation. The dam powerhouse would also have updated valves and piping installed, which is part of each of

the alternatives included in the study. This option requires drawing down the reservoir during construction, which would take up to 8 years to complete.

- C. **Alternative C: Remediation with Concrete Liner** – The existing spillway would be covered with a new concrete liner. The reservoir would need to be drawn down during construction, which would take up to 6 years to complete.
- D. **Alternative D: New, Larger Spillway** – A new spillway would be built. When complete, the existing spillway would be abandoned. This option requires excavation of rock and material that may be used for improvements to the dam embankment. Total construction time would be up to 6 years. The reservoir would need to be drawn down for a period of up to 4 years.
- E. **Alternative E: New Spillway and Repairs to Existing Spillway** – A new spillway would be built, with similar capacity to the existing spillway. Once complete, the existing spillway would be repaired for use as a second spillway during rare, extreme weather events. Excavated material may be used for improvements to the dam embankment. Construction time is estimated at 7 years, with the reservoir needing to be drawn down for up to 5 years.

Contributed by John T. Clemens, Towns County Civic Association President

Addendum:

The Towns County Civic Association asks all members, citizens, business owners and interested individuals to **PLEASE** attend these meetings and let your voices be heard. We thought Parrot Feather was important, and it was, but this potential drawdown for maybe 8 years would be significantly more damaging to our environmental ecosystem and the economy of Towns County and the Lake Chatuge area in both Georgia and North Carolina. Please follow the Save Lake Chatuge website/Facebook and leave comments at the TVA comment site.

SPECIAL FEATURED ARTICLE #2

TOWNS COUNTY CITIZENS FIREWISE COALITION

We live in a forested environment. Yes, it is absolutely beautiful. However, there is the real risk of this beauty being subjected to fire. It is called the “Wildland Urban Interface”, or WUI for short. The risk of a devastating fire presents a real threat which can cause the loss of property and life.

Our homes are more than a building to keep us dry and warm. They contain much of our life savings, many memorable possessions that cannot be replaced; pictures, grandma’s handmade quilts, hand carved reliefs by grandpa, family documents, a comfortable place to be when not feeling well, a place to receive family during the holidays, and many other conditions that give cause to name it “home”.

All can be lost when the embers are flying from a mile away ignite the leaves and pine needles in a corner of our roof adjacent to wood siding, or the debris collected under the deck, or the rapid spread of flames blowing across the yard towards our deck stairs, or the bush next to the home or garage in flames.

There are steps that each of us can take before we see and smell the smoke; simple, common-sense actions that we should take around our homes that may lessen the likelihood that a fire will harm us. The key word is “Mitigation”.

We each have the individual responsibility to care and protect ourselves as much as possible. Steps such as; decrease the flammable material within the first 5 feet around all sides of our home, keep the roof and gutters free of debris, use rock or patio stones adjacent to our wooden siding and decks, clear vegetation and debris away from the propane tank, trim low hanging tree limbs to 6 feet, store firewood away from the home, not on the deck, remove tree limbs overhanging the deck and roof. These are just some of the actions that you can take, not all at once, but little at a time to mitigate your risk.

Insurance may pay to replace your house; it will not replace your home or life lost.

For additional information, you may visit: www.firewise.org or contact your local Firewise Coalition at: 813 486-8997

Contributed by Micael Courey, Chairman of the Towns County Firewise Coalition

Mission Statement >>>

The **TOWNS COUNTY CIVIC ASSOCIATION** is a non-partisan/non-political association supporting the community since 2004. Our mission is to provide a platform for **Individuals, Families, Businesses, Organizations, Neighborhood Associations, City and County Governments** to address issues and concerns which affect the management, planning, and development of the County and its environs. Our objective is to share the concerns expressed by the TCCA, to ensure transparency and accountability of both Cities and County government officials as well as State appointed authorities and utility providers, and to fully cooperate with those authorities in the best interest of Towns County.



CONTACT INFORMATION
Towns County Civic Association
PO Box 455, Hiawassee, GA 30546-0455



TCCA BOARD MEMBERS

*John Clemens Michael Courey Anna Denton David Best
Joan Crothers Jim Olson Leslie Howard Andy Williams*
Email: townscountycivicassociation@gmail.com
Website: townscountycivicassociation.com

For Members to Know

As a member of Towns County Civic Association, you are always welcome to attend our monthly meetings that typically are on the second Wednesday of each month (time and location may vary so please check with a Board Member before attending). If you, as a member, wish to share a concern or wish to make a presentation, please let one of our Board Members know to have time scheduled.

GENERAL TCCA ENROLLMENT INFORMATION

TCCA membership is currently at 120 individual memberships, 3 HOA's and 1 business. Most annual memberships end on June 30 of each year unless you have paid for a two-year membership which saves \$5.00. If you haven't already paid your dues for this year (2023-2024) or for a two-year membership, please do so right away. See form below.

The Towns County Civic Association exists to support you the citizens and businesses of Towns County. We monitor the various media sources reporting on the activities within Towns County to understand what is of interest to our citizens. More importantly, we listen to you, our members, to understand what they believe we as an Association should be doing to make Towns County a wonderful place to live, work and play. The TCCA does not get any funds from the city, county or state government. We solely rely on your membership dues and our volunteers to do what we do in support of Towns County. So please, for those of you needing to renew their membership, complete the form below and continue to support our efforts.

Application Form Instructions:

Complete each question below and mail with your dues to:
Towns County Civic Association; PO Box 455; Hiawassee, GA 30546-0455

*****PLEASE PRINT *****

APPLICANT NAME(S): _____

Street Address (Towns Co.): _____

City & Zip Code: _____

Phones: _____

Emails: (TCCA uses BCC for mailouts): _____

If you have an out of Towns County Address, please enter below:

Address, City, State and Zip: _____

The Membership fiscal year is July 1 to June 30. One year membership dues: \$25.00, or two-year membership dues – \$45.00.

Paid Check # _____ **or Cash: \$** _____. Please print and cut out the form and send to address above.

As always, the TCCA appreciates your support, and we couldn't do what we do without your continuing membership in support of our efforts for Towns County.