

## Agriscience...

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as many other auctions and functions hosted by the FFA and school system.

Behind the arena section of the building sits a wide-open space, housed with mobile animal pens for students to keep livestock, conduct livestock shows and prep animals for auctions.

Also on the property is a section landscaped with a grazing field in mind as well as a smaller greenhouse, or hoop house, for students to grow crops during off-season, donated by the Chestatee-Chattahoochee RC&D.

Although the Agriscience Center was designed with the Union County Agriculture students in mind, Dr. Rayfield wants to extend the use of the facility to the community as well and hopes that it becomes a staple of Union County in the future.

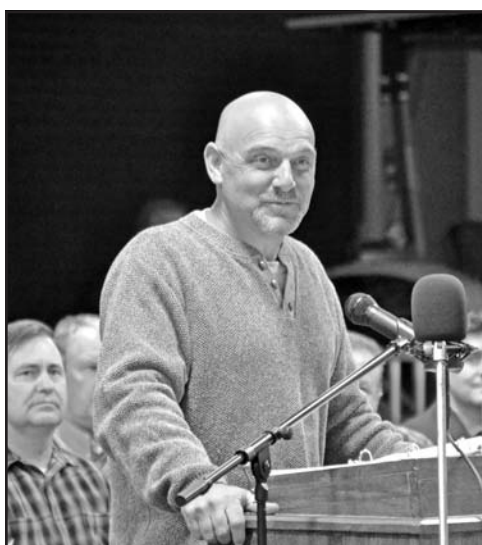
"There is a vision for this facility," said Dr. Rayfield. "There is a vision for this school system. There is a vision for this Agriscience Center to become an integral part of not only the Agriculture Education program, but also this community and this area of the state.

"We hope that you will partner with us in doing that, no matter which entity you represent."

All those involved in the center are excited for what the future has in store for the program, for the students and for the people of Union County.



Moveable animal pens inside the new UC Schools Agriscience Center.



Tony Hunter, Union County Board of Education Member



Austin Dyer, Union County FFA President

## Burn Ban...from Page 1A

website. "It is unlawful to burn manmade materials such as tires, shingles, plastics, lumber, household garbage, etc."

Residents can obtain a burn permit from the Georgia Forestry Commission by navigating to the GFC online permit system at [www.gfc.state.ga.us/online-permits/index.cfm](http://www.gfc.state.ga.us/online-permits/index.cfm), or by calling 1-877-OK2-BURN (652-2876).

Should residents decide to burn without a permit and accidentally start a wildfire or structure fire, they could be held liable for the cost of putting the fire out, as well as any damages

caused by the fire.

The GFC is expected to begin issuing burning permits this week, which is something it wasn't doing prior to last week's rainfall, though the continued issuance of burning permits depends entirely on daily conditions.

"There is no statewide burn ban," according to a Dec. 1 GFC Facebook post. "Many counties imposed local bans, and GFC will recognize those as long as they are in place. If your county isn't in a burn ban, we will issue permits when we feel that it is safe to do so.

"We understand that it may be inconvenient not being able to burn, but hopefully these wildfires have taught us all a lesson about what can happen. The rain has helped our fire danger levels, but we aren't out of the woods just yet! Please understand that safety of our GFC professionals, Georgia's citizens and their property is our top priority."

Gov. Nathan Deal's Nov. 14 executive order banning the use of fireworks will remain in effect until the drought declaration for Union County has been lifted.

As of press time Monday, a total fire ban was still in place for the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests.

"Southern Area Coordination Center advises there are currently 18 large fires burning in the Southeast for a total of 143,973 acres," according to the U.S. Forest Service website. "Wildfires have

burned an estimated 54,211 acres on the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests this fall."

And though rain may be putting out fires in leaf litter and other small piles of vegetation, larger fuels like stumps and standing dead trees, called hot spots, could continue to smolder deep within. This could cause the re-ignition of fires should vegetation become dry again.

The U.S. Forest Service continues to monitor fires that are becoming more and more contained, with Burned Area Emergency Response teams assessing ecological damage and developing ongoing recovery plans.

The Rough Ridge fire was 95 percent contained as of press time Monday, having burned nearly 30,000 acres of the Cohutta Wilderness in Fannin County.

The Rock Mountain Fire was also reported to be 95 percent contained as of press time Monday, with officials reporting 24,725 total acres burned. Of those acres, approximately 12,962 were in Georgia, including 11,111 acres in Rabun County and 1,851 acres

in Towns County.

Fortunately, there was no loss of life and no structure damage in any of North Georgia's recent wildfires, and for the most part fire teams have begun to demobilize thanks to the heroic containment efforts of hundreds of firefighters.

"Thank you to our residents and visitors for helping keep Union County safe during this extended burn ban," said Commissioner Paris in a statement. "I was fearful of something similar to what happened in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, happening here.

"We appreciate very much our local firefighters and volunteer firefighters, and so much appreciate Georgia Forestry and the U.S. Forest Service firefighters, bulldozers and helicopters which were indispensable in controlling the many fires we had. This was government at its best. We also had many answered prayers."

The *North Georgia News* would like to extend its deepest condolences to the residents of Gatlinburg, for the many lives lost and damage caused in the wildfire that ravaged parts of that beautiful city.