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"Serving our community and protecting our freedoms according to His Word since 1913"

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NO FOOLING: Invitation to Submit Songs to the Suwannee Riverkeeper Songwriting Contest



By Carol A. Gasser Moore

HAHIRA, Georgia — April 1st was the opening date for submissions to the 2024 Suwannee Riverkeeper Songwriting Contest.

"Musicians, don't wait until the deadline to send in your song," said WWALS President Sara Jay Jones. "We could use more volunteers to help at the show and committee members to help plan it."

The Seventh (7th) Annual Finals will be held at the WWALS River Revue. The WWALS River Revue is an indoor fundraising dinner to benefit WWALS Watershed Coalition. An evening of food, drink, and entertainment is planned on Saturday, September 7th from 5:00-8:00 P.M.

It will be held at the Turner Center for the Arts in Valdosta.

"Your ticket or sponsorship helps support everything WWALS does, from water quality tests, paddle outings and swimming and boating lessons, to chainsaw cleanups, and beyond to advocacy to stop trash at its sources, strip mines, and pipelines," said Suwannee Riverkeeper John S. Quarterman. "We work for water trails, solar power, and Right to Clean Water, with growing engagement for youth and marginalized communities."

WWALS indicates that there will be plaques for each best song per genre, prizes of \$50 each for best song sent in from inside and from outside the Suwannee River Basin, and a \$300 First Prize. All finalists get videos posted on YouTube, and a one year WWALS membership.

On-line, the entry form: <https://forms.gle/ett6ne6DxMc8Ln897/>.

For individuals and businesses who would like a link for tickets, sponsorship opportunities, and more: <https://wwals.net/pictures/songwriting2024/>.

Since June 2012, WWALS Watershed Coalition, Inc. (WWALS) is an IRS 501(c)(3) nonprofit charity working for a healthy watershed with clean, swimmable, fishable, drinkable water.

WWALS mission advocates for conservation and stewardship of the surface waters and groundwater of the Suwannee River Basin and Estuary, in south Georgia and north Florida, among them the Withlacoochee, Willacochee, Alapaha, Little, Santa Fe, and Suwannee River watersheds, through education, awareness, environmental monitoring, and citizen activities.

The WWALS RiverKeepers' watershed covers a 10,000-square-mile. The WWALS territory includes the Suwannee River from the Okefenokee Swamp to the Gulf of Mexico, plus the Suwannee River Estuary, and tributaries such as the Withlacoochee and Alapaha Rivers as far north as Cordele in Georgia, as well as parts of the Floridan Aquifer—the primary water source for drinking, agriculture, and industry for millions of Georgia and Florida residents.

Dead Animal Disposal Violations need to be Investigated



By Carol A. Gasser Moore

LANIER COUNTY, Georgia — The Rules and Regulations of the State of Georgia, Department 40, Chapter 40-13, Subject 40-13-13q states: "Waste disposal: Provisions must be made for the regular and safe removal and disposal of animal and food wastes, bedding, dead animals, and debris, so as to minimize vermin infestation, contamination, odors, and disease hazards. Disposal of dead animals must be by burial or incineration. Legal permission from the appropriate authorizes or landowner must be obtained, prior to, burial on any public or private land. Disposal of dead animals in wells, waterways, or wetlands of any kind is strictly prohibited."

Simply put, the Georgia rule appears to indicate the opposite of what emerges as the Lanier County Board of Commissioners practice of taking euthanized dead dogs and dumping their bodies in an open pit on county property to decay and rot.

Periodically over the last few months, the Lanier County News has been contacted by anonymous sources, who have supplied photos of the Lanier County Board of Commissioners possible current practice of dumping dead animals in an open mass grave to rot and decay. The practice as described to the LCN seems contrary to Georgia state rules and regulations. By several reports, the county is dumping 6-8 dogs every 7-10 days.

The Lanier County News (LCN) has learned that in some instances, complaints about what appears to be the Lanier County BOC practice, have been made to both the Georgia Attorney General's Office as well as the Georgia Department of Agriculture. The LCN's understanding of both agencies' on-line animal complaint reporting standards, both state agencies actively work to resolve

For more see "Dead Animal Disposal" • PAGE 8

Operation Skyhawk Breaks up a Multi-State Prison Drone Smuggling Operation

By Carol A. Gasser Moore

GEORGIA — With the Lanier County News' (LCN) recent reporting of local involvement in a prison drone smuggling scheme, area citizens should become knowledgeable that the State of Georgia and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) have busted a smuggling ring in Georgia prisons that used drones to bring in illegal drugs to those prisons. The investigation has been known as Operation Skyhawk.

Both the Georgia Department of Corrections as well as the FBI were involved in breaking-up the multi-state criminal operation. The operation was heavily involved in the use of drones to smuggle contraband, including illegal drugs, into Georgia state prisons.

Over the course the investigation, the Lanier County News has learned that nearly 90 drones were confiscated. There are also eight (8) prison employees, who were immediately fired, for their involvement in the smuggling operation. Twenty-two (22) weapons were also found during the investigation.

According to law enforcement, Operation Skyhawk has led to a number of arrests. There have been 150 suspects arrested. Eight (8) of those arrested are prison employees, who have been discharged from their employment at the prison. More than one thousand (1,000) charges have been made due to the prison contraband drone smuggling operation.

Civilians, prison employees, and prison inmates are said to have been involved in drug trafficking, introducing contraband, participating in criminal gang activity, possession of firearms by convicted felons, and violating Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act.

"This is possibly the largest gang RICO event in the state's history," said Governor Brian Kemp.

"The success of 'Operation Skyhawk' should be a reminder to anyone — inside or outside our prisons — that we have zero tolerance and will take swift action against those who threaten the safe operations of our



facilities and the safety of the public," said Tyron Olver, Corrections Commissioner in a public statement. "I am immensely proud of our agents for their commitment to seeing that these individuals are brought to justice."

In an additional report, the following is the official list of items which have been confiscated during the Operation Skyhawk investigation:

- 87 drones
- 22 weapons
- 273 cell phones (found inside state prisons)
- 180 cell phones (civilian)
- 10 pounds of cocaine
- 51 pounds of the drug Ecstasy
- 67 pounds of marijuana
- 12 pounds of methamphetamine
- 185 pounds of tobacco

Investigators have estimated that the total combined items that were confiscated had a street value of \$7 million.



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