

BLACK BEARS AND HOMEOWNERS TAX RELIEF ON COUNTY MEETING AGENDA

Commissioner Bill Kendall announced that the regular scheduled September 17th, County meeting has been changed to Monday, September 21st, at 7:00 P.M. at the courthouse. The meeting change was made so that the State Dept. of Natural Resources (DNR) personnel can attend to inform Towns County Citizens about black bears.

Kendall scheduled this meeting after numerous citizens expressed concerns about their encounters as well as property and crop damage by black bears. They have also expressed concerns for the safety of their children and grandchildren playing in the woods or backyard of their own property.

The Commissioner and DNR have put together a panel of experts on black bear behavior for the meeting. The speakers will include Ken Riddleberger, Supervisor of DNR Region 2, Scott Frazier, a Wildlife Biologist, and Adam Hammond which has worked as a Regional Wildlife Biologist in northwest GA, assigned the mountain counties and WMAs of the region. Among other things, his duties include participation on GA's Black Bear Committee, working with citizens to resolve human-wildlife conflicts, and active participation with the Southern Appalachian Black Bear Study Group, a group of wildlife biologists across the Southeast who work with bears. In 2006, Adam was appointed Chairman of the Black Bear Committee and given statewide responsibilities for GA's Bear Project in addition to his regional responsibilities. As such, he has been involved in bear research and management all across the state and the United States. One thing all the experts say is NEVER FEED THE BEARS. This is dangerous to yourself and to your neighbors and all residents of the county who do not feed them.

The meeting will be organized into three parts. First citizens will be allowed to share their experiences and concerns. Second DNR bear experts will inform citizens on what they should and should not do and any assistance from DNR. Third there will be a question and answer session.

The Commissioner stated he is hopeful the meeting will result in a better informed public on what to do and not do for their safety and to reduce property damage from the fast increasing black bear population.

CITIZENS WILL VOTE NOVEMBER 3RD FOR TAX RELIEF ON THEIR HOMES

At the September 21st meeting, Commissioner Kendall will pass out and explain legislation which he requested that allows Towns County Citizens to vote Tuesday, November 3, 2009 which if passed will result in Towns County Citizens not paying any county property tax on the first \$25,000 fair market value or \$10,000 of tax assessed on their homes. Kendall stated the present \$2,000 homestead exemption approved in state law has not been increased upward for inflation adjustment in 70 years. The Commissioner stated that the original intent of the state legislation was to exempt homeowners from paying any tax on the home they lived in and that the \$2,000 is obsolete and needed to be adjusted and is his reasoning for asking legislation to allow citizens to make this change. The vote applies only to Towns County and is entirely in the hands of Towns County voters.