

# Smoke Drifting From 200-Acre Fire Burning Underground In Swamp

**BY SUSAN USHER**  
Residents of much of southern Brunswick County awoke Tuesday to a low-lying blanket of drifting smoke from a 210-acre wildfire burning in the middle of the Green Swamp.

The inversion had cleared by mid-morning, but Assistant Brunswick County Ranger Mitch Pullen said county residents can "be prepared to smell smoke" at least for the next few days as the fire burns itself out within control lines established around 1 a.m. Tuesday on Federal Paper Board Co.'s pine plantation.

The forest floor in the swamp is distinguished by beds of peat—partially carbonized organic material—up to several feet deep.

"It's got ground fire, so there's going to be a lot of residual drift," he said. "It's so dry, it's going to burn and smoke until it reaches moisture or sandy soil."

The blaze is the largest of six wildfires that have broken out across the county since Friday, said Pullen. The others have ranged in size from three-tenths of an acre to 28 acres.

They were started by the "usual means," including fireworks and debris burning out of control.

A wildfire in Dog's Head Bay between Grissetown and Thomasboro along U.S. 17 also has ground fire and will continue to smolder and burn for some time, Pullen said.

"The heat from that fire like to have got to us," he said. "It was all we could do to just work it, much less wear our protective gear."

Heat was not as serious a problem Monday as approximately six tractors and a crew of 15 to 20 people worked through the night to control the Green Swamp fire, which was apparently caused by a lightning strike.

"There were no houses threatened," said Brunswick County Fire Marshal Cecil Logan. "But an awful lot of woods was threatened. At one time we thought we might have to call some fire departments in there to wet down the sides of the roads because the fire was jumping blocks."

The pine plantation is divided into numbered blocks within a network of intersecting dirt service roads.

A fire started by lightning often smolders for some time before it can be spotted, Pullen said, since lightning often strikes dead, hollow trees. "Sometimes it takes two or three days to show up."

"This week will be critical for us," he continued. "We have a plane flying today to check for further lightning strike fires from the dry thunderstorms we've been having."

Pullen spotted the Green Swamp fire Monday evening around 7:30 p.m. when he climbed the Bolivia fire tower to check after heavy smoke began drifting across the U.S. 17 four-lane at Bolivia. The smoke had traveled seven or eight miles before reaching a residential area and drawing notice. N.C. Forest Service fire towers are not routinely staffed in summer, he said.

The fire is east of N.C. 211 about three miles north of Supply, across the highway from the general location of the Bear Pen Airfield.

"We're just going to have to maintain the control lines and let it burn. There's no way to get water to it," said Pullen.



**Hillbillies On Parade**  
The Sudan Hillbilly Unit brought rustic charm to the N.C. Fourth of July Festival Parade in Southport. STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG RUTTER

# Sunset Council May Consider Private Clubs In Zoning Code

**BY LYNN CARLSON**  
A woman seeking to open a country dance club at Sunset Beach could not convince the town council that private clubs should be a permitted use in the mainland business district under the town's zoning code.

However, Linda Cunningham's "Boot Scooters" might have a chance if the board agrees to allow some kinds of private clubs as special uses in the MB-2 zone.

At a public hearing Monday, Cunningham and one other citizen spoke in favor of Boot Scooters' request that council allow the private club to operate on N.C. 904 next to Pelican Square Shopping Center. A third opposed the request, and petitions were presented representing both sides.

Cunningham moved here from Tennessee to open the club and then learned that the zoning ordinance makes no provision for private clubs anywhere in the town. Through her attorney, she asked the planning board to add private clubs as a permitted use in the MB-2 zone.

Though the planning board recommended against the request last month, the town council, on advice from its own lawyer, scheduled a public hearing on the matter.

Planning Board Chairman Richard Good referred to a 1992 survey of townspeople and said his board felt nightclubs would be "inconsistent with a family resort." Information Cunningham submitted indicated her plans were for a dance club with pool tables, a wide-screen television, live and recorded music, and alcoholic beverages, Good said.

Cunningham argued that her plans have "a lot of potential," and asked that council members not to "be negative without seeing what we have to offer." She said the building's 2,000-square-foot hardwood floor could be used during the day-time for community and family activities such as art shows, ballet and logging lessons.

Ella Davis of Sunset Beach said Boot Scooters could be "a good help to senior citizens. There's nowhere to go around here. There won't be any knocking down or dragging out. You should look before you refuse her."

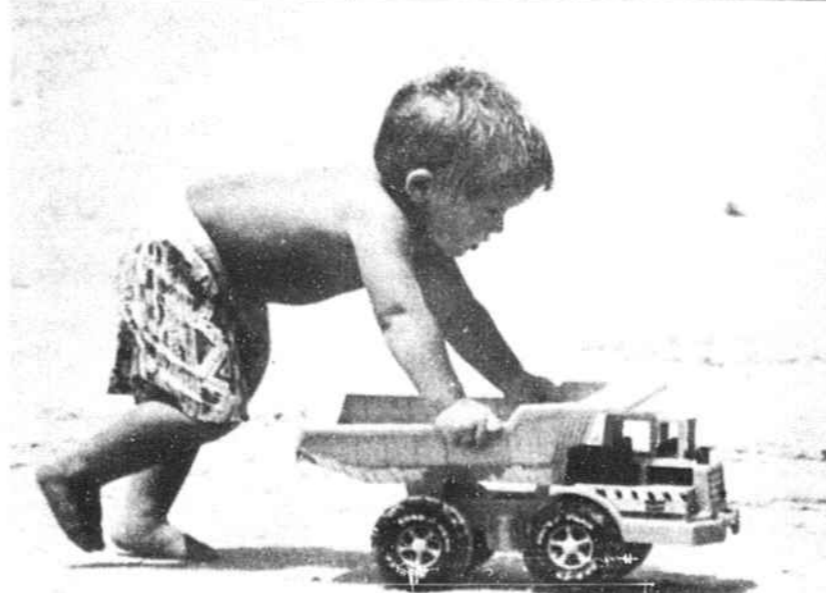
*"You should look before you refuse her."*  
—Ella Davis, on the use of Boot Scooters Club

Resident Cleo Waldmiller said people he talked to about the proposal feel it "is not in keeping with the type of community they want to have." Waldmiller said he was not speaking on behalf of the Sunset Beach Taxpayers' Association, of which he is president.

Town Attorney Mike Isenberg said if council made private clubs a permitted use, "how nice they are is not relevant. Anyone can open one. If you make (clubs) a special use, you can set restrictions and consider them on a case-by-case basis."

Council members Cheri Cheek and Ed Gore said the town shouldn't rule out the possibility of all types of private clubs. "There might be something like a spa or a health club to come before us sometime that we might want to consider," Gore said.

The planning board was asked to devise a proposed amendment defining private clubs for consideration as special uses, a process that Good warned will "take time," because of the planning board's heavy workload.



**Truckin'**  
Dane Boland, age 2, of Aiken, S.C., had a great time driving his dump truck down the strand at Holden Beach Sunday afternoon. Trouble was, he kept forgetting to turn around. His mother was frequently spotted chasing the youngster as he weaved back and forth between sunbathers. STAFF PHOTO BY ERIC CARLSON

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