

Farm And Garden Guide

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**Community Calendar**

## DOE Sets April 4 Public Hearing

The U.S. Department of Energy will hold a public hearing in the Thomas Wolfe Auditorium of the Asheville Civic Center on April 4 at 5 p.m. The public is invited to attend and comment on a proposed nuclear waste storage facility being considered for Buncombe, Haywood and Madison Counties.

For information on registering to speak at the meeting, see related story on Page 5.

## Nuclear Waste Education Committee To Hold Meeting On Sunday

The Madison County Nuclear Waste Education Committee will hold a business meeting on March 23 at 7 p.m. in the Marshall Senior Citizens Center on Long Branch Rd. The meeting is open to the public.

## Spring Creek VFD Dance

The Walnut Creek Community Development Club will meet on March 24 at 7:30 p.m. in the Enon Baptist Church fellowship hall. Jack Buckner of the N.C. Dept. of Transportation will be the guest speaker.

## Laurel VFD Dance Saturday Night

The Laurel VFD will sponsor a dance on March 22 at 8 p.m. in the fire hall. "Carolina Mist" will perform. Admission is \$2. Proceeds will benefit the fire company.

## Community Watch Program

The Spring Creek Volunteer Fire Dept. will present "Nothin' Fancy", a band of Madison H.S. musicians, on March 22 at 7 p.m. in the fire hall. Everyone is invited to attend.

## Walnut Creek CD Club Meets

There will be a meeting on March 31 at 7:30 p.m. for all persons interested in starting a Community Watch program in Hot Springs. The meeting will be held at Town Hall. All Hot Springs residents are invited to attend.

## County Election Registrars, Judges Are Appointed

### Registration Deadline Is April 7

The Madison County Board of Elections last week approved registrars and judges for 10 of the county's 11 precincts. Registrars and judges for the Sandy Mush precinct have yet to be determined.

In North Marshall, Lucretia Griffin was named as the registrar. Franklin Frisby Jr. was named as the Republican judge and Sammy Lunsford was appointed as the Democratic judge.

Howard Riddle was named as registrar in the South Marshall precinct. Richard Freeman was named as the Republican judge and Willard Ball was named as Democratic judge.

In Laurel, G. McClellan Cutshall was named as registrar. Muncie

Shelton was appointed as Republican judge and Mary Tweed was named as Democratic judge.

Jean B. Flowers was named as the Mars Hill precinct registrar. John H. Burry was named as Republican judge and David Wyatt as the Democratic judge.

In Beech Glen, Neil Willis was named as registrar. Clyde McKinney was appointed as the Republican judge and J.D. Thomas will serve as the Democratic judge.

In Walnut, A. Jack Davis was named as registrar. Clayton Hensley will be the Republican judge and David Treadway will serve as the Democratic judge.

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## School Board Members Told

# Madison County Schools Near Last In Local Funding

By WILLIAM LEE

Madison County School Superintendent Robert Edwards informed the County Board of Education at its monthly meeting last Wednesday that Madison County can probably expect to be last in the state next year in the amount spent locally on education.

According to statistics provided by the state board of education controller's office, Madison County ranked 141 out of 142 board units in the amount spent locally per pupil for the 1984-85 school year. When this year's figures are released, Edwards says, the county can expect to see itself on the bottom of the list, due in part to local cutbacks and because number 142 - Fairmont City - has since consolidated with Robeson County.

Edwards made the point that the figures showed Madison County spent \$828,269 locally on education in 1984-85, which translated into a \$292.06 per-pupil figure. Edwards noted that our next-door neighbor, Yancey County, which has an equal number of students, averaged \$381.55 per pupil.

Billie Jones of Big Laurel informed the board of her displeasure with the current state of county schools. She made a particular point of the high school's need for band instruments and supplies. Also, according to Jones, many music classes in the county are without instructors, pro-

viding only a teacher to oversee the class.

"I think if we take a close look at our taxes and where the money is being spent, we can find the money for education," Jones told the board.

Edwards reminded Jones and the board that the school system is at the mercy of the County Commission for its funding. Last year the school board asked for \$1,627,000 in funds, but were granted only \$620,000, giving them a revised budget of just over \$700,000, including carryover funds, said Edwards.

According to the state statistics, Madison County schools rely on the state for more than \$5,300,000 in funding, 76 percent of the total budget. However, board chairman Bobby Ponder added, "...with continued federal cutbacks effecting the state as well, there is no way a local board can make up the difference."

A decision on the Easter holidays was tabled in the morning session after a long deliberation failed to produce a motion. Board members Gerald Young and Ed Gentry had questioned the efficiency in opening the schools for just the one day on Friday, April 4, as proposed. They also questioned whether students would return from vacation for the one day.

School board attorney Larry Leake informed the board that should they decide to hold vacation through April 4, it would leave them with only 179 school days on the calendar. State

law requires a minimum of 180 days per year. Leake told the board that it could request a one-day waiver, but suggested it might be needed should any further school days be missed.

During the board's afternoon session, chairman Bobby Ponder again failed to get the board to make a motion concerning the Easter vacation.

The board then went into executive session.

Upon returning to open session, Larry Leake read a formal resolution proclaiming that all county schools will be closed from Good Friday, March 28, through Thursday, April 3.

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MADISON HIGH SCHOOL BUS No. 38 was damaged when it slid off Cogdill Branch Rd. Thursday afternoon. No injuries were reported among the four students aboard the bus at the time of the accident.

## Promotion Policy Is Adopted

The Madison County Board of Education last week approved a new student promotion policy for the 1986-87 school year. The new policy only applies to the elementary level, grades one through eight.

The ultimate responsibility for retaining or promoting students still rests with the school principal and individual teacher. The new county policy, however, offers basic guidelines and criteria that must be met.

If, for example, a student is not making appropriate academic progress, any such case will be referred on to the School Assistance Team (SAT) who will study each individual student's learning needs, or consider home intervention to first assist in academic progress before actual retention is considered.

The new policy provides for notice to be given immediately to the parents at the conclusion of each grading period should retention be possible. The schools will also schedule a conference between parents, teachers and counsellors, to discuss any retention of a student.

Specific passing grades are required for promotion in Madison County schools, varying by grade-age

group. Students in grades one through three will require passing grades in basic reading, language arts and mathematics. Grades four through eight will require at least a "D" average in language arts and math, and at least a "D" in at least two of the following subjects: science, social studies, or healthful living.

Principals may make exception, upon recommendation of the school committee, for those students certified as mentally handicapped in the categories of trainable, educatable, and severe or profoundly mentally handicapped. The school committee can also make exception for those already retained previously in the same grade span of one through three; four through six; and seventh and eighth.

A total of six or more unlawful absences in the school year can also result in retention.

The new student promotion policy now includes a paragraph that makes allowances for the new state standards which requires retention, or remedial work, for any student who falls at or below the 24 percentile in his or her grade level.

## Ponder, Edwards Debate Figures

By WILLIAM LEE

The Madison County Board of Education received a booklet filled with statistical information compiled by the State Board of Education Controller's Office last week that could be interpreted as a failing grade for local schools.

School superintendent Robert Edwards made a particular point of statistics which showed Madison County ranking 141 out of 142 school board units in the state for 1984-85.

"With the Fairmont City Board having since consolidated with Robeson County, we can expect to see a dead last finish when this year's figures come out," Edwards said.

The state statistics pointed to a total of \$620,961 being allotted to

schools from local revenues. That translated into a \$292.06 per pupil expenditure (PPE), based on enrollment of 2,861 students last year. The state average for local funding is \$648.93 per pupil.

What Edwards didn't take note of was the total PPE of Madison County once all resources, state and federal monies, are included. In the overall picture, Madison County showed a \$2,510.73 per pupil budget, ranking 63rd in the state.

State and federal funds, however, are designated monies, Edwards explains. The school board is required to spend them only where the state or federal grants allow. Teacher salaries, for example, are paid

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# Hydrologist Seeks Data For Dump Fight

By BILL STUDENC  
Staff Reporter

If Mother Nature would just let off a little steam, Western North Carolina might be removed from the federal Department of Energy's list of 12 candidates still in the running for a high-level nuclear waste repository.

Or at least so thinks Dr. Garrett Smathers, chairman of the Canton Planning and Zoning Board and a noted expert in the field of terrestrial hydrology.

Smathers, who teaches high-school level science in the Buncombe County public school system, is taking a six-week leave of absence to pursue a scientific investigation of the area.

Smathers will be looking at the geology, ecology and hydrology of lands within and near the 195-square mile site identified by DOE for further study for the repository. Smathers is hoping that he will discover characteristics that might disqualify Western North Carolina as a potential site.

And, according to Smathers, "This indicates that you're on a geological gradient — a large

fracture or crack that may go down 6,000 feet, and water is coming in contact with the warm crystal rocks," Smathers said. "When this happens, water rises and goes through the crack and comes out as a hot spring."

A number of hot springs in WNC would indicate that there are deep fractures in the rock structure underlying the potential repository site.

"I am looking for people who know of springs and seeps where the water is warm, or where there is steam escaping from cracks in the rock," Smathers said. "I'll go investigate and check the temperature to see if we do have a geothermal fracture."

Smathers is hoping that his studies will reveal a large network of underground hot springs, or, as he called it, "an underground hot water plumbing system," in the vicinity of the repository site.

Other geological features may also be an indication of the existence of underground hot springs and large, deep fractures.

"I'm also looking for large cracks or crevices where warm or heated

air is coming out," Smathers said. "I've never seen these warm blowholes, but I've had people tell that there are such things in this area."

Places where snow or ice never accumulates, even in the coldest winter months, may indicate some type of geothermal activity, he said.

Smathers is also looking for other geological and hydrological features that may disqualify WNC from DOE's list of candidates. Among those features are:

- Sulphur springs — The existence of sulphur springs, often used around the turn of the century by enterprising inn owners to attract tourists looking for the "healing characteristics" of the mineral water, could indicate deep fractures in the rock.
- Such mineral springs used for medicinal purposes may have also been warm, Smathers said.
- Mineral deposits — Some minerals, including barite and feldspar that show high alteration to the surrounding rock, could be found through hydrothermal activity.
- Earthquake activity — Some "old-timers" in the area may recall

seismic activity that occurred before devices to record such tremors were installed.

Smathers is working with the Tennessee Earthquake Information Center at Memphis State University to compile seismic data from the WNC area.

Although there have been no major tremors in the region in recent times, there have been more than 300 earth movements very deep in the earth below WNC, some five to six miles below the surface, Smathers said. Those quakes have measured between 0.5 and 2.5 on the Richter scale.

"They (earth movements) are there," he said. "And they are doing something. What we don't understand is, are they foretelling us something in the future? This we don't know, but we certainly need to study them."

• Caves — Caves in WNC may hold evidence of hydrothermal and other geological activities. Caves may also contain unique mineral deposits, Smathers said.

dangered or rare plants and animals is another thing that Smathers will be investigating, particularly in Canton's Rough Creek Watershed. Canton officials were alarmed to find that a portion of their watershed, which provides water to much of East Haywood, is within the area being looked at by DOE.

"DOE didn't even know that there was a watershed in the area. That shows how well they reviewed their data," Smathers said.

"I intend to look at the Rough Creek Watershed, and the total ecological picture of it, to see if there are any rare or endangered plant or animal species in there," he said. "We need to conduct an ecological survey of the Rough Creek Watershed to point out its unique significance, not only as a watershed but also as a unique laboratory for outdoor study."

For example, there is a population of Eastern bluebird that has been identified in the watershed, Smathers said.