

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

The Journey to Your True Self

Have you ever felt that gentle but persistent tug in your heart, pulling you toward something greater? That whisper suggesting there's more to life than what meets the eye? If so, you're walking a path that was blazed thousands of years ago by one of history's most courageous souls.

Picture this: a young man named Abraham, working in his father's successful business in ancient Mesopotamia. By all accounts, he had it made. His father's idol shop was prosperous, his future secure, his path clearly laid out before him. Much like many of us today, with our steady jobs, comfortable homes, and well-planned futures.

But Abraham had a problem that might sound familiar – something didn't feel right. While crafting those idols, while following the customs of his time, while doing everything society expected of him, he felt a deeper truth stirring in his soul. He knew, with unshakeable certainty, that there was only one true G-d, and that knowledge changed everything.

Think about what that meant in his world. Imagine telling your family today that you're going to completely change your life because of a profound spiritual revelation. Now multiply that difficulty by a thousand. Abraham wasn't just choosing a different path – he was challenging the very foundations of his society's beliefs.

The pivotal moment came when G-d spoke to Abraham, telling him to "Go forth to yourself, from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father's house." These weren't just travel directions. Each phrase carried a deeper meaning that resonates powerfully in our modern lives.

"Your land" represented Abraham's natural inclinations and comfort zone – much like our own habits and routines that keep us safely anchored to the familiar. "Your birthplace" meant the influence of society and culture – think of today's peer pressure, social media expectations, and cultural norms that shape our choices. "Your father's house" pointed to the need to examine, with profound respect and wisdom, which family traditions truly serve our spiritual growth while honoring the eternal values our parents instilled in us.

G-d was asking Abraham to transcend all of these limitations, not just physically but spiritually. And here's where it gets particularly relevant for us: The command wasn't just to "go forth" but to "go forth to yourself." This subtle but crucial detail suggests that our true self – our authentic purpose – often lies beyond the boundaries of our comfort zone.

Consider how this applies to our lives today. We're surrounded by modern idols – success, status, security, social approval. Like Abraham in his father's shop, we might be skilled at handling these idols, maybe even building our lives around them. But deep down, we might feel that same stirring he felt, that same certainty that we're meant for something more.

The beauty of Abraham's story is that when he finally took that leap of faith, when he stepped beyond all those limitations, he didn't just find a new land – he found his true self. He discovered that authentic connection with G-d that transformed him from a merchant's son into the father of many nations.

This is the profound truth that Abraham's journey teaches us: Sometimes, finding yourself means leaving behind what you thought you were. It means having the courage to question not just what you do, but who you've been told you are. It means being willing to step away from the familiar idols of our time – whether they're carved from stone like Abraham's, or built from our modern preoccupations with status and security.

The call that Abraham heard continues to resonate in our own spiritual journeys today. As we walk our paths of faith, we're invited to look ever deeper, to discover new dimensions of meaning in our relationship with G-d. Like Abraham, we're all on this sacred journey of "going forth to yourself" – finding new depths in our traditions, uncovering fresh insights in ancient wisdom, and discovering the divine spark that has always been within.

Yonatan Hambourger is a rabbi and writer dedicated to serving spiritual seekers of all backgrounds on behalf of Chabad of Rural Georgia. You can reach him at y@tasteoftorah.org.

By J. HALL © 2025 NEWS/EDUCATION



Letters To The Editor

Lake Drawdown Concerns

To the Tennessee Valley Authority:

I am writing on behalf of the City of Hiawassee to formally express significant concerns regarding the Tennessee Valley Authority's (TVA) proposed plan to lower Lake Chatuge to 10 feet below winter pool for a period potentially extending up to eight years to facilitate repairs to the Chatuge Dam spillway.

While we fully understand and support the importance of ensuring the long-term integrity of the dam infrastructure, this proposed drawdown presents serious risks – operational, environmental, and financial – to the City of Hiawassee's Water Treatment Plant, which is a critical utility in our region. The facility provides safe, potable drinking water to the citizens of the City of Hiawassee and Towns County, ensures adequate fire protection capacity, and supports the commercial and economic vitality of our community by serving local businesses.

Our system currently produces approximately 1.7 million gallons per day (MGD) of treated water. The intake structure, which is situated on a floating dock on Lake Chatuge, was designed and engineered based on historical lake elevations and was not intended to operate under such drastically reduced water levels. The proposed drop in lake level would directly threaten the effectiveness and reliability of our intake system and the continued delivery of safe and sufficient water to the public.

Below are several urgent concerns that must be addressed:

1. Pumping Head and Suction Performance: A lower lake level will significantly alter the pumping head, creating challenges for the current intake pumps which were not designed for such conditions. Increased suction lift can lead to pump cavitation, reduced efficiency, and possible mechanical failure.

2. Access and Maintenance Challenges: The floating dock will be positioned much lower relative to the access ramp, creating extremely steep access conditions. This presents serious safety and logistical challenges for operations and routine maintenance.

3. Risk of Intake Drawing from Silt-Laden Bottom Waters: With the lake 10 feet below winter pool, our intake will be closer to the sediment-rich bottom, increasing the risk of drawing silt and organic matter into the system. In worst-case conditions, the intake could become partially or fully obstructed by lakebed sediment.

4. Water Quality Degradation: Reduced lake volume and depth will lead to increased turbidity and organic load during storm events. Under these conditions, the lake's reduced residence time means sediment-laden river inflows will reach our intake much faster, without time to settle.

5. Chemical Demand and CT Compliance: Increased turbidity and organics will significantly raise our chemical treatment costs, particularly for coagulants and disinfectants.

6. Backwash Frequency and Wastewater Production: Increased turbidity will demand more frequent backwashing, thereby increasing raw water use and decreasing net finished water output. This will further strain system capacity.

At a recent TVA meeting regarding this project, we were told by TVA representatives that prior outreach had been conducted and that our intake was evaluated as unaffected. However, to our knowledge, key stakeholders – including our engineers and operations team – were not consulted. We respectfully ask for clarity: Was our utility formally included in the intake impact study? Who at TVA conducted this research and with whom did they coordinate at the City?

We are prepared to provide detailed system drawings, intake depths, and treatment capacity metrics upon request. I am open to discussion and collaboration to identify mitigation strategies that protect both the dam infrastructure and the public water supply.

Given the scope of these risks, I strongly recommend that TVA consider the following:

1. Re-evaluate the project impact on municipal water systems in the area.

2. Establish a technical advisory group including TVA, municipal water authorities, and state regulators to ensure ongoing coordination.

We are committed to working with TVA to find solutions that safeguard public health and maintain regulatory compliance, without placing undue financial burden on our water ratepayers.

Please feel free to contact me anytime to discuss.

Sincerely,

Jay Chastain

Hiawassee Mayor

EDITOR'S NOTE: A TVA representative was scheduled to appear in the April 28 work session of the Hiawassee City Council to discuss the concerns enumerated above. However, TVA informed the city last week that a representative would be unable to attend after all.

Guest Columns

From time to time, people in the community have a grand slant on an issue that would make a great guest editorial. Those who feel they have an issue of great importance should call our editor and talk with him about the idea. Others have a strong opinion after reading one of the many columns that appear throughout the paper. If so, please write.

Please remember that publication of submitted editorials is not guaranteed.

Pollinator Gardening

Let's talk about pollinator gardening, and some of the things to include in a good pollinator garden.

Pollinators

play a very important role in our food production and ecology. When we think about pollinators we often think of honeybees and butterflies. They are very important for pollination, but the truth is that there are also tons of other critters that are important pollinators. Bats, hummingbirds, native bees, wasps, moths, and more all play an important role in pollination. Since we have such a diverse group of pollinators, it's important that we have a diverse habitat in our pollinator garden for them.

Most pollinator plants like full sun. Full sun is at least 8 hours of sun each day during the summer. If you don't have full sun in your spot then the plants that you choose will need to reflect that. Many pollinators like to spend some time basking in the sun with some protection from the wind. A soil test is also a good idea before starting a pollinator garden to see if you need to add any lime or fertilizer to the soil. A well-drained soil is also ideal.

Native plants are the best choice for your pollinator garden.

They tend to be better adapted to our soils and our native pollinators. It's important to have a diversity of plants in your pollinator garden. Different flower shapes, flower colors, plant size, and plant shape are all important. It's important to have a diversity of plants so that you have blooms for Spring, Summer, and Fall.

There are a ton of different plants that you could put in a pollinator garden, so I can't mention them all here. It is important to make sure that the plants you choose are well suited to your site for sunlight, water drainage, and USDA zone. Here are some plants that I would recommend.

Some good spring blooming plants are wild indigo, Bee balm, lyre leaf sage, bearded tongue, tulip poplar, serviceberry, sweetshrub, eastern redbud, fringe tree, Carolina silverbell and bottlebrush buckeye. Many of these plants are more trees and shrubs. As I mentioned earlier you want a diversity of plant sizes too.

Summer blooming plants are easier to find that spring blooming. Cosmos, blackeyed Susan, coneflowers, coreopsis, St. John's wort, sweet pepperbush, milkweed, yarrow, passionflower, mountain mint, and sourwood. This list has a mixture of perennial and annual. Many pollinator plants are able to reseed themselves. For some, if you give them a little help dispersing the seed, they do even better.

Fall blooming plants are very important as pollinators try to store up that last bit of energy before the frost comes. Goldenrod, asters, joe-pye weed, and ironweed are all some important fall bloomers. Goldenrod, joe-pye weed, and ironweed have beautiful blooms and are often seen along the roadside. These have the misfortune that they are thought of as weeds by some people, but really, they are great pollinator plants.

One challenge with native pollinator plants can be finding seed to plant. Work with other plant lover neighbors to see if they have plants that you like and if they would be willing to share seed with you. Also check out local plant sales, including the Master Gardener plant sale on May 24 at the Union County Farmers Marke. If you have questions about a pollinator garden contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

Left's True Colors

As evidenced through the recent news cycle, liberals continue to prioritize illegal aliens over the American people.

Contrary to Democrat politicians and the left-wing media's claims, Kilmar Abrego Garcia is not a "Maryland man"; he's an illegal alien and MS-13 gang member from El Salvador. In 2019, two courts, both an immigration court and an appellate immigration court, ruled that he was a member of MS-13 and in our country illegally. Additionally, there was a deportation order for him dating back to 2019.

Therefore, Kilmar Abrego Garcia was deported to El Salvador several weeks ago. In response, Democrat politicians and the left-wing media have been up in arms to bring this illegal alien – who is currently being detained in his home country – back to the United States.

From erroneously referring to him as a "Maryland man" to pushing the false claim that he was wrongly deported, the Left has attempted to portray Kilmar Abrego Garcia as a victim in desperate need of being rescued. They've even gone so far as to hold rallies featuring his tearful wife begging for his return – yet conveniently leaving out court documents and police reports exposing Abrego Garcia as a violent domestic abuser. In one filing, his wife wrote: "At this point, I am afraid to be close to him. I have multiple photos/videos of how violent he can be and all the bruises he left me."

As you may know, the Trump Administration is currently battling against returning Kilmar Abrego Garcia in court. Both a federal court and the U.S. Supreme Court ordered the Administration to "facilitate" his release and return to the U.S. for deportation proceedings. Yet Attorney General Pam Bondi has confirmed his return is up to El Salvador. Moreover, the Supreme Court's ruling made it clear that no district court has the power to compel the foreign policy of the United States.

Democrat politicians are now flying to El Salvador to demand for this criminal illegal alien to be brought back to America. Imagine how many American lives could have been saved over the past four years if Democrats cared as much about U.S. citizens as they do criminal illegal aliens.

Chris Van Hollen, a Democrat Senator from Maryland, even took a taxpayer-funded flight to meet with Abrego Garcia. Keep in mind, Senator Van Hollen failed to properly acknowledge the murder of Rachel Morin, one of his actual constituents who was brutally murdered by an illegal alien in Maryland during the Biden-Harris Administration.

Unconscionable is an understatement. So, after repeatedly begging to meet with this MS-13 gang member, Senator Van Hollen was granted his wish – falling right into Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele's trap. Following the release of photos of their meeting, Bukele proudly proclaimed, "Now that he's been confirmed healthy, he gets the honor of staying in El Salvador's custody."

Good! This criminal illegal alien has no place in our country. I commend President Trump and President Bukele's work to deport and detain illegals like Kilmar Abrego Garcia in facilities in El Salvador.

Bottom line, when Democrats show their true colors – believe them. In stark contrast, my conservative colleagues and I will continue working to support President Trump in putting the American people first and deporting illegal aliens from our communities.



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Towns County Community Calendar

First Monday of each month:		
School Board...	HS/MS Media Center	6:45 pm
Every Tuesday:		
Storytime for Children...	TC Library	10:30 am
First Tuesday of each month:		
Hiaw. City Council...	City Hall	6 pm
YH City Council...	YH City Hall	6:30 pm
Second Wednesday of each month:		
Board of Elections...	Elections Office	4 pm
Third Monday of each month:		
Planning Commission...	Temporary Courthouse	6 pm
Third Tuesday of each month:		
Commissioner's Mtg...	Courthouse	5:30 pm
City of Young Harris Planning Commission...		
Meeting Room in City Hall		5 pm
TC Water Authority Board Meeting		6 pm

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