

Commissioner makes application for shooting range land

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The first concrete step toward the development of a local shooting range has been completed, as Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris has submitted an application to lease roughly 14 acres of U.S. Forest Service land to serve as a potential range site.

Commissioner Paris' office mailed the application to the U.S. Forest Service on Wednesday, April 25, concerning the land inside the Blue Ridge District of the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests.

Located between mile markers 18 and 19 off Georgia 180, the proposed range would be able to accommodate rifle shooting at 200-plus yards, pistols and potentially shotguns, if given the go-ahead by Forest Service officials.

The local push for a shooting range is being spearheaded by the Union County Gun Club, which gathered for its first general club meeting at the Blairsville Civic Center on



Photo by Mark Novak

Left to right, Union County Gun Club Board Members Bill Parker, Joan Moody and Gene Cooley in the May 1 general club meeting.

Tuesday, May 1.

During the meeting, Union County Gun Club President Paul Clark announced the club's plans going forward.

"The county plans on leasing this property for 100 years - we probably won't be here at the end of that," said Clark, keeping things light. "In turn, we, the Union County

Gun Club, will lease the property from the county."

Club board members have been working diligently to make the shooting range a reality for the more than 350 members who have already signed up, and that evening, Clark went into detail of what board members have been

See Gun Club, Page 10C

Gun Club...from Page 1C

working on during the past nine months.

One of the first orders of business was for the gun club to form a limited liability corporation before starting the long search for the perfect piece of property that would be safe for area residents and most useful for club activities.

"The nearest home is in one direction and is over a mile away, and two ridges rise up in between this property in question and the existing residence," said Clark. "Beyond this are miles and miles of U.S. Forest land in all other directions."

The club has compiled a comprehensive set of documents, including the club's mission statement, a list of board members, the clubs bylaws, a gun club application form, range layout, a list of the paid gun club charter members, an aerial view of the property outlining the location of boundaries and water sources, and many letters of recommendation from numerous officials, businesses and civic organizations in support of a local shooting range.

Supporters who have given letters of recommendation to the club are club advi-

sor and Union County Sheriff Mack Mason, Commissioner Paris, Alexander's Store, the Veterans of Foreign Wars service organization, local hero and recently departed veteran Eric England, among others.

The above-mentioned documents have been submitted to the decision-making governmental authorities that can assist the club in the use of the property.

Also in the meeting, Clark introduced his fellow board members to the rest of the club, then made a motion to approve the club bylaws, which carried unanimously.

The gun club must now wait for the approval of the lease, and Clark motioned that the club suspend the new election of officers to allow present board members to remain in place until the shooting range is up and running.

Members unanimously voted to keep all of the board members in place, and once the range is in full operation, the



Photo by Mark Novak

Meetings involving the Union County Gun Club are always well attended.

elections of officers' portion of the bylaws will resume.

Commissioner Paris spoke to club members that

evening about some opposition they may incur in the future with a number of environmental groups, and he said he would

be reaching out to representatives of the Georgia Wildlife Federation to invite them to examine the proposed range.