

# County remains in significant drought

## BURN BAN Continued from page 1

effect until conditions have been reviewed and deemed safe and reversed by the Taylor County Fire Chief," the release continues.

"This is a mandatory burn ban for all of Taylor County. The county-wide mandatory burn ban prohibits all outdoor and open burning, including, but not limited to:

- All outdoor burning of yard debris, household paper products, bonfires, campfires, warming fires, outdoor fireplaces, chimeneas (freestanding front-loading fireplace) and cooking fires.
- Use of flares, explosives (including fireworks) and sparklers.
- Outdoor use of metal cutting/welding equipment that produces swarf (sparks) or molten slag.

The county-wide mandatory burn ban does not include: any pile or broadcast burning authorized by the Florida Forest Service or contained and monitored gas or charcoal grill for cooking."

The announcement came less than two days after Taylor County Commissioners voted 4-1 not to impose a burn ban, based on a recommendation from Cassel.

Although many counties in North Florida have instituted "burn bans" in response to extremely dry conditions created by a prolonged drought, Taylor County officials decided on Tuesday it was not yet necessary to adopt blanket restrictions prohibiting all types of outdoor burning.

While the FFS is currently not issuing burn authorizations for large-scale agricultural burning, land clearing, acreage and pile burning, local fire officials told commissioners earlier this week they believed a total burn ban was not yet required.

At its meeting on Tuesday, April 21, the Taylor County Commission heard an update from Cassel, who said he and local FFS officials did not believe a complete outdoor burn ban was needed.

However, the county commission voted to authorize Cassel to implement burning restrictions himself, without having to return to the board for approval, in case the situation changed and a burn ban was deemed necessary in the coming days or weeks.

"I'll start off with the bad news, which you already know," Cassel said Tuesday. "It's really dry.

"Our area is in a significant drought from lack of rainfall. Our Keetch-Byram Drought Index (KBDI) is getting up there.

Tomorrow, we'll pass 600 on that drought index.

"The good news is we have some things that are good for us still," Cassel said. "Looking at our call volume over the last month, we do not have a significant increase in wildfires, which doesn't make sense, because of how dry things are. You'd think we'd be a lot higher, especially because the last four years have been a lot wetter."

Cassel noted that at the time of the April 21 commission meeting, there had been 12 wildfires reported in Taylor County so far during the month of April.

"They've all been relatively small fires," he said. "Last year we had 11 (fires in April). Then, in April the year before that, we had 12, and then the two years before that, we had 10. So, we're pretty on point for April with where we normally see ourselves on wildfires."

A new wildfire was reported Wednesday morning at 3:21 a.m. in the area of Pisgah Road that burned 2.5 acres, but was 100% contained just several hours later, according to FFS officials. A nearby three-acre fire around Vera Lane was 90% contained.

"When we look at the types of calls that we're having, most of our wildfires have been caused from equipment malfunction, escaped fires from a structure fire, a car fire, a tractor fire. We had one of those not too long ago, where logging equipment caught on fire. But, these are things that are out of our control. They happen," Cassel said.

"What we're not seeing a lot of is escaped yard trash (fires). That is a very small thing. And, when they do happen, fortunately, there are people that are attending them the way they're supposed to, or in areas where the grass is cut and it's low, so a garden hose can put it out. It slows down the spread and gives us a chance to put them out.

"Our community is being very responsible with their yard trash burning, because they're not just lighting a fire and walking away. They recognize that it's dry. It's windy. Today is not the day for it. So, we've been very thankful to our citizens that while they are still allowed to burn, they are doing it very responsibly."

Cassel noted that Taylor County was under a "red flag" warning on Monday due to the low humidity and high winds, but was not under one on Tuesday because the winds were not as high.

"The other things that would normally be concerns for us would



Jacob Brannen posted this photo on social media showing the aftermath of a wildfire on his property on Pisgah Road first reported around 2 a.m. Wednesday morning. The fire burned 2.5 acres, but was 100% contained just several hours later, according to Florida Forest Service officials. As of press time Thursday, the only active wildfire listed in Taylor County was a three-acre fire around Vera Lane that was 90% contained.

be large pile burns and broadcast burns, which is monitored by Florida Forest Service," Cassel said. "They monitor the weather conditions every day, and they authorize or they don't authorize, and they have not been authorizing, and it doesn't look like they're going to be authorizing.

"Broadcast burns and large pile burns, those are the ones that are going to create large wildfires for us, because they can have multiple spots, and they can run really fast," Cassel said. "The fact that the Forest Service is not allowing those right now is in our favor.

"Could conditions change? Of course. We don't know what it's going to look like, but right now, the number of fires that we're getting is well within our wheelhouse of what we can handle. We're not having to run from one fire to another to another.

"We're in constant contact with Forestry. We discuss things -- a need for a burn ban, anything like that. Our partners over there agree that our call volume doesn't really indicate that we need to do that (issue a burn ban) right now," Cassel said. "We might be getting one or two brush fires a day, but they're not right on top of each other, and they're not getting to be something that we're there for a day or two trying to put it out or having a 400-to-600-acre-plus fire, which would require units from outside of the county."

"So, the Forestry department is not recommending we have a burn ban?" Commissioner Pam Feagle asked.

"Not at this time, because the types of fires we would be stopping would be yard trash burns, which we're not having an issue with," Cassel said. "It would not allow fireworks, outdoor chimneys, stuff like that. A

lot of the (wildfire) causes that a burn ban would stop, just aren't what we're getting sets from right now.

"If we were inundated with small fires, where we're just all over the county constantly running crazy, we would be trying to stop any possible fire. But, because we're on pace for what's normal right now, it's kind of hard to justify," Cassel said.

"We can say we want to be super cautious and make sure this doesn't happen, but then we also have our citizens that are very responsible, that are burning within their setbacks. They're burning what they're allowed to burn. They're burning in a burn barrel.

"You have to look at it on both sides," Cassel said. "We don't want to punish the people that are doing it right, as long as we don't have to. Now, it may very well come in the next week or two that it changes, and we have to say, out of the abundance of precaution, we can't have anything anymore."

"My big concern is, the last thing that Taylor County needs is an out-of-control forest fire to take the rest of what we still have," Feagle said. "I like to be on the side of where you get ahead of it before it starts."

"I will say, if you look at today -- and yesterday especially -- with all the smoke that was trickling down from Georgia, we had a lot of people that were very cautious -- and in a good way," Cassel said. "We have a lot of responsible people in this county that don't want that either, and they see the conditions, they see the smoke that's laying down and certainly not burning yard trash. If we do a burn ban, we're going to stop them from doing something they're not doing now anyways."

Commissioner Michael Newman asked if Cassel felt the FFS's current pause on authorizing burn piles and broadcast burns was sufficient.

"At this time," Cassel said Tuesday.

Cassel noted that they had prepared a resolution for the commission to approve to implement a burn ban if he and local FFS officials felt one was needed.

"This is not something we just visit once a week," he said. "This is a daily thing."

Newman asked if local FFS staffing was reduced due to the number of fires occurring elsewhere in the state.

"Right now, they're fully staffed," Cassel said. "Fire-Rescue is fully staffed. Depending on where they are within the district -- Taylor, Madison and Lafayette -- they might send some of their people over, but today, we had, I think, three or four rangers that were ready to respond, three light tractors and then I think we had two heavy tractors ready to go."

County Administrator LaWanda Pemberton added that the county has begun participating in calls with the Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM), which has activated its Emergency Operations Center (EOC) in response to the statewide fire outbreak.

"If resources are needed, we can make calls through the EOC network and call in resources that way," Cassel said. "Locally, we know we have our partners. If it's a fire down around the Dixie area, Dixie will come to us, just the same as we help across the bridge. In Madison, as well, and the City of Perry."

Cassel added that the National Guard was mobilizing helicopters to assist in the firefighting efforts across the state.

Additionally, the state is mobilizing equipment such as bulldozers and tractors in areas near where there are current large fires, like in Dixie County.

"This way they don't have to pull from places like us," Cassel said. "We're fortunate right now that we're not burning like them, but we need to be able to remain in a state of readiness to make sure that we don't get that bad."

"If we do decide that we need to recommend a burn ban, we're ready so we can have that in front of the board real quick," Cassel said. "The other alternative would be to take an approach like Dixie County, which I'm not recommending -- I think bringing it to the board is fine -- but if you wanted a quicker response for a burn ban if it's needed, the board could authorize me to declare one at a moment's notice."

"That might be the safest," Newman said. "That way you wouldn't have to wait for the board."

"It's whatever the board would want," Cassel said. "If you would prefer to draft it like that, we can have that ready for you and we can go ahead and move on that."

Newman said he would prefer to authorize Cassel to declare a burn ban should one be needed, and then made motion to do so. Commissioner Jim Moody seconded.

"I wouldn't say that we need to go that far with it," Commission Chair Jamie English said. "The chief just sat here and gave us factual information that we didn't need to go that far."

English then called for a vote on Newman's motion, which passed 4-1 with English voting against.

Feagle asked Cassel how he would go about informing the public if a burn ban was declared.

Cassel said he would use social media and the Alert Taylor system, as well as contact Perry Newspapers to help get the word out to the community.

English asked if it would be up to the board to declare an end to a burn ban if Cassel declared one.

"When you get to doing things like this, you end up creating bigger government," English said. "You'll have to answer more questions."

"If we draft it in a way where I can activate it, I can do it as a 30-day (activation), and it can also be me that says, 'Okay, conditions no longer warrant it,'" Cassel said. "That's the approach Dixie County takes. I can cancel it, with notification to everybody. If we do that, it eliminates having to come to a board meeting and asking every 30 days if we need to renew it."

## LEGALS

(Continued from page 10)

stucco walls with a new metal panel wall system. The metal wall panel area is 8,111 square feet. All bids must be submitted on a lump sum basis; segregated bids will not be accepted. In addition to the base bid there are three (3) alternates. The award will be based on the lowest, responsive bid.

Contractors and Sub-contractors may obtain electronic copies (PDF files) of the Drawings and Project Manual from Architects Lewis + Whitlock, PA, the project architects office upon receipt of a non-refundable price of fifty dollars (\$50.00) by contacting Rodney Lewis at rlewis@think3d.net or at 850-942-1718.

Respondents will be required to have the approval of Florida Commerce Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) MIT Program staff and the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) prior to being awarded a contract by Taylor County. Previous experience working with healthcare facilities or similar projects is strongly recommended.

Respondents will be required to comply with state and federal regulatory requirements, Taylor County policies and procedures, and Florida Commerce (the funding agency) policies and grant contract requirements. It is the Respondents responsibility to fully understand and follow all conditions and specifications the Agency for

Health Care Administration (ACHA) requires for medical facilities.

The County reserves the right, in its sole and absolute discretion, to reject any or all bids, to cancel or withdraw this solicitation at any time and waive any irregularities in the bid process.

The County, in its sole and absolute discretion, also reserves the right to waive any minor defects in the process. No faxed bids will be accepted.

Additional information in reference to the County's bidding and procurement process may be obtained from LaWanda Pemberton, County Administrator at 850-843-5381 or at lpemberton@taylorcountygov.com.

Qualified WBE's, MBE's, DBE's, and Veteran Owned Businesses are encouraged to submit proposals. Additional technical information on the project and scope of work may be obtained from: Rodney Lewis Architects Lewis + Whitlock, PA 206 W. Virginia Street, Tallahassee, FL 32301 (850) 942-1718 or at rlewis@think3d.net

### NOTICE OF FINAL AGENCY ACTION TAKEN BY THE SUWANNEE RIVER WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

Notice is hereby given that the Suwannee River Water Management District has issued Water Use Permit Number 2-123-253830-1 authorizing the withdrawal of

0.0814 million gallons per day of groundwater and 4.5565 million gallons per day of surface water for mining use to SRM Materials, LLC, 1000 Hollingshead Cir, Murfreesboro, TN 3729. The project is located in Section 5,6,7,8,17,18 Township 4S, Range 6E, in Taylor County. Files pertaining to the project referred above are available for inspection at: <https://permitting.sjrwmd.com/srpermitting/jsp/start.jsp>.

NOTICE OF RIGHTS A person whose substantial interests are or may be affected has the right to request an administrative hearing (received) either by delivery at the office of the Resource Management Business Resource Specialist at District Headquarters, 9225 CR 49, Live Oak FL 32060 or by e-mail to tjm@srwmd.org, within twenty-one (21) days of newspaper publication of the notice of final agency action (for those persons to whom the District does not mail or email actual notice). A petition must comply with Sections 120.54(5)(b)4. and 120.569(2)(c), Florida Statutes (F.S.), and Chapter 28106, F.A.C. The District will not accept a petition sent by facsimile (fax). Mediation pursuant to Section 120.573, F.S., is not available.

A petition for an administrative hearing is deemed filed upon

receipt of the complete petition by the District Clerk at the District Headquarters in Live Oak, FL during the District's regular business hours. The District's regular business hours are 8 a.m. - 5 p.m., excluding weekends and District holidays. Petitions received by the District Clerk after the District's regular business hours shall be deemed filed as of 8 a.m. on the next regular District business day.

The right to an administrative hearing and the relevant procedures to be followed are governed by Chapter 120, Florida Statutes, Chapter 28-106, Florida Administrative Code, and Rule 40B-1.1010, Florida Administrative Code. Because the administrative hearing process is designed to formulate final agency action, the filing of a petition means the District's final action may be different from the position taken by it in this notice. Failure to file a petition for an administrative hearing within the requisite time frame shall constitute a waiver of the right to an administrative hearing. (Rule 28-106.111, F.A.C.). If you wish to do so, you may request the Notice of Rights for this permit by contacting the Business Resource Specialist in the Division of Resource Management (RM), 9225 CR 49, Live Oak, FL 32060, or by phone at 386.362.1001.

### IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE 3RD JUDICIAL CIRCUIT IN AND FOR TAYLOR COUNTY, FLORIDA

**CASE NO.: 25000014CAAXMX** CARRINGTON MORTGAGE SERVICES LLC, Plaintiff, VS.

SCOTT KNUDSEN, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA ON BEHALF OF THE SECRETARY OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, BRANDY KNUDSEN AND BRANDY KNUDSEN, PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ESTATE OF LINDA KNUDSON A/K/A LINDA J. KNUDSON A/K/A LINDA JEAN KNUDSON, DECEASED, Defendant(s).

### NOTICE OF SALE PURSUANT TO CHAPTER 45

NOTICE OF SALE IS HEREBY GIVEN pursuant to the order of Summary Final Judgment of Foreclosure dated April 20, 2026, and entered in Case No. 25000014CAAXMX of the Circuit Court of the 3RD Judicial Circuit in and for Taylor County, Florida, wherein Carrington Mortgage Services LLC, is Plaintiff and Scott Knudsen, United States of America on behalf of the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Brandy Knudsen and Brandy Knudsen, Personal Representative of the Estate of Linda Knudson a/k/a Linda J Knudson a/k/a Linda Jean Knudson, deceased, are Defendants, the Office of the Clerk, Taylor County Clerk of the Court will sell at East Doors of the Courthouse, 108 North Jefferson Street, Perry, FL 32347 at 11:00 a.m. on the 9th day of June, 2026, the following described property as set forth in said Final Judgment, to wit

LOT 15 AND THE NORTH 14.0 FEET OF LOT 16, BLOCK A, MURPHYSIDE

HEIGHTS ACCORDING TO THE PLAT THEREOF AS RECORDED IN PLAT BOOK I, PAGE 96, OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS OF TAYLOR COUNTY, FLORIDA.

Property Address: 1104 N Allen Street, Perry, Florida 32347 and all fixtures and personal property located therein or thereon, which are included as security in Plaintiff's mortgage.

Any person claiming an interest in the surplus funds from the sale, if any, other than the property owner as of the date of the lls pendens must file a claim before the clerk reports the surplus as unclaimed.

If you are a person with a disability who needs any accommodation in order to participate in this proceeding, you are entitled, at no cost to you, to the provision of certain assistance. Please contact Court Administration, 173 NE Hernandez Avenue, Room 408, Lake City, Florida 32055; DAdamail@jud3.flcourts.org; (386)758-2163 at least 7 days before your scheduled court appearance, or immediately upon receiving this notification if the time before the scheduled appearance is less than 7 days, if you are hearing or voice impaired call 711.

Dated: April 22, 2026.

Gary Knowles  
As Clerk of said Court  
By: Kathryn Lago  
Deputy Clerk