



UPCO news

Upson EMC proudly serves our great outdoors

BY NEAL TRICE, PRESIDENT/CEO

Summertime is approaching! What better way to spend your free time than by going outside and enjoying the beauty that our local community has to offer.

Upson EMC's service territory—including Crawford, Meriwether, Pike, Talbot, Taylor and Upson counties—is a great place to call home, as well as a great place for a "stay-cation." Centrally located within one hour's drive of Atlanta, Columbus and Macon, our home base is located in the "sweet spot" of Georgia's heart. Our backyard contains some of the best family day trip adventures in all of Georgia. The Rock Ranch, Camp Thunder, the covered bridges of Meriwether and Upson counties and the amazing Sprewell Bluff Park are just a few of the options.

The Rock Ranch is a 1,500 acre working cattle farm on the eastern edge of Upson County. The farm was created by Chick-fil-A's founder, the late Truett Cathy, as a foster home for children and has evolved into a fun destination providing entertainment for people of all ages. It's a place where families, school groups and even corporations come to enjoy and learn via agritourism. A day at The Rock Ranch is packed full of excitement, fun and adventure. Memory makers like train rides, zip lines, a jumping pillow, carousel rides, cane pole fishing, paddle boats and pony rides are just a few of the experiences you will treasure long after you depart.

Did you know that two of Georgia's 16 covered bridges are within a 30-minute drive of Upson EMC's headquarters? The Big Red Oak Creek Covered Bridge in Meriwether County was built in the 1840s and has approximately 2,500 wooden pegs. At 391 feet, including the approaches, this structure is the oldest and longest covered bridge in Georgia. The Achump-kee Creek Covered Bridge in southern Upson County



Achumpkee Creek Covered Bridge

was originally built in 1892 and rebuilt in 1997 following the 1994 state-wide floods. Today it is 96 feet long and features a truss design. Picnic tables and plenty of parking are on-site. Sit a spell and listen to the crickets. If you are quiet enough you may hear echoes from the past.

The Gerald I.

Lawhorn Scouting Base in western Upson County is a 2,400-acre Scout camping area along the

peaceful banks of the lovely Flint River, which is located in Georgia's Pine Mountain range. This base is operated by the Flint River Council Boy Scouts of America and has three activity centers: Camp Thunder, the Flint River Adventure Area and the Pine Mountain Back Country. Open to the general public, the base offers canoeing and tubing on the Flint River, rock climbing, a ropes course and shooting activities. The Pine Mountain Back Country consists of 2,000 acres with 16 campsites and a challenging 21 miles of hiking and mountain biking trails.

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Big Red Oak Creek Covered Bridge

Our great outdoors, *Continued from page 20A*

One of the most charming visits in Upson EMC's realm is Sprewell Bluff Park on the Flint River. In January 2013, Upson County signed a lease with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources for operational control of the 1,317 acres that flank the river in Upson County. And, what a great job the community has done in just a few short years! At the entrance to the park, an overlook deck has been built among Georgia's famous long leaf pines on Pine Wood Ridge. It provides a panoramic view of the river and its deep valley. Easily the most photographed location along the entire Flint River, this



Gerald I. Lawhorn Scouting Base

overlook is one of the most beautiful vistas in the entire state. Across from the overlook point is a new trading post with snacks, drinks and Sprewell Bluff souvenirs.

If hiking is in your blood, you have two great choices; the Widowmaker Trail or the Long Leaf Pine Trail. The Widowmaker Trail lives up to its name. Starting at the park entrance, it drops 300 vertical feet down to the Flint River valley floor. Along the way are benches and picnic tables. As you near the bluff, there are two observation decks. The trail is out-and-back at a little over 5 miles and is rated moderate to difficult.

Once you drive away from the entrance to the park, you will see the newly constructed River Ridge Campground offering six cabins along with six sites for RV campers. For canoers and kayakers who put in upstream at Camp Thunder, there are primitive campsites on the Meriwether County and Talbot County side located within the Wildlife Management Area (WMA).



Flint River at Sprewell Bluff Park



Overlook at Sprewell Bluff Park

Once you reach river level at Sprewell Bluff, you will see the second hiking option. The trailhead to the Long Leaf Pine Trail travels along the river and eventually climbs back up the mountain where wonderful views of the lazy river await. This second trail is 1.5 miles long and is rated easy to moderate.

Visitors to the riverside will also find a newly constructed boat ramp to launch a canoe or kayak as well as a volleyball court, picnic tables, barbecue grills and several covered pavilions. The Flint River corridor is truly an American treasure in one of our last free-flowing, unspoiled waterways.

Its cool deep waters come complete with its own hidden delight: the Flint River red eye bass. This bass is located only within these special Flint waters. It is fast becoming a must-have trophy on every serious fisherman's bucket list.

So, if you need a mini-vacation this summer, just head out into our backyard. A whole world of easy pleasure awaits you in Middle Georgia's sweet spot!



Flint River at Sprewell Bluff Park

KING DAVIS