

A U B U R N U N I V E R S I T Y

# School of Forestry & Wildlife Sciences



## Honoring a Legacy

### FEATURE SERIES

New Faculty  
Make Groundbreaking  
Discoveries pg. 6

### WHAT'S INSIDE

New Deanship pg. 2  
Annual Report pg. 4-5  
Why Stumpage Prices are Low pg. 10  
Roberson Named Outstanding Alumnus pg. 11

SFWS NEWS • Spring 2021

Working with Nature for Society's Well Being

### In This Issue

Administration ..... 2-3, 9  
Academics & Learning ..... 8  
Annual Report ..... 4-5  
Research & Discovery ..... 6-7  
Extension & Outreach ..... 10  
Alumni & Friends ..... 11-12

### Upcoming Events

75th Anniversary "7 for 75" Speaker Series  
• John Burrell, 9/23 • Nick Wiley, 10/7  
Summer 2021 Commencement, 8/7  
Dean's Forum and Alumni Social  
• Emmett Thompson, Virtual 10/28  
• Richard Brinker, Virtual 11/18



[sfws.auburn.edu/giving](https://sfws.auburn.edu/giving)

Learn how you can support the SFWS.



[sfws.auburn.edu/newsletter](https://sfws.auburn.edu/newsletter)

Visit our website to read past issues and access digital content related to stories you see here. When you see one of the icons below, you know more content is available online.



slide  
show



video



related  
articles



MANRRS Hoops for Trees



Dixon Center hosts Yale University students

**Online Exclusive Content** Visit [auburn.edu/sfws](https://auburn.edu/sfws) for more on these stories.



Aubie visits KPNC's Woodland Wonders Nature Preschool



First graduating class of sustainable biomaterials and packaging major

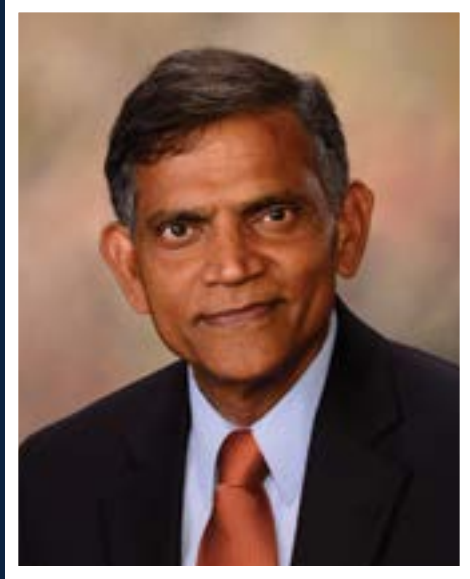
NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
AUBURN, AL  
PERMIT NO. 9

AUBURN UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF FORESTRY  
AND WILDLIFE SCIENCES



602 Duncan Drive  
Auburn, AL 36849-0001





## A Message from the Dean

Dear alumni and friends,

As the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences closes the 2020-21 academic year, I am proud to share the many achievements and positive developments that have recently transpired within the school.

Despite the challenges presented by COVID-19, our faculty maintained face-to-face instruction for 70% of the curriculum for the fall 2020 and spring 2021 semesters. And now we look forward to summer practicum being held in person at the Dixon Center with a full house of 76 forestry and wildlife students. The outlook is also positive for the 2021-22 academic year, as enrollment for graduate and undergraduate programs remains at pre-pandemic numbers for freshmen and transfer students.

Our academic programs continue to grow as well. With the support of our faculty, the school has introduced two new undergraduate science core course sequences that will now be part of the Auburn University science core curriculum. We have also proposed an online master's degree in forest business and investment, which was approved by the Auburn University Board of Trustees this June.

Finally, we announced the creation of the Emmett F. Thompson Deanship, an endowed fund established to support the achievement of major goals to elevate the school's status, position it to become a college, launch new initiatives and continue a culture of excellence.

We are truly grateful to our colleagues for their unwavering commitment, which enabled our students to continue their studies successfully, and to our alumni, friends and stakeholders, whose steadfast support has ensured the school's programs will thrive as we boldly progress into the future as a top-tier natural resources institution.

War Eagle!

Janaki R.R. Alavalapati, Ph.D.  
Dean, School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences

# Administration

## Auburn University announces new deanship in honor of Emmett F. Thompson

The School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences has announced the creation of the Emmett F. Thompson Deanship in honor of the founding dean of the Auburn University School of Forestry, who left a significant legacy during his tenure, and beyond.

The deanship is a designated endowed fund used at the discretion of the current dean to direct funds needed to achieve a school's major goals without undercutting budgetary priorities.

The Thompson Deanship will benefit the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences, or SFWS, by elevating the school's status, positioning it to become a college, launching new initiatives, continuing a culture of excellence and helping to recruit and retain highly qualified deans in the future.

Auburn's forestry program is now widely considered to be top tier in the Southeast, and the Emmett F. Thompson Deanship, one of only two forestry school deanships in the U.S. — along with Oregon State University — will help propel the program to national prominence.

Funds from the deanship will support initiatives to promote excellence in teaching, research, extension and outreach and programs that will promote personal and professional development of students, faculty and staff.

The Thompson Deanship was established by Thompson's children, Chuck, Meri and Juli, and received a leadership gift from the Solon and Martha Dixon Foundation in addition to gifts from a host of other friends of the school. Funding for the deanship is currently at 72%, with a projected completion by the end of 2021.

**Honoring a legacy**  
Thompson, who retired in 1998, began his Auburn career in 1977 as head of the Department of Forestry, which was then part of the School of Agriculture. In 1984, he became the School of Forestry's first dean. During his 21-year tenure, he was a pioneer.

At Auburn, Thompson established the School of Forestry as a stand-alone entity, separate from the College of Agriculture. Thompson has said that was perhaps his most notable accomplishment, giving the school a much-needed sense of autonomy and flexibility.

He was also involved in establishing the Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center, a 5,350-acre forestry and wildlife education facility near Andalusia, Alabama, that provides SFWS students with a unique hands-on experience.

Thompson said he is not aware of any other school with anything comparable to the Dixon Center.

"We've got a modern facility in the middle of southern forestry activity," he said. "Prior to the Dixon Center, summer camp students used to get on a bus and tour the Southeast. Now, within 50 miles, you can see all aspects of southern forestry.

"The Dixon Center really made a difference in our undergraduate education, and we were able to market it with employers — that our graduates had hands-on experience and were ready to hit the ground running," he said.

Thompson, along with agricultural engineering, established a forest engineering degree. And with support from the Alabama Forestry Association, he established a wood procurement course, the predecessor of the current forestry in the private sector course.

He also provided foundational work for the school's state-of-the-art facility, which was completed in 2005. Though the building opened after his retirement, he considers it a landmark in the



Emmett and Vi Thompson

school's evolution. He began lobbying for a new building soon after he arrived in Auburn. The effort took years, with numerous setbacks, but with strong support from alumni and industry, his successor, Dean Richard Brinker, was able to bring the construction to fruition.

"I thought, at the time I retired, all we were lacking to be a really top-notch forestry school was a building of adequate size with modern laboratories and computing capabilities. The new building fulfills these needs."

He's impressed not only with the school's facilities, but with its dean, Janaki Alavalapati.

"Janaki has just done an outstanding job," Thompson said, mentioning, among other developments, a forestry and wildlife presence in the University's science core courses. "He's on top of things. The school is in good hands and moving forward."

"The admiration is mutual," Alavalapati said.

"Dr. Thompson truly deserves to be honored with a deanship in his name," Alavalapati said. "His achievements as dean of the School of Forestry have had a major impact on developing this school to become the outstanding research and educational institution that it is today."

"Thompson has continued to be a force in the school," he added.

"Since his retirement, he has served on our campaign committee, maintained a strong relationship with our many benefactors and industry contacts and makes himself available for any school event that takes place."

**A life in forestry and family**  
A native of Oklahoma, Thompson studied forestry at Oklahoma State University, obtained a master's degree at North Carolina State University and earned a doctorate in forest economics at Oregon State University. In Oregon he met his wife, Vi, to whom he has been married since 1961.

In 1962, when Thompson arrived at Virginia Tech University for his first university job, the forestry department had just been established. In fact, he was the first faculty member hired by the new department. The Thompsons stayed in Virginia, where they started their family, through 1973. Next, they headed to Mississippi State University, where Thompson became the head of the forestry department. By then, the Thompsons had three children, Juli, Chuck and Meri.

"The Dixon Center really made a difference in our undergraduate education, and we were able to market it with employers — that our graduates had hands-on experience and were ready to hit the ground running."

- Emmett F. Thompson

Four years later, Thompson began his tenure at Auburn, where he hit his stride and settled with his family in the town they have called home ever since. "He's had as strong an impact on his family as he has had on the school," said Thompson's son, Chuck.

The seeds for the deanship were planted more than a year before the announcement.

"My sisters, Juli Thompson and Meri Pylant, and I were talking during the Christmas season of 2019 of creative ways that we could honor dad that reflected his career contributions to Auburn Forestry," Chuck Thompson said. The siblings were thinking of a naming opportunity within the building, but then Alavalapati and Heather Crozier, the SFWS director of development, suggested the deanship.

It all came down to family.

"My dad has always valued maintaining family connections, whether it be traveling across the country to see our South Dakota and Arizona relatives when we were kids, or how, more recently over the past 10 to 12 years, he has spearheaded family vacations to get all the grandkids together every other summer."

## Solon and Martha Dixon Foundation contributes major gift to establish Emmett Thompson deanship

Establishing the Emmett Thompson Deanship in the Auburn University School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences depended on many generous donors, alumni and friends of the school.

But the most substantial gift toward the deanship came from the Solon and Martha Dixon Foundation, which for more than 40 years has been integral to the school's development and growth.

Solon Dixon was a 1926 Auburn graduate and a pioneer in forestry management who aspired to promote excellence in forestry education by providing students with a hands-on laboratory to develop and practice responsible forest management.

In 1976, he and his wife, Martha, formed what is now the Solon and Martha Dixon Foundation in support of forestry education as well as the arts, health organizations and other charities.

Their generosity and dedication to the school is best exemplified by the Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center, which is not only a cornerstone to the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences educational program, but is also considered one of the finest field facilities of its type in the nation.

Auburn School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences Dean Janaki Alavalapati has thanked the Solon and Martha Dixon Foundation for the many noteworthy projects it has established and supported over the years, including the Dixon Center, which he has called "a unique educational asset that allows the school to excel in preparing resource managers."

"We are extremely grateful for all the Solon and Martha Dixon Foundation has made possible for the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences," Alavalapati said. "With this major gift toward the Emmett Thompson Deanship, the foundation is helping to take the school to another level of greatness in which it will be positioned to become a college, in which new initiatives will bolster the current culture of excellence and lead the program to become a prominent presence in the U.S."

In 1978, the Dixons donated an initial 80 acres in addition to funds to create the Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center. This land was later combined with another larger deed of property — at the time the largest of its kind in Auburn's history — to create the Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center, a 5,350-acre forestry and wildlife conservation education facility located in Andalusia.

Emmett Thompson, the namesake of the new deanship, was a friend of the Dixons, sharing their passion for education in forestry. Thompson was dean of the school at the time the initial gift was established.



Members of Auburn University administration were in attendance to present the Emmett F. Thompson Deanship with Dean Janaki Alavalapati, including: Auburn's Senior Vice President for Advancement John Morris on the left, and Provost Bill Hardgrave on the right.

"Finally, my sisters and I liked how an early donation from us also dovetails with the overarching Auburn Family sentiment that all Auburn people talk about so much, so we just decided the deanship was a perfect way to honor dad."

They somehow kept their father out of the loop so successfully that when the deanship was announced at a small 75th anniversary celebration dinner on March 26 in the EBSCO Atrium, where those who have already made an investment in this initiative were in attendance, Emmett Thompson was taken aback.

"It was a total surprise," he said. "It's a real honor."

If you would like to make a gift to honor Emmett Thompson through this initiative, please contact the Development Office at 334-844-2791 or scan the QR code to contribute online at [aub.ie/givingtosfws](http://aub.ie/givingtosfws).



Members of the Dixon Foundation board are shown with Emmett and Vi Thompson. From left to right are Cathy and Rhett Johnson, Emmett and Vi Thompson, Doris Tyler, Louisa Mann, Cary Mann and Phillip Jones.

"I would say that during my tenure, of the things that were really important, getting the Dixon Center would be right up there," Thompson said. "At the time, it was the largest gift ever received from a living individual. I'm convinced that there is no facility in the country for field-oriented education in forestry or natural resources that equals the Dixon Center."

With the support of the foundation, the center has grown to include the 6,500-square-foot Solon and Martha Dixon Foundation Learning Center, which houses a state-of-the-art auditorium, classroom and conference room; two large bunkhouses, five semi-private dormitory buildings, a rec center, administrative building, classroom and computer lab building, maintenance shop and cafeteria.

Solon Dixon served as president of the foundation until his death in 1986; Martha Dixon then became president of the foundation's board of directors until 2001 and continued her involvement until her passing in 2017.

Members of the Solon and Martha Dixon Foundation Board of Directors are Doris B. Tyler, who serves as president, Phillip G. Jones, Frank "Trippy" McGuire, Louisa Mann and Rhett Johnson.

Support of the new deanship is just the latest example of the Dixon Foundation's generosity to the school.

Through the years, the Dixon Foundation has continued its support through funding numerous initiatives and projects in the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences, including the funding of an endowed professorship and the naming of an executive conference room in the school's building. At the Dixon Center, the foundation's funds created the addition of the Solon and Martha Dixon Foundation Learning Center, renovation of

the cafeteria, the replacement of the roofing of several buildings, new dorms and the purchase of private land inside the center's perimeter to expand the facility, among many other gifts.

The center fulfilled Solon Dixon's vision of a place where young people could experience nature through applied teaching while learning about forestry, wildlife and other aspects of natural resources management.

The Dixon Center has been an essential component of the education of Auburn forestry students — more than 1,000 students have completed the summer practicum. In 2010, a wildlife summer practicum was added to fortify the degree requirements of students majoring in wildlife ecology and management. In addition, students from other Auburn University programs have used the center's facilities and forest for field labs and other educational opportunities.

Students from 20 other universities have visited the center, with some institutions such as Mississippi State, Iowa State University, Penn State University and Yale University returning on several occasions.

The center has also been home to in-service training for state and federal agencies, continuing education programs for natural resource professionals in both the public and private sector, groups of nature enthusiasts, and youth organizations such as 4-H and Future Farmers of America, among others.

Most recently, the Dixon Center has become host to the Wildland Firefighters Apprentice Program, or WFAP, an academy that supplies fire and aviation managers to federal agencies such as the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management and Bureau of Indian Affairs.

## School of Forestry & Wildlife Sciences

### SFWS NEWS • Spring 2021

Dean ..... Janaki R.R. Alavalapati  
Associate Dean of Academic Affairs..... Scott Enebak  
Associate Dean of Research..... Daowei Zhang  
Extension Coordinator ..... Becky Barlow  
Managing Editor ..... Jamie Anderson  
Contributing Writer ..... Teri Greene

Auburn Office of Communications and Marketing  
Project Manager ..... Mike Hales  
Editor ..... Megan Burmester  
Designer ..... Heather Jackson

### Contact Us

The SFWS newsletter is distributed to alumni and friends of the school. Inquiries and suggestions concerning the newsletter should be directed to the school's Office of Communications and Marketing at the address below.

Auburn University School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences  
Office of Communications and Marketing  
602 Duncan Drive • Auburn, AL 36849  
334-844-9248 • [sfwscom@auburn.edu](mailto:sfwscom@auburn.edu)

### Giving

Questions concerning the school's development program, including annual and corporate giving, planned gifts and estate planning should be directed to Heather Crozier, School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences Building, 602 Duncan Drive, Auburn, AL 36849. Inquiries may also be made by email to [vannhea@auburn.edu](mailto:vannhea@auburn.edu) or by phone at 334-844-2791.



Auburn University is an equal opportunity educational institution/employer. Produced by the Auburn Office of Communications and Marketing, July 2021



# AUBURN UNIVERSITY

## School of Forestry & Wildlife Sciences

### 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

## Academics & Research



Forest operations students learn best practices.



Graduates and their families gather for the spring 2021 graduation open house.



Students mount cameras to track efficacy of feral hog traps.



Yucheng Peng studies uses of forest biomass from downed timber.

#### Undergraduate Degrees

- Forestry
- Forest Engineering Option
- Geospatial and Environmental Informatics
- Natural Resources Management
- Sustainable Biomaterials and Packaging
- Wildlife Ecology and Management
- Wildlife Sciences – Pre-Vet Concentration
- Wildlife Enterprise Management

#### Undergraduate Minors

- Natural Resource Ecology
- Nature-Based Recreation
- Watershed Sciences

#### Graduate Degrees

- Forestry, M.N.R., M.S., and Ph.D.
- Natural Resources, M.N.R., M.S.
- Wildlife Sciences, M.S. and Ph.D.
- Earth Systems Science Ph.D.

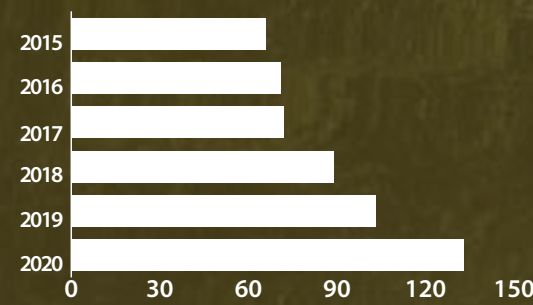
#### Online Graduate Programs

- Forest Finance and Investments Certificate
- Restoration Ecology Certificate
- One-Health Certificate
- Master of Natural Resources

#### Undergraduate Enrollment 2015-20



#### Graduate Enrollment 2015-20



**12% FORESTRY STUDENTS**  
on the dean's list for fall 2020

**30% INCREASE**  
in graduate enrollment

**70% EMPLOYMENT RATE**  
secured by graduates 1-3 years after graduation

**70% PASS RATE**  
of forestry students taking the registered Forester's exam

## Development

**104% ACHIEVEMENT**  
OF SCHOOL'S \$1.2 MM CAMPAIGN GOAL  
**\$1,237,287**  
TOTAL AMOUNT RAISED



Auburn alumnus Christoph Stuhlinger establishes the H. Christoph Stuhlinger Fund for Excellence in support of urban forestry.

**6** New scholarships established  
**14** Virtual and in-person events hosted



Graduate student Monet Gomes holds a fawn at the Deer Lab for Tiger Giving Day.



Aubie promotes water education at the KPNC for Tiger Giving Day.

**TIGER GIVING DAY**

**113% OVER GOAL**  
Deer Lab

**126% OVER GOAL**  
KPNC Turtle Pond

## Outreach



KPNC hosts its annual Earth Day celebration.

**15% INCREASE**  
in visitor traffic to KPNC

**25% INCREASE**  
in social media consumers of KPNC educational content



Dixon Center contracts for multi-year Wildland Firefighter Apprenticeship Program.

#### Dixon Center Forest Management Initiatives:

**963 ACRES OF PRESCRIBED FIRE COMPLETED**

**216 ACRES SOLD FOR CLEAR CUT**

**139 ACRES OF TIMBER THINNING**

#### Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center

**6,449**  
User recorded days

**6** Roofs replaced

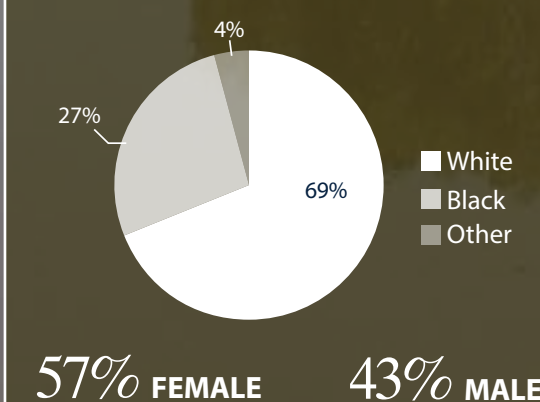
**3** Buildings with replaced flooring



Alabama Forestry Commission launched bi-annual training program at the Dixon Center

## Extension

#### 2020 Forest, Wildlife and Natural Resources Extension Programs Event Participation and Diversity



**MORE THAN 1,150**  
events with  
**64,694**  
PARTICIPANTS

**APPROXIMATELY 621,895**  
forestland acres owned and/or managed by participants

**114:1**  
Return on investment for Alabama Extension

**\$171MM ESTIMATED VALUE OF SERVICE**

**5,531**  
Continuing education credits generated

**30** ACES publications



Extension Specialist Nancy Loewenstein leads an invasive plant control program.



Professor and Extension Coordinator Becky Barlow conducts a ForestHer program via Zoom.



# New Faculty Make Groundbreaking Discoveries

## Narine demonstrates NASA satellite's ability to observe forest health, generate data to support sustainable forest management

Lana Narine, an assistant professor of geospatial analytics in the Auburn University School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences, is part of a research team whose recent study presented a breakthrough in the capabilities of a NASA satellite to examine the three-dimensional structure of forests.

The study, "Using ICESat-2 to Estimate and Map Forest Aboveground Biomass: A First Example" in the Remote Sensing Journal, shows how NASA's Ice, Cloud and land Elevation Satellite-2, or ICESat-2, can be used to estimate aboveground biomass, or AGB, of forests and map its distribution. The upscaling of AGB estimates was done in conjunction with other available data, including vegetation indices from Landsat 8 Operational Land Imager.

Narine said limited information on the three-dimensional structure of forests has contributed to uncertainties in the carbon budget. However, ICESat-2 can capture this information using its photon-counting

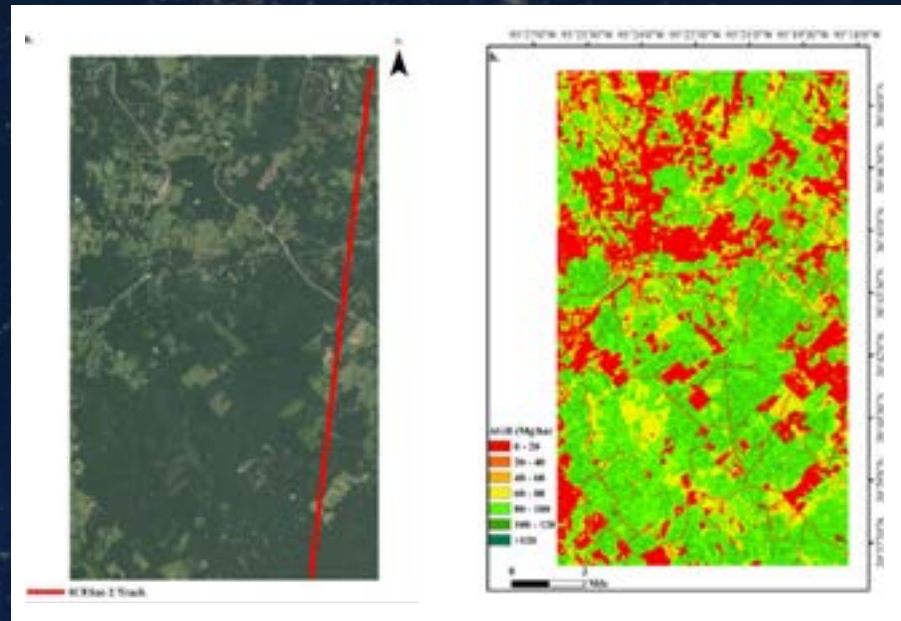


light detection and ranging — or lidar — instrument, the Advanced Topographic Laser Altimeter System, or ATLAS.

Lidar facilitates direct three-dimensional structural measurements, and utilization of this technology from a space-based platform translates to exciting possibilities for assessing forest resources up to global scales, Narine said.

"With ICESat-2 providing elevation measurements globally, a plethora of indicators of ecosystem health and function — including a key surrogate measure of forest AGB — can be potentially estimated to support sustainable management of forests," Narine said.

"Dr. Narine's role in researching the capabilities of the NASA Ice, Cloud and



The image on the left illustrates an area analyzed by ICESat-2 and overlaid with imagery from the National Agriculture Imagery Program. On the right is an image generated from ICESat-2 and combined with other data, showing aboveground biomass density for the study area. Darker shades of green indicate higher aboveground biomass densities.

land Elevation Satellite-2 is yet another notable contribution from our faculty in the rapidly evolving field of geospatial and environmental informatics," said Janaki Alavalapati, dean of the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences.

"This study has provided the first example of the satellite's unique ability to gather critical data from forests that was previously unavailable,"

Narine's co-authors were Sorin C. Popescu and Lonesome Malambo of the Department of Ecology and Conservation Biology at Texas A&M University. Narine's former institution. Narine is a co-investigator on a NASA grant with the same team, with Popescu as principal investigator.

## Aspinwall co-authors study finding that carbon dioxide levels within plant communities influence soil carbon dioxide emissions

Predicting future climate and ecological change is among the world's top priorities, and an Auburn University faculty member is among a group of researchers whose findings in a recently published study on carbon dioxide emissions could make a vast contribution to those future outlooks.

Mike Aspinwall, assistant professor of tree physiology and ecophysiology in the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences, said the study examines how rising atmospheric carbon dioxide, or CO<sub>2</sub>, might impact CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from grassland soils.

The findings of the nearly decade-long study, published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, stresses that understanding ecosystem carbon-cycling responses to atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> enrichment is critical to preserve biodiversity and maintain vital ecosystem services in grasslands impacted by global change.

The research explored CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from soil, which represent the largest flux of CO<sub>2</sub> from the land surface to the atmosphere, Aspinwall said.



"Changes in soil CO<sub>2</sub> emissions will have consequences for future climate, yet our understanding of the impacts of rising atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> — a key driver of global change — on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from soil is limited," he said.

There has been a particularly limited understanding of how factors such as plant species diversity and soil properties might influence the way rising atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> impacts soil CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, he added.

Aspinwall's co-authors represented the USDA Agricultural Research Service, the University of Texas at Austin, Stanford University and Tennessee State University.

Janaki Alavalapati, dean of the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences, underscored the study's significance.



A lysimeter carbon dioxide gradient study, conducted in Temple, Texas, could influence predictions of future climate and ecological changes. Auburn University faculty member Michael Aspinwall says "tunnels" located at the project site contain intact grassland communities growing along a gradient of atmospheric carbon dioxide. Researchers have temporarily removed the plastic to survey species diversity, productivity and other responses such as soil carbon dioxide release. (Photo courtesy of Alexia Kelley)

"The research of Dr. Aspinwall and his team on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from soil presents important findings that will go a long way in future predictions of climate and ecological change," Alavalapati said. "The team's dedication to this uniquely sourced research is a noteworthy contribution."

Aspinwall is optimistic about its impact.

"We hope this research will improve our ability to predict changes in soil CO<sub>2</sub> emissions over space and time — which will inform predictions of future climate and ecological change," he said.



Heather Alexander, assistant professor of forest ecology in Auburn University's School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences, is co-author of a new study published in the journal Science that finds deciduous trees replacing burned spruce forests more than make up for carbon and nitrogen loss, storing more carbon and accumulating it four times faster over a 100-year fire interval.

## Alexander co-authors new study finding deciduous trees offset carbon loss from Alaskan boreal fires, published in Science

Heather Alexander, assistant professor of forest ecology in the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences at Auburn University, is co-author of a new research study published this week in the journal Science demonstrating the deciduous trees replacing burned spruce forests more than make up for carbon and nitrogen loss, storing more carbon and accumulating it four times faster over a 100-year fire interval.

More severe and frequent fires in the Alaskan boreal forest are releasing vast stores of carbon and nitrogen from burned trees and soil into the atmosphere, a trend that is widely thought to accelerate climate warming.

The study, led by a team of researchers at the Center for Ecosystem Science and Society at Northern Arizona University, counters this

theory and suggests that faster-growing, less flammable deciduous forests may act as a stabilizing "firebreak" against escalating fire patterns and nutrient loss in the region.

"I was surprised that deciduous trees could replenish lost carbon so effectively and efficiently," Alexander said. "Even though considerable carbon is combusted and emitted into the atmosphere when black spruce forests burn severely, the deciduous trees that often replace them have an amazing ability to recapture and store carbon in their aboveground leaves and wood."

The study began in the wake of the dramatic 2004 fire season in Alaska when an area seven times the long-term average burned. Historically, more than half of this forested terrain has been dominated by black spruce, but after fire, faster-growing aspen and birch are replacing some of these stands.

The team, made up of researchers from Northern Arizona University, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Auburn University, University of Florida and University of Saskatchewan, surveyed 75 black spruce stands that burned in 2004 and followed their recovery over the next 13 years. They also collected a range of data from trees and soils of different ages and burn severities

to construct a chronosequence, a kind of scientific time-lapse that lets researchers fast-forward through a 100-year fire cycle to see how forests recover and change.

Janaki Alavalapati, dean of Auburn's School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences, added, "Boreal forests cover a large amount of the Earth's terrestrial surface and store a huge portion of terrestrial carbon. They also have large impacts on climate through albedo, or surface energy reflectance. Any change in their composition or structure could be very important to global carbon and energy cycling, and thus climate."

"Dr. Alexander's team has potentially unveiled a more accurate formula for carbon accounting that will help us better understand the role of boreal forests in climate feedbacks."

The study was supported by the U.S. Department of Defense Strategic Environmental Research and Development Program, the NASA Arctic Boreal Vulnerability Experiment, the U.S. Joint Fire Sciences program and the Bonanza Creek Long-term Ecological Research Program, a program of the U.S. National Science Foundation and the USDA Forest Service.

## Kumar and team embark on soil moisture study combining big data, artificial intelligence and earth system modeling

Auburn University faculty member Sanjiv Kumar in the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences is leading a research team in connecting forecasts of soil moisture — a key influencer of climate change and a vital component in agriculture productivity and the prediction of flood and drought — through the combined use of big data, artificial intelligence and user interactions.

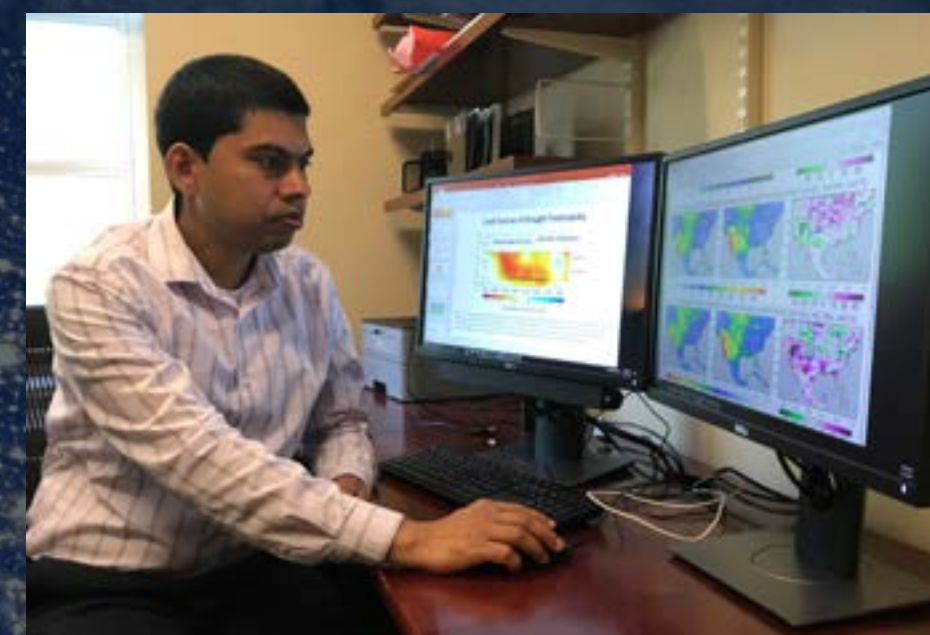
The study, "FACT: Interactive Deep Learning Platform and Multi-source Data Integration for Improved Soil Moisture Forecasting," which began in September and will continue through August 2023, is funded by a nearly \$500,000 grant from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture, or NIFA. Kumar's co-principal investigators are Wonilun Lee of Yeshiva University in New York City, who oversees the big data portion of the research, and Imtiaz Rangwala of the University of Colorado, Boulder.

This research is one of 12 projects funded by NIFA grants totaling more than \$7 million that will initiate research on big data analytics, machine learning, artificial intelligence and other cyberinformatics — technology that is now considered necessary to keep the nation's agriculture on the leading edge of food and agricultural production.

The multidisciplinary approach will combine the expertise of earth system modeling, big-data technology and drought monitoring and forecasting. The objectives are to develop new algorithms for integrating soil moisture data from different sources, building a scalable big data infrastructure and deep learning analytics platform for real-time interactive soil moisture forecast applications and developing new or improved forecast attributes at the interface of human technology and data interactions.

"The project aims to provide an improved soil moisture forecast that is calibrated using user-provided soil moisture measurements and location information," Kumar said. "At the front end, the user can access the forecast using a mobile app that is supported by cloud-based computer power and software-defined storage technologies," Kumar said.

School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences Dean Janaki Alavalapati said Kumar and his team likely will reveal groundbreaking findings.



Auburn University faculty member Sanjiv Kumar in the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences is leading a research team to combine the use of big data, artificial intelligence and user interactions to build scalable big-data infrastructure and a deep learning analytics platform for real-time interactive soil moisture forecast applications. The project is funded by a grant from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

"The researchers' implementation of multiple disciplines — from farmers' observations to artificial intelligence to big data to study the measurement and forecasts of soil moisture — could lead to breakthroughs in this vital area of study within the next few years," Alavalapati

said. "This ambitious project is one more example of Auburn researchers stepping to the forefront of innovations with worldwide implications."



FEWL Academy continues to shape future leaders with newest cohort

The School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences has fostered leadership opportunities for outstanding students through the Forest, Environment, Wildlife, and Leadership, or FEWL, Academy since its establishment in 2019.

The purpose of the academy is to prepare students with leadership abilities and problem-solving skills for critical issues related to the management, utilization and stewardship of natural resources.

The school is proud to introduce the students of the 2021 FEWL Academy.

Current FEWL Academy members are Alex Booker, Emma Breda, Ashlyn Cowgill, Joseph Davis, Allie Foster, Bethany Foust, Madison McCown, Quinn Morrison, Brock Story, James Treadwell and Carlie Wilson.

During the two-semester course, students attend classroom lectures and interface with a range of private industry executives as well as local and nation-wide policymakers. The personal development program is co-instructed by Dean Janaki Alavalapati and Assistant Professor and Alabama Extension Specialist Adam Maggard, and both are optimistic about what lies ahead for the program.

“The future of the FEWL Academy is bright.

As an established and competitive education program centered on forestry, the environment and wildlife, we are positioned to supply skill-building and collaborative opportunities through experiential learning to a qualified, select group of students creating a new leadership force of natural resource professionals,” Alavalapati said.

The academy includes students from a range of majors offered at the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences as well as the Auburn University College of Agriculture.

“The diverse knowledge and skills of our students provide a prime environment for fostering leadership and collaboration, as each student is specialized within their field and can learn from one another to advance sustainable stewardship of natural resources for current and future generations,” Alavalapati said.

In the past, the FEWL Academy has visited both Montgomery and Washington, D.C. During their trip to the state capitol, students met with Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey and leaders of the Alabama Forestry Association and the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.



In Washington, D.C., students visited organizations and offices where they gained insight into the development of natural resource policy issues.

Though this year’s FEWL events may look a little different due to COVID-19 precautions, the program is still planning to visit the state capitol in the fall.

“At this time, the trip to Washington, D.C. is undecided as we are monitoring COVID-19 restrictions, but we are currently in the early stages of planning a fall visit to Montgomery. This semester, students have had the opportunity to interface with presidents, CEOs and decision makers from several forestry and natural resource companies and organizations, and from the university. They are also working on leadership projects that will continue into the fall,” Maggard said.

The FEWL academy does not meet over the summer to enable students to better focus on career-building activities such as internships and volunteer programs.

Auburn University alumnus Ed Sweeten, a leading authority on timberland acquisitions

“The diverse knowledge and skills of our students provide a prime environment for fostering leadership and collaboration, as each student is specialized within their field and can learn from one another to advance sustainable stewardship of natural resources for current and future generations.”

- Dean Janaki Alavalapati

and land sales in the southern United States with over 39 years of diversified forestry and real estate experience, helped create the FEWL Academy through his sponsorship of the program beginning in 2019.

“It is exciting to see the school grow in quality and continue to foster the future leaders of the forestry industry. The opportunity to give back to the school is very satisfying, especially through the FEWL Academy and its work to provide students with valuable leadership experience,” Sweeten said.

The school’s long-term goal is to create an endowment to support this program. Individuals or corporations interested in contributing to the endowment may contact the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences Development Office at 334-844-2791 or email [sfwsdev@auburn.edu](mailto:sfwsdev@auburn.edu).

To learn more about the individuals in the 2021 FEWL Academy class, review their student biographies on the main FEWL Academy webpage at [sfws.auburn.edu/fewl-academy/](http://sfws.auburn.edu/fewl-academy/).



Governor Kay Ivey visits Dixon Center

Gov. Kay Ivey joined the Alabama Forestry Commission’s Forestry Academy spring graduation ceremony at the Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center where 26 students graduated as the Class of 2021. She was joined by State Forester Rick Oates, Assistant State Forester William Brantley, Dean Janaki Alavalapati, as well as several other government representatives. The AFC established the original Forestry Academy in 1979, and it continued through 1994. Now, after 26 years, the academy has been reinstated. This first graduating class of the ‘new’ academy is composed of recently hired AFC employees from 20 counties across Alabama. These individuals have completed eight weeks of intensive classroom study and field exercises in forest protection, forest management and teamwork building at the Dixon Center.

Timber Products Inspection and CEO Ronnie Williams make major gifts in support of new deanship

Two of the leading backers of the new Emmett F. Thompson Deanship in the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences are Timber Products Inspection and that company’s CEO, Ronnie Williams, a 1974 forestry graduate who is known as an enthusiastic advocate and supporter of the Auburn University School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences.

The gift is a continuation of the generosity of both the company and Williams; both have made numerous contributions to the school through the years. Their generous gifts in support of the new Emmett F. Thompson deanship, the only such post in a forestry school in the Southeast, and one of only two in the nation, is a continuation of that support.

Ronnie Williams has served on the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences’ advisory board, the development campaign committee and the Forest Products Development Center board, in addition to being a loyal supporter of the school’s Forest Products Development Center, the Solon and Martha Dixon Building at the Dixon Forestry Education Center, and now, the Thompson Deanship.

The Atlanta-based company Timber Products Inspection, which began as a two-man operation in 1969, has grown to become the largest independent wood products inspection and testing agency in the country.

School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences Dean Janaki Alavalapati stressed the contributions from Williams and Timber Products Inspection will significantly bolster the new deanship initiative.

“Ronnie Williams and Timber Products Inspection are longtime, generous supporters of the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences,” Alavalapati said. “These major contributions will go far to establish the Emmett Thompson Deanship, which will elevate our already esteemed school to a top-tier level, and we are extremely grateful.”



Fishing crew, from left to right includes Glenn Glover, Dean Emeriti Richard Brinker, Jeff Brinker, Chuck Thompson, Dean Emeriti Emmett Thompson and Ronnie Williams

United by their enthusiasm for nature, Emmett Thompson and Ronnie Williams are longtime friends as well as fellow sportsmen. Along with a group of other enthusiasts, Williams and Thompson make annual trips to the United States-Canadian border for fishing expeditions.

In addition to remaining active in the numerous aspects of the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences, Ronnie Williams’ family members have Auburn connections: his wife, Patricia “Pat” Williams, is finishing a degree in Spanish at Auburn University, and his son, Jeremy — who is now vice president of finance at Timber Products Inspection — earned a degree in forestry from the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences in 2004.

Jeremy Williams said the family and the company have always been deeply committed

to the forest products industry and Auburn University.

“I can think of no better way of supporting the longevity of both of these causes than helping fund the Emmett Thompson Deanship at Auburn’s School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences,” Jeremy Williams said.

“Emmett Thompson has always been an outspoken proponent of the forest products curriculum, and this deanship will help cement his legacy at the school,” Jeremy Williams added. “It’s an honor for us to be able to assist in the funding of this deanship and a small token of appreciation for all that Emmett has done for the industry and the school.”

- Dean Janaki Alavalapati

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>SFWS Students Receive Top Awards</b><br><br>Please join us in congratulating the following award recipients:<br><br><b>Auburn Research Student Symposium</b><br><br>Top Graduate Oral Presentation Award, <b>Javier Hernandez Diaz</b> (Major Professor Maria Soledad Peresin)<br><br>Top Graduate Poster Presentation Award, <b>Yufei Nan</b> (Major Professor Maria Soledad Peresin)<br><br>3rd place in the University-wide Undergraduate Student Winners in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics: <b>Sarah Cain</b> (Advisor Steve Ditchkoff)<br><br>SFWS Undergraduate Student Winner: <b>Autumn Reynolds</b> (Major Professor Maria Soledad Peresin)<br><br><b>Graduate School Awards</b><br><br>Outstanding Master’s Students for 2020-21, <b>Jessica Colbaugh</b> (Major Professors Christopher Lepczyk and Robert Gitzen)<br><br>Outstanding Doctoral Students for 2020-21, <b>Diego Gomez Maldonado</b> (Major Professor Maria Soledad Peresin) | <br><br>Harry Merriwether Fellowship for 2021-22, <b>Maria Celeste Iglesias</b> (Major Professor Maria Soledad Peresin)<br><br><b>National Soil Science of America</b><br><br>Board of Directors Graduate Student Chair awarded to <b>Elizabeth Bradley</b> (Major Professor Graeme Lockaby)<br><br><b>Alabama Academy of Sciences</b><br><br>1st place Graduate Poster to <b>Elizabeth Bradley</b> (Major Professor Graeme Lockaby)<br><br><b>Sigma Xi National Student Research Conference</b><br><br>Top Poster Presentation to <b>Debit Datta</b> (Major Professor Lori Eckhardt), also accepted as a member of the 2020 Society of American Foresters (SAF) Diversity Scholars Program<br><br><b>Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences National Social Media Campaign Challenge</b><br><br>1st place Campaign, <b>Sabine Bailey</b> (Chapter Advisor Michelle Cole) |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|





Why Stumpage Prices are Low Despite Historic High Lumber Prices

Written by Adam Maggard and Daowei Zhang

For many forest products, there has been an increase in demand and prices are at historic highs. This is especially true for lumber prices. Beginning in the second quarter of 2020 and continuing into 2021, lumber prices have been on a roller coaster, reaching historic highs on multiple occasions. However, stumpage prices have not rebounded. These prices, especially sawtimber stumpage prices, continue to remain low. According to Timber Mart-South, southern pine sawtimber stumpage prices were on average \$23.35 per ton in 2020, compared to \$23.47 per ton in 2019. There are several factors that have led to this difference in responses between lumber and stumpage prices.

**Oversupply of Standing Timber**  
Over the last decade, dating back to the recession in 2008, many landowners opted to not harvest their timber because of poor prices from the housing market collapse. Also, with the help of Conservation Reserve Programs, tree planting over the last few decades has increased and stayed at a high level, the peak of which was in 1988. Interestingly, trees planted around 1988 just started to produce sawtimber after 2008 when timber markets collapsed. The combination of these factors resulted in a serious oversupply of standing timber, not only in Alabama, but across the South. The good news for landowners is that their forest lands are more productive than before.

**COVID-19 Effects on Markets**  
Going into the spring of 2020, the strong housing market of 2019 was continuing its pace. The strength of the housing market was driven by high demand for new housing starts, low mortgage interest rates and low unemployment. For most of the year, interest rates for 30-year home mortgages ranged on average between 3.2 and 3.5%. The average is now currently below 3.0%. At the beginning of 2020, the average lumber price in the United States was approximately \$402 per thousand



board feet (MBF). The average then increased to approximately \$457 MBF near the latter half of February.

Initially, COVID-19 affected lumber production and the overall capacity across the South. Lumber mill managers had to follow COVID-19 operating guidelines set by the CDC, such as social distancing and maximum persons in an area at one time. It was expected the housing market would weaken and the demand for lumber would decrease as a result of a slowed economy. During the month of March, lumber prices steadily declined and bottomed out in the beginning of April at approximately \$264 per MBF. Prices started to slowly rise through May and the first part of June, reaching approximately \$350 per MBF. Prices then increased exponentially through the summer and fall and have continued this trend for much of the first few months of 2021. The increase in lumber prices was caused by the following short-term factors all merging at the same time:

- Strong reductions in lumber production and capacity as a result of COVID-19 and the resulting safety guidelines
- The real-time demand growth from home renovations

- Persistent housing markets, fueled by low mortgage rates

These short-term factors were also met with one long-run factor. Sawmills had not expanded or even reduced their production capacity when lumber prices were down after 2008.

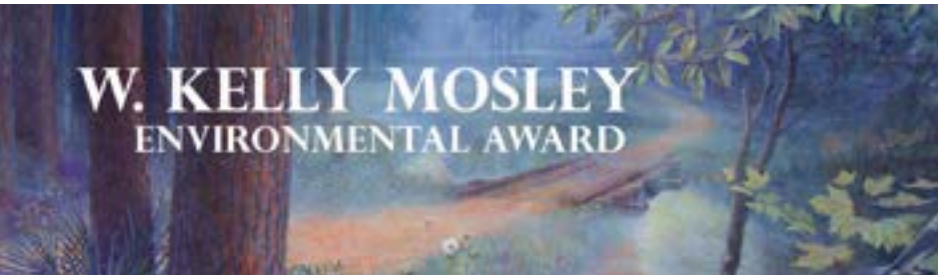
All of these factors ultimately paved the way to a shortage in lumber and an increase in price. During the second quarter of 2020, home renovation projects soared as more people were stuck at home. Also, housing starts accelerated. Wholesalers and retailers were not expecting such an increase in the demand for lumber and inventories were planned accordingly. As a result, softwood lumber inventories were depleted and the reduction in lumber production and capacity of mills magnified the situation.

**Conclusion**  
The combination of these factors resulted in a tremendous supply gap in the lumber market. By the second week of September in 2020, lumber prices were nearing a new record high at approximately \$989 per MBF. Throughout the remainder of much of 2020, lumber prices fell drastically as a result of increasing capacity

of returning to mills and the supply of lumber entering the market.

Lumber production and consumption are still behind 2019 values, as is the pace of new home builds. Therefore, the issue appears to be more a result of a restraint on the supply of lumber rather than expanding market demand. For the start of 2021, lumber prices again increased to new historic highs, rising above \$1,000 per MBF at the end of February and beginning of March. This is likely a result of limited capacity of mills during the winter months as they do repairs and updates, paired with a continual strong demand for lumber.

While lumber prices could be jumpy and may remain high for the remainder of 2021, we have seen some homeowners deciding to postpone their renovation or new home activities as lumber prices are currently too high. As for timber prices, it is unlikely to see a substantial improvement in the short-run because it is a buyer's market and sawmills do not have to pay more than they have to pay. It may take a while before we see increasing prices. Until then, the industry may continue to see the usual decoupling of lumber and timber prices that has been seen since the spring of 2020.



Submit a nomination for the Mosley Environmental Achievement Award in Forestry, Wildlife, and Related Resources

The W. Kelly Mosley Environmental Awards Program are accepting nominations for the Mosley Environmental Achievement Award in Forestry, Wildlife and Related Resources. The fundamental mission of the Mosley Environmental Achievement Award is to identify and reward "unsung heroes" who have voluntarily contributed significantly to the wise stewardship of Alabama's natural resources. Almost anyone may be eligible – youth, adults, practitioners, professionals, technicians, individual citizens and groups – if their voluntary contributions have resulted in the wiser use of our natural resources and the betterment of our communities. Award recipients are identified by the steering and selection committee composed of leaders of Alabama natural resource institutions.

Although nominations for the Mosley Environmental Achievement Awards may be submitted any time of year, the deadline for this year's spring steering committee meeting was April 1, 2021, while the deadline for the fall meeting is Aug. 15, 2021. Award recipients receive a \$500 honorarium, a framed certificate of recognition and a framed limited-edition reproduction of a commissioned painting. Multiple award recipients may be approved each year by the steering and selection committee (i.e., not restricted to only one recipient per year). Nominators will also receive the same reproduction of the commissioned painting should their submission be successful.

For more information about the W. Kelly Mosley Environmental Awards Program, or to submit a nomination online, please visit the new website at [sfws.auburn.edu/wk-mosley-environmental-award/](https://sfws.auburn.edu/wk-mosley-environmental-award/).

If you have any questions regarding nomination submissions, please contact Executive Secretary Mark Smith by phone at 334-844-8099 or email [mds0007@auburn.edu](mailto:mds0007@auburn.edu).



**Alabama Natural Resources Council presents award to Chilton Natural Resources Council**  
On behalf of the Chilton Natural Resources Council, Brian Smith (AFC) and Gay West (ACES) accepted the 2020 Outstanding County Planning Committee Award at their Arbor Day Tree Giveaway in Clanton, Alabama. The award recognizes the Chilton Natural Resources Council for their excellent work in promoting and conducting programs focused on the stewardship of Alabama natural resources.

School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences names 2020 Alumnus of the Year

Joe Roberson has been named Auburn University's School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences Outstanding Alumnus for 2020.

A 1988 graduate in the forest engineering program, Roberson has been a forest engineer and wood settlement coordinator for 20 years at WestRock, one of the world's largest packaging and paper companies. The company, headquartered in Atlanta, has made a substantial commitment to sustainability.

Before that, Roberson worked for 13 years as a geographic information systems, or GIS, forester at Mead Corporation. Combined with his studies at the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences, or SFWS, he has cultivated decades of expertise in GIS and the forest products industry.

"It's always an honor to be recognized by your peers, especially for doing something you love," Roberson said of receiving this honor. "I love travel, forestry, Auburn, family and friends. Being active with SFWS alumni combines all of these."

"I'm glad to be a part of the SFWS family and try to give back as much as possible, not just money, but with my time. As an essential worker in an essential industry, I am fully vaccinated against COVID-19 and ready to travel with Auburn Baseball, Auburn Football and the War Eagle Travelers."

Currently, Roberson chairs both the Alabama Implementation committee and the Georgia Loggers Educational committee of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative. He is also active in the Alabama Forestry Association and its educational activities with high school teachers and students.

He is also active in the SFWS advisory committee, the Society of American Foresters, the Alabama Forestry Association and the Georgia Forestry Association.

Don Heath, fellow SFWS alumnus and retired Regions senior vice president of natural resources and real estate, nominated Roberson for the honor.

"I have had the privilege of working with Joe on the SFWS leadership and development teams and the advisory council," Heath said. "I feel I know Joe well and his commitment to this

school is demonstrated by the generosity of his time and resources. Joe truly embodies the Auburn spirit."

Dean Janaki Alavalapati said Roberson's impact in forestry is impressive, both professionally and through his outreach initiatives.

"Joe has taken his impressive skills and knowledge of forestry and GIS and shared them not only with his colleagues but with the community at large, assuming a vital role in educating and fostering public interest about forestry," Alavalapati said.

For Roberson, forestry is not just his profession, but also his passion.

"I always take offense when foresters advise students looking at forestry or wildlife to 'pick something else, where you can make money.' I always jump in and say, 'Earning a comfortable salary and loving what you do every day is more important than being rich.' I am rich in experiences and friends.

"Our love of nature binds all natural resource professionals. Our love of Auburn binds all Auburn graduates," Roberson said. "But our love of both and our love of mankind binds our SFWS family."



Tiger Giving Day success benefits students and community

Written by Avy Elmora

Auburn University hosted its annual Tiger Giving Day on Feb. 24, 2021. Tiger Giving Day is a 24-hour university-wide crowd funding initiative. During this social media campaign, more than 30 diverse projects from Auburn University are showcased. This year, the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences celebrates the funding of three exciting projects: raising funds for the Auburn University chapter of Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences, or MANRRS, planting a sustainable landscape at the Kreher Preserve and Nature Center and the granting of industry-standard equipment to geospatial and forestry programs.

The Support Minority Students in Natural Resources and Agriculture campaign raised \$10,000, representing 125% of its total goal. MANRRS is a national organization of students and professionals of all racial and ethnic groups who take part in agriculture and natural resource-related careers. The Auburn chapter is a small group that wants to do big things. With this funding, MANRRS will be better equipped to recruit others to build membership, participate in new and innovative educational programs and initiatives, and refine members' skill sets to stand out through career development conferences and mentorship programs.

The campaign for planting a new sustainable landscape in the Kreher Preserve and Nature Center, or KPNC, raised \$11,730, representing 161% of its total goal.

The KPNC's new environmental education building, currently in the design phase, will be constructed from cross-laminated timber, showcasing sustainable construction and design, and the intent is for the landscape to maintain the same standard. This new landscape will include three main features: the nature preschool courtyard will serve as an interactive outdoor learning space for Woodland Wonders students, a rain garden that will mitigate run off while also creating a natural habit for native plants and wildlife and welcoming landscape frontage for the building's entrance that will highlight the beautiful and unique native plants of Alabama to encourage connection with the local environment.

These outdoor gardens will be a critical part of the building's purpose and engage and



Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences, or MANRRS, is a national organization of students and professionals of all racial and ethnic groups who take part in agriculture and natural resource-related careers. The Support Minority Students in Natural Resources and Agriculture campaign raised \$10,000, representing 125% of its total goal.

inspire visitors of all ages on the message of sustainability and environmental awareness, and the beauty of these finished gardens will appeal to all.

A total of \$39,581 was raised for updating industry-standard technology for the geospatial and forestry programs, which represented 257% of the campaign's goal.

Each year, students in Auburn University's School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences take part in summer practicum, an immersive experience that takes them out of the classroom and into the outdoors at the Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center near Andalusia, Alabama. Forestry majors participate for eight weeks between their sophomore and junior years — living and working at the Dixon Center and taking courses that provide hands-on learning and field skills necessary for their chosen careers.

Understanding surveying is a foundational part of a forestry student's education, and with the funds raised, the school will be able to replace outdated, unreliable and cumbersome theodolites and tapes with four new total stations. Total stations are instruments used in modern surveying and operate with a

"These three projects will bring a renewed enthusiasm to students, faculty and stakeholders as the school expands through the uplifting of minority leadership through MANRRS, the increase of interactive communal spaces in the KPNC and the improvements in instruments used in the field by geospatial and forestry students."

- Dean Janaki Alavalapati

combination of electronic distance measuring devices and software running through a laptop or electronic data collector. Instead of the campaign goal of obtaining four total stations, geospatial and forestry students will now have access to 10 total stations thanks to generous donors.

"We thank all of our project donors for making this year's Tiger Giving Day a huge success," said the school's Director of Development Heather Crozier.

"These three projects will bring a renewed enthusiasm to students, faculty and

stakeholders as the school expands through the uplifting of minority leadership through MANRRS, the increase of interactive communal spaces in the KPNC and the improvements in instruments used in the field by geospatial and forestry students," said Janaki Alavalapati, dean of the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences.



SPOTLIGHT on alumni

Written by Avy Elmore



ERIC GEE, '94

Eric Gee, a 1994 forestry graduate, is the new executive director of the Southern Forest Products Association, or SFPA, which represents Southern Pine products and services around the globe. As executive director, Gee will direct domestic and international product promotion programs and the Forest Products Machinery & Equipment Exposition, the longest running industry-sponsored trade show of the forest products industry, which has met every two years since 1950.

Gee began his wood industry career in Jackson, Mississippi, with James M. Vardaman & Company where he worked as a consulting forester. Gee joined SFPA in 1997, serving in multiple capacities including marketing, government and environmental affairs. Most recently, for the past two years Eric has served the association as deputy director.

**Why did you choose to attend Auburn?**  
“I chose to attend Auburn after applying to two other universities for their engineering programs, and I was ecstatic to be an Auburn student. I knew about the school because of a personal connection through my godparents, Kyle and Pallie Butler. They are both Auburn University alumni, and I admired the passion and spirit that they had for Auburn and wanted the same for my college experience.”

**What led you to choose your major?**  
“After learning that I would be unable to continue my family's tradition of military service and become a fourth-generation service member due to my eyesight, I chose civil engineering as my Plan B because the high school I attended in New York City concentrated on preparing students for engineering careers. I started out in Auburn's pre-civil engineering program, but between differential equations and fluid dynamics, it became apparent that a career that required those courses was not for me. As an Eagle Scout and one who loved the outdoors, my parents suggested I check out the School of Forestry.”

**How did SFWS prepare you for your career?**  
“Auburn provided me with the core knowledge and solid understanding of forestry and silviculture principles. Even 27 years later, it is information I use every day, especially when communicating how the lumber we produce comes from abundant, sustainable forests.”

**What is your current position at the SFPA, and what are your major responsibilities?**  
“As the executive director of SFPA, I'm responsible for directing the domestic and international product promotion programs. The SFPA receives nearly \$1,000,000 in grant funding from the USDA Foreign Agricultural Service, with which we use to promote Southern Pine lumber throughout the world. I also direct and produce the Forest Products Machinery & Equipment Exposition, which provides industry professionals a place to gather and engage with the latest technology and services used to produce lumber products. Our next event is scheduled for Aug. 11-13, 2021 at the Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta.”

**Why is staying involved and in touch with SFWS valuable to you?**  
“Because so many instructors invested in my education and helped me get where I am today in the industry. I feel it is important to give these same opportunities to the next generation of foresters by staying involved with the school and its constituents.”

**What is your favorite memory from your time at SFWS? Was there a professor or faculty member who had a great influence/ impact on you during your time in the school?**  
“Summers spent at the Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center, first as a student and then as a student teaching assistant the following year, were

particularly unforgettable. I feel the SDFEC's history and majesty help connect students to the industry. While many professors had a positive impact on me, two stand out: Rhett Johnson, for his laid-back, even-keeled demeanor, and Dr. Warren Flick, for his ability to convey the nuanced details of a detailed course like environmental law in an engaging manner.”

**What is your favorite thing about being an SFWS alumnus?**  
“My favorite thing about being an SFWS alumnus is the pride I feel that I am part of a tradition of excellence. Auburn's School of Forestry and Wildlife Science's reputation gives me instant credibility wherever I go, and the practical knowledge instilled in me in those formative years has proven to be invaluable.”

**Do you have any advice for students entering the work force right now?**  
“Keep an open mind. Recognize the forest products industry offers so much more than just field work. Learn all you can about developing your leadership and interpersonal skills, because these skills, combined with the school's foundational knowledge, can get you where you want to go.”

For more detailed information on Eric Gee's career and experience with the SFWS, visit [sfws.auburn.edu/category/development/](https://sfws.auburn.edu/category/development/).



Woodlands and Wildlife Society Members

Learn more about the Woodlands and Wildlife Society online at [sfws.auburn.edu/woodlands-and-wildlife-society](https://sfws.auburn.edu/woodlands-and-wildlife-society).



African Safari Club of Florida  
Conservation Fund, Inc.  
Alabama Ag Credit, FLCA  
Alabama Chapter ACF  
Alabama Conservation & Natural Resources Foundation, Inc.  
Alabama Forestry Association  
Alabama Forestry Foundation  
Alabama Forests Forever Foundation  
Alabama TREASURE Forest Association  
Alabama Wildlife Federation, Inc.  
Dr. Brenda Maudine Allen  
Mr. and Mrs. W. Gordon Armistead Jr.  
Dr. Orville Euing Bach, Jr. '69  
Beck's Turf, Inc.  
Mr. and Mrs. Donald Jeffrey Bentley  
Dr. and Mrs. Henry Cooper Black III  
Mr. Chris Bodine  
Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Lewis Boutwell  
Ms. Starr Lynn Boykin  
Dr. and Mrs. Richard Brinker  
Dr. John Clifford Brown  
Mr. and Mrs. Alan P. Bruce  
Burgin Timberland Management, LLC  
Mr. and Mrs. Eugene B. Butler  
Mr. and Mrs. William Byrd  
Campbell Global  
Canfor Southern Pine, Inc.  
Mr. and Mrs. David Frank Carroll  
Mr. and Mrs. Charles Edward Carter III  
Ms. Anne Lynn Casey  
Charles Barkley Foundation  
Mr. and Mrs. Charlie Chitty  
Mrs. Michelle Cole '10  
Mr. & Mrs. Bryan Wayne Cole '91  
Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham  
Mr. and Mrs. David Richard Conway, Jr.  
Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Aaron Crawford  
Ms. Mary Virginia Crisp  
Mrs. Heather Vann Crozier  
CSP Technologies, Inc.  
Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Day  
Delta Waterfowl Foundation  
Drummond Company, Inc.  
Ducks Unlimited, Inc.  
EBSCO Industries, Inc.  
Exum Associates, Inc.  
F & W Forestry Service, Inc.  
F. Allen & Louise K. Turner Charitable Foundation  
Dr. and Mrs. Thomas W. Fell, Jr.  
Five Star Plantation  
Mr. Steve Forehand '78

Forest Investment Associates LP  
CDR and Mrs. William August Freise  
Garden Club of Alabama, Inc.  
Mr. and Mrs. J. Robert Gardner  
Dr. and Mrs. G. Edward Gibson, Jr.  
Mr. and Mrs. David Benjamin Giles  
Dr. and Mrs. Glenn Ray Glover  
Mr. George Chandler Graham  
Dr. George Graves and Dr. Allison Thompson-Graves  
Mr. and Mrs. William M. Green  
Growth Products  
Mr. Glenn Harold Guthrie '62  
Dr. and Mrs. John E. Hackman  
Mr. and Mrs. Richard W. Hall  
Hancock Forest Management  
Mr. and Mrs. John Anderson Harp  
Mr. and Mrs. John Patrick Harrigan  
Mr. and Mrs. William Dwight Harrigan III  
Mr. Rodney M. Havens '80  
Mr. and Mrs. James Robert Heath  
Mr. and Mrs. David Brian Helm  
Mr. and Mrs. Arthur C. Herndon II  
Mr. and Mrs. William Herring  
High Adventure Company  
Mr. and Mrs. William Webster Hindman  
Mr. and Mrs. Richard Franklin Hoerlein  
Mrs. Margaret Elaine Holler  
Mrs. Nicole Holler and Mr. Luiz Garzon  
Dr. Mary A. Hooten and Mr. William R. Hooten  
Mr. David E. Housel and Mrs. Susan M. Housel  
Dr. and Mrs. David Hyink  
Industree Timber, Inc.  
Inventive Outdoors, LLC  
Ms. Michelle A. Isenberg  
Jasper Lumber Company  
Mr. and Mrs. Alan H. Jaye  
Mr. and Mrs. Rhett Eugene Johnson, Jr.  
Mrs. Kay H. Jones and Mr. Burke C. Jones  
Mrs. Belinda Jane Jones  
Dr. Robert H. Jones and Dr. Jeryl C. Jones  
Dr. Crystal A. Kelley  
Mr. and Mrs. Leo Michael Kelly  
Mr. and Mrs. James Jackson King, Jr.  
Dr. Emily B. Kling  
Kykenkee, Inc.  
Mr. Tom Lamberth '75  
Land O'Lakes, Inc.  
Mr. and Mrs. John Harry Lange III  
Mr. Hugh Cannon Lawley

Mr. and Mrs. Arthur M. Leadingham, Jr.  
Mr. and Mrs. Jackson Keith Lee  
Mr. and Mrs. Curt W. LeVan  
Mrs. Jenny Lightfoot  
Mr. and Mrs. John Lindley  
Mr. Dana Carl Little  
Ms. Amanda R. Littrell and Dr. Mark Lowe  
Mr. and Mrs. Henry Stover Long, Jr.  
MAJ Brandon James Loomis  
Louisiana-Pacific Corporation  
Mr. and Mrs. James Robert Lowe  
Ms. Hebe Lutz  
Mrs. Alice G. Mallory  
Dr. Frank Dwayne Marcum  
Mr. and Mrs. James William Martin  
Mr. and Mrs. Hooper Matthews III  
Mr. and Mrs. Alexander McCall  
Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Wilkinson  
McNeel III  
Media 360, LLC  
Mr. Boyd W. Megginson Jr. '89  
Mr. and Mrs. Lovick Pierce Miller  
Dr. Vikki Hart Miller and Mr. Todd Winfield Miller  
Mr. and Mrs. Russell Cary Miller  
Mr. Phearthur Moore  
Mr. and Mrs. Richard Moore  
Mr. Emory W. Mosley Jr.  
Mr. & Mrs. Dan Moultrie  
NAVCO Foundation  
Mr. and Mrs. Kenwood Nichols  
Norbord Alabama Inc.  
Mr. and Mrs. Daniel P. Norman  
Mr. and Mrs. Dennis Edward Norton  
Oser Forestry Services  
Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Lewis Oser  
Mr. and Mrs. G. Wayne Pearce  
Mrs. Sue Atchison Pearson '49  
Mr. & Mrs. Tim Peters  
Dr. and Mrs. Brent Andrew Ponce  
PRADCO Outdoor Brands  
PrintPack  
Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Dean Pylant III  
Resource Management Service  
RL Investment Property LLC  
Mr. Joe Dalton Roberson  
Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Earl Roberts  
Mr. and Mrs. Richard Marion Rogers  
Mr. and Mrs. Ben M. Rooke, Jr.  
Mr. and Mrs. Darryl Conrad Rosser  
Russell Lands, Inc.  
Safari Club International Houston  
Mr. and Mrs. Kevin Brian Savoy

Mr. and Mrs. Paul Edward Schrantz  
Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Schwarzauser  
Mr. and Mrs. John Sechrist  
Ms. Emily S. Sexton  
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Preston Sharp  
Mr. and Mrs. Ben Simms  
Sing Properties, LLC  
Mr. and Mrs. Austin Singleton  
Dr. Wayne H. Smith and Dr. Mitzi C. Austin  
Mr. and Mrs. Carl Franklin Southern  
Stallworth Land Company  
Stella-Jones Corporation  
Mr. Steven W. Stewart  
Mr. H. Christoph Stuhlinger '80  
Mr. Robert L. Sutton  
Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Lewis Sweeten  
Mr. Charles M. Tarver  
Mr. and Mrs. Charles L. Taylor  
Mr. and Mrs. Robert W. Taylor  
Team Ag Marketing, LLC  
Tensaw Land & Timber Company, Inc.  
Mr. William R. Terry  
The Alabama Chapter of Safari Club International  
The Solon and Martha Dixon Foundation  
Mr. and Mrs. Charles Emmett Thompson  
Dr. and Mrs. Emmett F. Thompson  
Timber Products Inspection, Inc.  
Mr. Oscar G. Traczewitz II  
Mr. and Mrs. Noll A. Van Cleave, Jr.  
Mr. and Mrs. John Edward Vick  
Mr. Bennie F. Vinson, Jr. '74  
Mr. and Mrs. James Wadsworth  
Mr. and Mrs. L. Frank Walburn  
Mr. and Mrs. Forrest Walker  
Dr. and Mrs. William Walley  
Mr. and Mrs. Marc Ashley Walley  
Mr. and Mrs. Ron Watson  
WestRock  
Weyerhaeuser  
Mr. and Mrs. Marvin Guy Whitley, Jr.  
Mr. and Mrs. John C. Wild  
Willann, LLC  
Mr. and Mrs. Ronald Williams  
Mr. Larry D. Williamson  
Ms. Stephanie Wilson  
Mrs. Cherie Leist Woodard '82  
LTC and Mrs. Leonard S. Woody, Jr.  
Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth W. Wright  
Ziebach & Webb Timber Company  
Mr. and Mrs. Elmo Ziebach  
Mr. and Mrs. Elmo Douglas Ziebach, Jr.



Compass Circle Members

Learn more about Compass Circle online at [sfws.auburn.edu/compass-circle](https://sfws.auburn.edu/compass-circle).

Mr. Tyler D. Baxter '17  
Mr. Jameson S. Clark '10  
Mr. Samuel C. Colville '18  
Mr. Chase Lee Dixon '11  
Mr. Eric Lee Dooley '18  
Mr. Adam T. Frame '09  
Mr. William M. Green '14  
Mr. William Noll Harp '12  
Mr. George Stephenson Hazard III '08  
Mr. Michael W. Heatherly '08  
Mr. Marshall B. Herron '18  
Mr. Kristopher Watson Lewis '10  
Mrs. Jenny Marie Lightfoot '10  
Mr. William Thomas Liner '14  
MAJ Brandon James Loomis '16  
Mr. Eddie L. Love '15  
Mr. and Mrs. Russell Cary Miller '11  
Mr. William P. Neighbors '06  
Mr. Sebastian Drake Rodriguez '15  
Mr. and Mrs. Tyler D. Sibley '12  
Mr. James Benjamin Simms '11  
Mr. Charlie Smith '12  
Mr. Charles L. Taylor '06  
Mr. Kenneth Brian Watts '12  
Mrs. Ashley Sanders Winfree '06  
Dr. Xiaofeng Xu '10



To learn more about the benefits of Compass Circle membership and the flexible ways to join, please visit [sfws.auburn.edu/compass-circle/](https://sfws.auburn.edu/compass-circle/).