College of Forestry, Wildlife & Environment

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CFWE NEWS • Summer 2023
Working with Nature for Society’s Well Being

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Fall Commencement 12/8

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Gaining valuable hands-on learning at the Dixon Center
Celebrating our summer commencement
Giving students first campus experience at Camp War Eagle

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Auburn alumni and forestry executive Marc Walley serves as the summer 2023 commencement speaker

Marc Walley, president and chief executive officer of Forest Investment Associates (FIA), delivered the keynote address to Auburn University's 1,400+ summer graduates during the institution’s two commencement ceremonies.

“I am delighted to welcome Marc back to Auburn as our summer commencement speaker,” said Auburn University President Christopher B. Roberts prior to the ceremony. "In addition to being an accomplished leader in the forest investment industry, Marc represents the ideas that define an Auburn education, including hard work, a commitment to excellence and raising the bar for the next generation. I am confident he will inspire our graduates to achieve greatness in their endeavors.”

After graduating from Auburn in 1985, Walley joined Scott Paper Company in Mobile, where he spent 15 years supporting its timberland management and strategic operations. Upon joining FIA in 2005, Walley worked alongside a team of investors and industry experts to acquire and expand the company’s portfolio and was eventually appointed to executive vice president and director of timberland management in 2008. He was named president and chairman of the Executive and Investment Committees in 2016. As president and CEO, he is a member of FIA’s Board of Directors.

Walley currently serves as a member of the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment Advisory Council and the Strategic and Tactical Assessment Resource Committee. In addition to chairing the college’s campaign leadership team during the $500 million capital campaign, Walley was awarded the Outstanding Alumni Award in 2017.

“I’m most pleased to share with you our feature story about the gift of Crooked Oaks, Coach Pet Dye’s 18th-acre homestead. Crooked Oaks will provide a venue for majors that have not previously had access to a field practice experience and continue our long tradition of providing high quality experiential learning opportunities for our students. Crooked Oaks is also a special event venue available to the Auburn Family and beyond. We hope you’ll enjoy this story about what it meant to him and how so many are now working to keep his legacy and vision for the property alive.

Among our exceptional faculty, I’d like to especially note the work of Christopher Lepczyk, who will be the new interim director of the Honors College, and Will Gulsby, who is taking nature-based education to the masses with his award-winning “Wild Turkey Science” podcast. The transformative work of Sandie Petrun in the newly awarded NSF Engine grants aim to “Green the Southeast” with a collaborative, multi-disciplinary effort to bolster the sustainability of our region that will benefit industry, researchers, farmers and consumers.

Finally, I want to draw your attention to the new scholarships established by two forest industry giants. As we look for ways to attract and support a diverse student population, these scholarships will enhance access to an Auburn education for first generation, rural and underserved students. Thank you for your support in our efforts to elevate our students’ academic experiences, perform innovative research to advance our understanding of the world, and sustain bioeconomy in our region that will benefit society into the future.

“Anyone who knows me knows I am proud of my Auburn family and my Auburn education. While I have been personally and professionally blessed, speaking to Auburn’s graduates and sharing insights from my journey is the honor of a lifetime.”

— Mark Walley

Gulsby awarded Alabama Wildlife Federation Governor’s Conservation Achievement Award

Lori Eckhardt, a professor of integrated forest policy and economics and director of the Forest Health Cooperative, has been selected as chair-elect of the Auburn University Forestry, Wildlife and Environment Advisory Council. The University Senate consists of faculty members and representatives from non-academic units with the purpose of advising the university’s president on matters concerning academic policies as well as issues that affect the university community at large.

Eckhardt joined Auburn University in 2005 as an assistant research professor and moved to a tenure-track position after seven years. She has an outstanding record of service to the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment and to the university with terms on numerous committees, often as chair.

“I am honored to be chosen as chair-elect,” Eckhardt said. “I value service and believe it is important to give back to the community that continues to inspire me and my career.”

Eckhardt’s priorities will be collaboration and openness between Senate, faculty and administrators, diversity and inclusion, and gender equity, and the support of non-tenure-track faculty. She will serve one term as chair-elect and assume new duties as the chair of the University Senate in 2024.

“Eckhardt is dedicated to her role and to the continued success of the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment,” said Dean R. R. Alavaipatil. “I welcome her leadership as we continue our mission to be a leader in teaching, research and service.”

Contact Us

The CFWE newsletter is distributed to alumni and friends of the college. Inquiries and suggestions concerning the newsletter should be directed to the college’s Office of Communications and Marketing at the address below:

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Giving

Inquiries may also be made to Heath Crouse via email at vanessa@auburn.edu or by phone at 334-844-4814.

Auburn University is an equal opportunity educational institution/employer. Founded by the CWFE Office of Communications and Marketing.

Presenting the awards were Conservation Commissioner Chrisilder Blankenship, AWF President Steve Forehand, and Natalie Kious with PowerSouth Energy and Susan Comensky with Alabama Power Company. (AWF) in conjunction with the University of Florida, were associate professor of wildlife and environment at Auburn’s Honors College.

Following an internal search, Christopher A. Lepczyk, Alumni Professor in the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment, was named interim director of Auburn’s Honors College.

As director, Lepczyk will oversee the college’s central programs that provide specially designed learning experiences, resources and activities that are targeted for high-achieving students until a permanent director is identified to replace Tiffany Sippol, who transitioned from the university earlier this summer.

A well-regarded instructor and interdisciplinary scholar in ecology, Lepczyk brings extensive experience to the position of interim director, including teaching in the honors programs at both Auburn and the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. During his time in Hawai‘i, Lepczyk served as an honors faculty cohort member, where he worked to strengthen the institution’s emphasis on transformative educational experiences and civic engagement opportunities to foster more meaningful student learning experiences. In addition to his experiences in Auburn’s honors programs, Lepczyk is an advocate for undergraduate education in the CFWE through his efforts to provide opportunities for students to participate in independent research, expedited field training and innovative coursework. As a result of his active involvement with undergraduate students at both institutions, Lepczyk has been recognized with numerous teaching and mentorship awards, including Auburn’s Gerald and Emily Leitschuck Endowed Presidential Award for Excellence in Teaching and the Harry Murphy Award for Excellence in Research.

“In addition to being a respected student-focused educator, scholar and colleague, Dr. Lepczyk works tirelessly to provide opportunities of experience and service to the role of interim director,” said Associate Provost Norman Gobin. “I am confident he will lead the Honors College during this important time of transition and continue the college’s efforts to promote academic opportunities and community engagement.”

To read more about Lepczyk, visit auburn.edu.

“A interim director, I look forward to contributing my collective experiences and knowledge to both Auburn’s Honors College community, particularly during an interim period where stability and support are critical to its continued success.”

— Christopher Lepczyk

will Gulsby, associate professor of wildlife ecology and management in the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment at Auburn University, and Marcus Lashley, associate professor of wildlife ecology and conservation at the University of Florida, were jointly awarded the Conservation Communicator of the Year Award during the 2023 Alabama Wildlife Federation Governor’s Conservation Achievement Awards banquet for their podcast “Wild Turkey Science.”

The Alabama Wildlife Federation (AWF), in conjunction with Alabama Power Company and PowerSouth Energy, co-sponsored the event which took place on Friday, August 4, at the Marriott Legends at Capitol Hill in Prattville. Governor Kay Ivey commended the awardees through an exclusive congratulatory video prepared for the occasion.

Gulsby and Lashley, researchers and turkey hunting enthusiasts, teamed up early this year to develop their podcast. “Wild Turkey Science” endeavors to provide impartial, data-supported insights regarding the ecology and management of wild turkeys. Gulsby and Lashley routinely involve experts engaged in wild turkey research in their discussion, allowing them to articulate their discoveries authentically—a refreshing method for landowners, land managers and turkey hunters.

“It’s been a little over a year since we launched our show, a partner on what was originally his vision,” Gulsby said. “We decided then that we would do our best to share the science on wild turkeys without bias, even if it meant we’d face criticism. There’s much work left to be done, but it’s so nice to take a moment to celebrate this award and the feeling of validation that it brings.”

Since its debut in January, Gulsby and Lashley have crafted 39 episodes of the podcast, amassing over 200,000 downloads. “Wild Turkey Science” is the highest rated podcast on wild turkey subject matter and spent time as the #3 podcast in the science category rankings on Apple Podcasts.

“Wild Turkey Science” serves as an outlet for new and extended research initiatives positioned to advance the understanding of wild turkeys, their management and conservation, as well as the work of those populations for the benefit of future generations.

“Receiving this award demonstrates Dr. Gulsby’s exceptional dedication to conservation research. His work on the podcast ‘Wild Turkey Science’ showcases his skill as a researcher and instructor, actively contributing novel insights to the field of wildlife conservation.”

— Dean Alavaipatil

Ally Coben, a CFWE wildlife ecology and management student, was also recognized for her dedication to the Alabama Wildlife Conservationist of the Year.
Academics & Learning

CFWE FEWL Academy members meet leaders and policymakers in Washington, D.C.

Recently the Forests, Environment, and Wildlife Leadership (FEWL) Academy within the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment visited Washington, D.C. The visit provided opportunities for students to interact with policymakers and natural resource organizations, allowing them to gain firsthand insights from leaders involved in shaping natural resource policy in the United States. Faculty advisors Dean Janaki Alavalapati and associate professor Adam Maggard accompanied the students and facilitated discussions with the representatives.

While on the trip, the students enjoyed a private tour of the Capitol, led by Joseph Rosenberg from the Office of Congressman Gus M. Bilirakis (Florida). They also engaged with Andrea Weeks, associate deputy chief of the U.S. Forest Service, and visited the United States Geological Survey, or USGS. During this visit, they had a direct meeting with John D. Thompson, deputy chief of the USGS Cooperative Research Units in the Ecosystems Mission Area. Later at the Auburn University Office of Federal Relations, they were welcomed by Andrew Newton, the director of federal relations.

They also engaged in a lunch meeting with David Tenny, who serves as the president and CEO of the National Alliance of Forest Owners, or NAFO, and Terry Baker, CEO of the Society of American Foresters. Afterward, Newton guided them on a tour of the D.C.-based Auburn University facility. In addition, they held meetings with personnel from several governmental offices, including Office Administrator Kyle Nichols of the Department of State, John Henry Woods, legislative correspondent for the Office of Senator Doug Jones, Emily McBride, legislative assistant for the Office of Senator Tommy Tuberville and Will Stiers, legislative assistant for the Office of Congressman Mo Brooks.

Members of the academy also spoke with Anne Abt and Kate Macken from the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, who are integral members of the Office of the Conservation and Wildlife.

“Experiential learning opportunities such as this play a significant role in enhancing students’ personal development and leadership skills. It was a fantastic experience!”

– Adam Maggard

While on the trip, the FEWL Academy students were able to partake in a private tour of the Capitol Building.

CFWE hosts Coastal Zone Management course at Dauphin Island Sea Lab

Christopher Anderson, a professor of coastal wetland ecology, in the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment, led a two-week Coastal Zone Management course this May at the Dauphin Island Sea Lab. The course provided students with a multi-disciplinary, experiential learning opportunity at the state’s primary marine research and education facility. The Coastal Zone Management course drew 16 upper-level, undergraduate students for a comprehensive review of coastal environments and the challenge of protecting these areas and their natural resources. The course, a requirement for CFWE’s recently launched Coastal Management minor, drew approximately half its students from Auburn University, with the rest hailing from other universities across Alabama.

During the course, students visited field sites and engaged with the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment managers and agencies who acted as guest speakers and field tour leaders and shared their professional expertise. For instance, coastal wetland scientists Mary Kate Brown and Rebekah Farmer from The Nature Conservancy (TNC) led students on an assessment of the Lineer Perdido Islands, a series of small islands located in Mobile Bay. The TNC managers discussed the challenge of minimizing impacts from heavy boat use while protecting and restoring important habitats on and around the islands. After their field review of the islands, students evaluated recent designs formulated by students in biosystems engineering under the supervision of Anna Linhoss, as well as landscape architecture under the instruction of Rob Holmes. The designs were collaborative student efforts, with input from TNC, aimed to stabilize and protect the islands in question while still providing recreational use. This initiative was funded by a grant awarded by the National Academy of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine – Gulf Research Program and supported student opportunities to undertake comprehensive coastal design and assessment endeavors.

The Coastal Zone Management course included several other field trips, in which students in-depth learning experiences in coastal environments. Will Underwood and Amy Hunter from the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, led students on a tour of the Dauphin Island Sea Lab and an excursion into the Mobile-Dauphin Coastal Zone. These coastal zone managers learned about conservation efforts and ongoing research in the area. At Bayou La Batre, students had the opportunity to evaluate the coastal marsh restoration area with the guidance of TNC. The class also visited Weeks Bay, where Johanna Gherits, Scott Phypers and other staff of the Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve provided a tour that familiarized students with the challenges and associated with coastal preservation.

“The Coastal Zone Management course at Dauphin Island Sea Lab was a transformative learning experience for our students,” said Chris Anderson. “It allowed them to witness firsthand the complexities of managing our coastal environments and the critical role managers play in supporting the sustainability of these ecosystems.”

“The collaboration with local organizations and agencies, coupled with the immersive field experiences, is an incredible learning experience that provided a great overview of pertinent coastal issues and the professionals working toward solutions.”

– Chris Anderson

While the course is a requirement for the Coastal Management minor, it is open to all Auburn University students through advanced interdisciplinary from other universities across Alabama. The College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment students who are passionate about coastal conservation and management to join in the commitment to preserving and protecting our coastal resources.

For more information about the Coastal Management minor, offered by the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment, visit https://cfwe.auburn.edu/programs/minors/.

CFWE research team receives NSF grant to “Green the Southeast”

Maria Soleid Parens, associate professor of forest biomaterials, is one of the researchers recently awarded $81 million from the U.S. National Science Foundation’s National Innovation Engineering, or NSF Engines, program.

The funded project, titled “Advancing carbon-neutral crop technologies to develop sustainable consumer goods (AL, GA, NC, TN),” or “Greening the Southeast” for short, aims to develop a green, circular bioeconomy for building materials and consumer goods in the Southeast that reduces climate change impacts from manufacturing by eliminating industry reliance on petroleum and environmentally costly fibers. The project could benefit the Southeast at every level from academic researchers to farmers and consumers.

Led by Jeremy Schmutz of HudsonAlpha Institute for Biotechnology, the team of experts across multiple disciplines and institutions is among the more than 40 unique teams to receive one of the first-ever NSF Engines Development Awards, which will help partners collaborate to create economic, societal and technological opportunities for their regions.

“These gains will include job opportunities for diverse scientists from minority-serving institutions and rural communities in plant genetics and genomics, plant gene editing and perennial agronomy.”

– Sole Parens

“The engine’s focus across the entire product development life cycle and the engagement of a diverse group of stakeholders will benefit those at each discovery stage, build incentives and drive innovation forward,” said Parens. The NSF Engines program is a transformational investment for the nation, ensuring the U.S. remains competitive for decades to come. These NSF Engines Development Awards lay the foundation for emerging hubs of innovation and potential future NSF Engines,” said NSF Director Sethuraman Panchanathan.

“These awardees are part of the fabric of NSF’s vision to create opportunities everywhere and enable innovation anywhere. They will build robust regional partnerships rooted in scientific and technological regional innovation in every part of our nation. Through these planning awards, NSF is seetting the future for in-place innovation in communities and to grow their regional economies through research and development. This plan for meeting the education and training needs of the ENGINE stakeholders in a scalable, coordinated and coordinated way, with an emphasis on diversity, equity and inclusion as a guiding principle.”

The “Southern region has significant resources in transformable marginal land, plant development in genomics — — many groups focusing on sustainable biomaterials — and significant untargeted resources for new scientists across many HBCUs,” said Parens. “With integrated regional accelerator to test as a hub for research, training and innovation, we can catalyze the major change needed in manufacturing to achieve carbon neutrality.”

The awardees span a broad range of states and regions, reaching geographic areas that have not fully benefited from the technology boom of the past decades. The NSF Engines development awards will help organizations create connections and develop their local innovation ecosystems within two years to prepare strong proposals for becoming future NSF Engines, which will each have the opportunity to receive up to $160 million. Launched by NSF’s new Directorate for Technology, Innovation and Partnerships and authorized by the “CHIPS and Science Act of 2022,” the NSF Engines program unites federal agencies to harness the nation’s science and technology research and development enterprise and regional/local assets.

NSF Engines aspire to catalyze robust partnerships to positively impact regional economies, accelerate innovation and technology development, address societal challenges, advance national competitiveness and create local, high-wage jobs.

“This is a very exciting opportunity for Auburn to participate in transformative research that will have a great impact in the region through the development and growth of new products from alternative biomass, in close partnership with regional stakeholders.”

– Dean Alavalapati

To learn more about the individuals to right are Duber Garces, Diega Cuartas and Fatimatu Bello. Shown center is Maria Soledad Parens with researchers in her lab. From left to right are Lukas Grande, Diego Courtois and Patruno Boni.
This summer, the Auburn University Real Estate Foundation (AUREF) and the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment accepted the gift of Crooked Oaks, Pat Dye’s 415-acre homestead in Notasulga. The property includes Dye’s main house, a guest cabin, lodge, pavilion, gazebo, two barns and a nursery office, in addition to the Japanese maple gardens and nursery.

“He didn’t develop this property for Auburn,” said Nancy McDonald, Dye’s longtime partner and retired nursing educator at Auburn University at Montgomery. “But he always planned that it would go to Auburn.”

McDonald and her partner, retired nursing educator Russell Stephens, serve as the caretakers of Crooked Oaks, learning how to manage the property.

This is not just a job. “Our job is to make sure the business sustains itself so Auburn students can take advantage of this incredible gift,” Stephens said.

“We are grateful to Coach Dye and Dr. McDonald for their generosity and for entrusting the legacy of Crooked Oaks with us,” said Russell Stephens.

Students in the soon-to-be-approved Parks and Recreation Management degree will likely have their field skills practicum at the facility.

Dye grew up on a farm in Georgia with a grassroots education in helping things grow and thrive. The caretakers of Crooked Oaks marvel at the way his love for nature and the land helped him visualize improvements he wanted. “The area where he put the Japanese maple garden was overrun with opportunistic vines and briars,” said McDonald. “I couldn’t see it, but he saw what he wanted and he made it beautiful.”

Over the years, Dye built a lodge and pavilion for hosting events, a stable with attached living quarters, a small cabin on the pond and his own living quarters, a cabin full of whimsical touches that harness the untouched beauty of nature. As the college develops plans for experiential learning opportunities at Crooked Oaks, the property will continue to operate as a lodging and event venue.

Dye’s vision was sorting things after I got here, and I found out that Coach was ordained,” she said. “Apparently he never had occasion to put it to use, but he got himself ordained just in case there was a wedding and he needed to step in.”

The stories she tells with particular relish are the ones involving his gentler side. “He was such a burly man—everyone knew him as a football coach. But he had such a passion for nature, and these Japanese maples especially.”

During Dye’s lifetime, his passion for Japanese maples was a prominent part of the Crooked Oaks experience. Guests can enjoy the peace of the wind through the maples in the Japanese maple garden he planted, or they can enjoy spotting the hundreds of Japanese maples scattered throughout the property.

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Multi-disciplinary research team hosts workshop as part of effort to mitigate growing economic threat to pine forests

Lori Eckhardt, a CFWE professor and director of the Forest Health Cooperative, facilitated discussion among the distinguished experts who shared insights on potential disease management strategies, which varied relative to their respective states. The workshop featured engaging presentations from esteemed faculty, graduate students and forestry professionals. Topics covered during these sessions encompassed identification, mitigation techniques, genetic diversity, environmental influences and other relevant aspects related to brown spot needle blight.

Auburn University alum Carter Crosby and Extension Specialist and Harry E. Murphy Associate Professor Adam Maggard were recognized at the Forest Landowner Awards held by The Forest Landowners Association at its annual conference in Nashville, Tennessee. These awards celebrate individuals who have demonstrated outstanding leadership, innovation and dedication in the field of forestland stewardship.

CFWE alumnus and associate professor, extension specialist recognized at Forest Landowner Awards

Carter Crosby, a graduate of the Auburn University’s College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment master’s program in forest business and investment, was presented with the “Next Generation Forest Landowner of the Year” award. This recognition celebrates young forest landowners who are actively engaged in managing forestland, either through personal ownership or involvement in a family business. The award acknowledges their stewardship practices, business acumen and commitment to preserving and enhancing forest resources.

Crosby currently serves as an area supervisor for 18 million acres of forestland in Louisiana, responsible for supervising loblolly and slash plantations. His prior work experience in California, Oregon and Washington brings a fresh perspective and adds value to the daily operations at Crosby Resource Management.

In addition to Crosby’s recognition, Extension Specialist and Harry E. Murphy Associate Professor Adam Maggard received the “Extension Forester of the Year” award. This recognition pays tribute to individuals who exemplify dedication to landowner education as demonstrated by efforts in presenting or publishing educational materials specifically tailored for private landowners and engaging in interactions with private landowners, both on an individual basis and in group settings.

Maggard prioritizes the instruction and promotion of multiple management and sustainability, spearheading extension programs targeting small and large landowners with a specific focus on the financial aspect of forest management. He also supervises the publication of the semianual Cost and Management Highlights.

Drones becoming a powerful tool for forest management

Unmanned aerial systems (UAS), also referred to as drones, have multiple applications such as aerial photography, precision agriculture, disaster management, forest management, construction, mining and surveillance. Drones are becoming more widely used due to advancement of electronic technology, miniaturization, affordability, efficiency of cameras and sensors and improved battery power. Drones can serve as a valuable supplement to conventional data capture methods in the forest industry—providing a unique perspective and additional information that can enhance the quality of collected data. In forestry, drones can be used for stand delineation and mapping, habitat mapping and wildlife distribution, canopy inventory, damage assessment, forest disease and pest detection, land mapping, forest fire detection and post-fire mapping. To learn more about drone applications, follow the link to read the full story by Richard Cistern, Alabama Extension specialist and assistant professor of forest operations.

Two new scholarships established in the CFWE to promote diversity within forest industry

Two forest industry powerhouses have established annual scholarships within the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment to promote diversity within the forest industry. By attracting a diverse pool of highly skilled individuals, the companies seek to create an inclusive and dynamic environment that encourages innovative thinking and new perspectives.

The collaborative efforts with Auburn University aim to empower talented individuals from various backgrounds to contribute to their unique experiences, knowledge and skills toward shaping a future generation of forest industry professionals who are equipped to tackle the complex challenges and opportunities in sustainable forest management and conservation. International Paper is recognized as a global leader in fiber-based packaging and pulp production. Through the transformation of renewable resources into essential everyday products, the company endeavors to enhance the well-being of individuals, safeguard the environment and bolster its own operational efficacy. The company is steadfast in its dedication to supporting a culture of diversity and inclusion, valuing and engaging every individual, thereby contributing to its achievements.

This commitment to both workplace diversity and responsible forestry forms a fundamental aspect of the organization’s sustainability initiatives, aimed at fostering a brighter future for humanity and the planet. The Molpus Woodlands Group has also established an annual scholarship to attract a wide range of talented individuals to shape the next generation of professionals within the forestry industry. Molpus, one of the oldest timber-related companies in the United States, operates under a vertically integrated business structure, employing in-house experts in various fields, including accounting, business and legal. Currently overseeing over 1.7 million acres of timberland investments across 15 states, the Molpus Woodlands Group recognizes the importance of responsible forest management and highlights the exceptional work being done by individuals like Crosby and Maggard.

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Alumni & Friends

Crosby and Maggard recognize outstanding landowners and forestry professionals contributing to the advancement of the private forest landowner community. The awards recognize the importance of responsible forest management and highlight the exceptional work being done by individuals like Crosby and Maggard.

“The collaborations with International Paper and Molpus Woodlands Group reflect our shared commitment to advancing diversity, innovation and sustainable practices within the forest industry, ensuring a vibrant and inclusive future for all.”

– Dean Alavalapati

The College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment, in collaboration with the Forest Health Dynamics Laboratory and the Forest Health Cooperative, hosted a workshop in August to address a pine disease threatening Alabama forests.

Research & Discovery

Multi-disciplinary research team hosts workshop as part of effort to mitigate growing economic threat to pine forests

The workshop’s primary focus was to exchange up-to-date evaluations of brown spot needle blight and to achieve the specific goals working with small landowners.

Brown spot needle blight is a naturally occurring disease known for causing needle shed and stunted growth in many pine species. It has emerged as a significant issue in loblolly pine plantations in Alabama and elsewhere across the Southeast.
Auburn forestry graduate Dana Little honored with Outstanding Alumni Award

Dana Little of Columbia, Miss., has been recognized as the recipient of the 2022 Outstanding Alumni Award in the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environmental Sciences. The award recognizes Little’s outstanding contributions to the university and the forestry profession through his time with the Mississippi Forestry Association (MFA), and his career in the forest industry.

“Dana has an incredible career marked by generous service to help further public understanding of forestry. His efforts to establish the college, especially with regard to underserved communities, have made a tremendous impact,” said Lanier J. Edwards, Auburn University’s interim dean for the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environmental Sciences. “This award is well-deserved for his dedication to the profession and his contributions over his career.”

Among other professional activities and awards, Little is also dedicated to mentoring young professionals. He serves as a dean, assistant superintendent of Sunday school and choir member at John the Baptist M.B. Church, and he was a Parent Advisory Council member for the Hazelhurst Public School system and Mississippi Board of Education for multiple terms. “I’ve known Dana Little since we met at Auburn in the late 1970’s,” said Kennedy Day ’81. “He is forward thinking, extremely dependable, has an outstanding work ethic and always displays a pleasant, professional disposition in everything he does. I think that’s another important thing that Auburn University graduates can do and should do in terms of helping to bring along the next generation of successful professionals.”

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Lanier J. Edwards Fellowships

Lanier J. Edwards Fellows from Auburn University in the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environmental Sciences have been selected for the 2022-23 academic year. The fellowship, located at the Talley Student Life Center, offers students the opportunity to conduct interdisciplinary research and innovation in the fields of forestry, wildlife, and environmental sciences.

The fellowship is named in honor of Lanier J. Edwards, a prominent figure in the forestry profession and an Auburn University alumnus. Edwards was known for his dedication to the profession and his contributions to the university and the profession.

The fellowship is awarded to students who are enrolled in the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environmental Sciences and who demonstrate a commitment to the advancement of the profession. Students are selected based on their academic performance, research potential, and demonstrated leadership and service.

The fellowship supports up to 12 recipients each year, who are chosen by a committee of faculty members from the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environmental Sciences. The recipients receive a stipend of $15,000 per year for two years, along with opportunities to conduct research and participate in professional development activities.

Auburn University has a long history of excellence in forestry, wildlife, and environmental sciences, and the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environmental Sciences is one of the top programs in the country. The college is committed to preparing students for successful careers in the profession and helping to solve pressing issues facing the environment.

Lanier J. Edwards Fellows are expected to contribute to the college in ways that advance its mission and improve the student experience. They are encouraged to participate in professional development activities, such as conferences and seminars, and to engage with industry partners and other stakeholders.

The fellowship is one of several opportunities available to students in the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environmental Sciences. The college also offers scholarships, internships, and research opportunities to support students in their academic and professional pursuits.

The College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environmental Sciences is dedicated to preparing students for successful careers in the profession and helping to solve pressing issues facing the environment. The college is committed to excellence in teaching, research, and service, and to providing a world-class education to students.

The college offers degrees in forestry, wildlife and natural resources management, conservation biology, and environmental studies. It is home to the Forestry Research Center, the Wildlife Research Center, and the Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service. The college is also active in community outreach and partnership projects.

In addition to the Lanier J. Edwards Fellowships, the college offers a variety of other opportunities to support students in their academic and professional pursuits. These include scholarships, internships, and research opportunities. The college is committed to preparing students for successful careers in the profession and helping to solve pressing issues facing the environment.

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“Practicum gave me an opportunity to participate in job field scenarios that I otherwise would not have been privy to. I’ve made connections with people working for the state and other places. I put my knowledge I’ve gather for the past 3 years to the test in the field. The experience I have gained just from those 6 weeks really put into perspective what I plan to do for the future of my career.”

– Kendall Preston, Wildlife

Experiential learning gained at the Dixon Center prepares students with career-ready skills

For 6-9 weeks each summer, students in CFWE’s Forestry and Wildlife programs are engaged in an unparalleled program at the Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center near Andalusia, AL. From navigation and surveying to data collection and analysis, our students master a wide range of practical skills crucial for their career success through the CFWE Summer Practicum.