

# College of Forestry, Wildlife & Environment

## FEATURE STORY

*Auburn Forestry, a land-grant legacy,*  
from the campus to the community  
pg. 8-9

## WHAT'S INSIDE

CFWE Annual Report pg. 4-5

Geospatial and Environmental Informatics major: a pathway to diverse careers pg. 6

Belsare develops app to combat rabies pg. 7

Center instills love of nature pg. 10

Emmett & ViAnn Thompson Lectures in Forest Economics & Policy established in the CFWE pg. 11

CFWE NEWS • Spring 2024

Working with Nature for Society's Well-Being

### In This Issue

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

### Upcoming Events

- Summer Commencement 8/3
- Welcome Back Picnic 8/22
- Homecoming Tailgate 9/14
- Career Fair 10/1
- Fall Commencement 12/14



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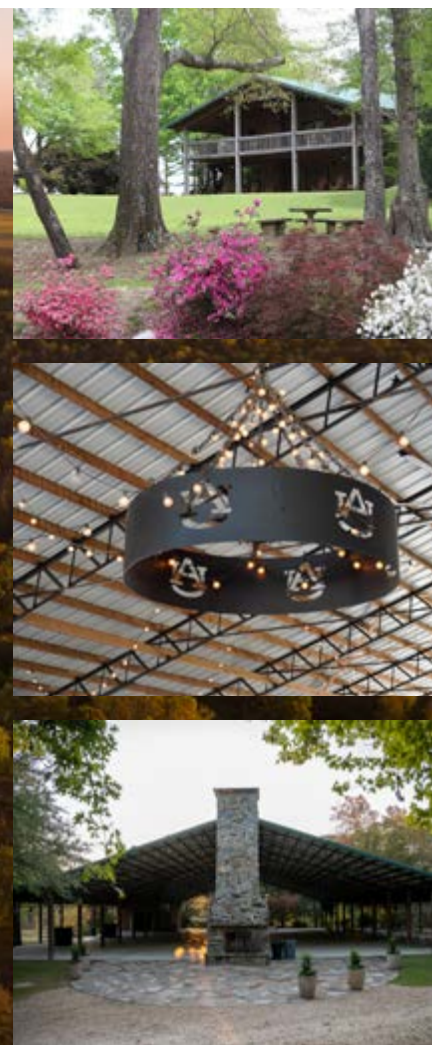
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College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment



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## THE DEAN



Greetings to all, We are proud to share new developments and reflections within this issue and 2023 annual report. As you'll see, the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment continues to pursue excellence in all facets of its land-grant mission of teaching, research and

outreach. It remains dedicated to enhancing its core curricula and research platforms, consistently expanding to meet the evolving needs of employers and stakeholders. This commitment has resulted in the creation of exciting new career paths for students, such as the Parks and Recreation Management degree.

Our faculty members continue to demonstrate remarkable productivity, securing contracts and grants totaling an unprecedented \$11.1 million—the highest level of extramural funding ever awarded in the college's history. This upswing, coupled with an increase in faculty mentors, has substantially broadened opportunities for graduate study across novel and engaging topic areas. Additionally, the growth of the college's online education platforms has contributed to a 200% increase in graduate student enrollment since 2015.

The college has also been enriched by the generosity of our alumni, friends and stakeholders, who have supported endowments and various construction projects. These initiatives are poised to elevate the student experiential learning environment. In total, this support has propelled the college to surpass its 2023 fundraising goal of \$2 million by an astounding 242%, accumulating a total of \$4.84 million.

We extend our heartfelt thanks for your invaluable contributions and eagerly welcome your feedback and involvement as we strive to achieve our ambitious goal of becoming a Top 5 natural resources college in the nation. Your support remains crucial in shaping the future success of the college.

War Eagle!

Janaki R. R. Alavalapati, Emmett F. Thompson Dean

## Administration

### CFWE celebrates retirement of forestry professor, Tom Gallagher



Janaki Alavalapati, the Emmett F. Thompson Dean of the CFWE, presents Tom Gallagher with the Auburn University Certificate of Emeritus.

This spring, the College of Forestry, Wildlife, and Environment (CFWE) celebrated the retirement of Tom Gallagher, Regions Professor of Forest Operations.

Gallagher has been a faculty member in the college since 2003, where he served as an expert on timber biomass harvesting methods, forest surveying, wood procurement issues and forestry in the private sector. In recognition of more than 10 years of sustained meritorious service, Gallagher will retire as Emeritus Professor.

His teaching philosophy focused on delivering information that must be processed and practiced while accommodating each student's learning style. Gallagher is credited with teaching or co-teaching nine classes and advising 16 senior projects in his 20 years at the CFWE. He also led courses in the Forestry Summer Practicum at the Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center from 2005-23, where CFWE students receive hands-on learning opportunities.

During his tenure, Gallagher served as advisor of the Forestry Club and was honored five times with the Forestry Club Teacher of the Year Award in 2007, 2010, 2019, 2022 and 2023. He also received the Harold E. Christian Award for Teaching in 2009 and 2020, and the Harry Murphy Award for Excellence in Advising in 2019. Gallagher was also recognized by the Society of American Foresters (SAF) as a fellow in 2022.

Gallagher's research included projects in harvesting and transportation of biomass for consumption at alternative fuel plants, improved utilization, forest fragmentation, timber stand improvement, improving forest health and reducing fuel loads. He collaborated on 43 grants totaling \$30.6 million and 55 published papers and lectures. Gallagher also gave more than 100 invited talks at the regional, national and international levels.

He received his master's degree and doctorate in forestry at Virginia Tech before arriving at Auburn.

In his retirement, Gallagher plans to travel, spend time with his grandchildren and participate in a favorite hobby, car shows.

"Dr. Gallagher has been an invaluable member of the college," said Janaki Alavalapati, Emmett F. Thompson Dean of the CFWE.

*"His dedication to fostering our students' professional development and industry engagement enhanced the forestry program and elevated our student experience. We thank Tom for his passionate service and wish him the best in his retirement."*  
— Dean Alavalapati

Visit our [website](https://www.cfwewe.auburn.edu) to view this story online.

### Auburn leadership visit the Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center to engage with stakeholders, user groups and staff



Auburn and CFWE leadership and Dixon Foundation members gather for photos outside the Solon and Martha Dixon Foundation Learning Center during a recent visit to the Andalusia campus.

Auburn University President Chris Roberts, accompanied by his wife Tracy, Senior Vice President for Advancement Rob Wellbaum, and Rob's wife, Christine, recently traveled alongside Dean Janaki Alavalapati to the expansive campus of the Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center in Andalusia, Ala.

Situated along the banks of the scenic Conecuh River, the education center was founded in 1978 through a transformative donation from Solon and Martha Dixon to Auburn University. Today, the Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center spans over 5,400 acres and serves as an educational hub for experiential learning in forestry, wildlife and natural resources management within the southeastern U.S.

Located only hours from numerous major cities, the all-inclusive learning center includes the 6,500-square-foot Solon and Martha Dixon Foundation Learning Center, a state-of-the-art auditorium, classroom and conference room. There are also two large bunkhouses, five semi-private dormitory buildings, a rec center, an administrative building, a classroom and computer lab building and a cafeteria.

As part of their visit, the Auburn leaders visited with the Solon and Martha Dixon Foundation board. Among the discussion topics, the conversation delved into the foundation's current priorities and the future vision for the Dixon Center, focusing on an upcoming project to replace two late 1970s-era dormitory buildings, which are crucial for accommodating user groups and Auburn's summer practicum students.

The Dixon Foundation, which has a long history of philanthropic support of the Dixon Center since 1980, has fostered its continual growth and expansion, enabling the facility to become one of the nation's finest field stations. More recently, the foundation's contributions have supported the construction of new faculty dorms, the state-of-the-art learning center and upgrades to its full-service kitchen and cafeteria.

At the conclusion of the visit with the board, President and Mrs. Roberts presented each board member with an Auburn Oak tree cookie as a token of gratitude in recognition of the foundation's loyal support of the Dixon Center and continued engagement with Auburn University.

Following lunch, the group spoke with staff and representatives of the center's present user group, the National Wildland Firefighters Apprenticeship Program (WFAP), to learn about their training regime and use of the facility.

Historically taught in Sacramento, California, the U.S. Forest Service chose the Dixon Center as an East Coast satellite location for the WFAP in 2018. In its second, five-year contract with the USFS, the Dixon Center provides food, lodging, classrooms and some field instruction for the training for 10 to 12 weeks per year.

The unique combination of classroom and hands-on field training at the residential facility enables the apprentices to learn about fire behavior, fire suppression tactics, weather, safety, leadership, risk management and tactical decision-making. Upon graduation, the firefighters are dispatched to fight wildfires in national forests across the country, including Alabama's four national forests—Bankhead, Conecuh, Talladega and Tuskegee.

As the visit ended, Dean Janaki Alavalapati extended a heartfelt gesture by presenting President and Mrs. Roberts with a handwoven longleaf pine needle basket, a symbol of the importance of the longleaf ecosystem to the region.

*"This gift serves as an expression of gratitude on behalf of the college, its faculty, students, alumni and industry stakeholders. We sincerely appreciate the university's commitment to advancing the Dixon Center's mission to provide invaluable educational opportunities for academic institutions, nonprofit organizations and government agencies alike."*  
— Dean Alavalapati

To learn more about the Dixon Center and opportunities to contribute to the upcoming dormitory project, contact Heather Crozier, director of development in the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment, at [vannhea@auburn.edu](mailto:vannhea@auburn.edu).

### CFWE hosts Advisory Council annual meeting



A banquet was held for members, faculty and staff at Crooked Oaks, the farm and homestead of Pat Dye, legendary Auburn football coach.

The College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment Advisory Council members convened at Auburn on March 19 and 20 for their annual meeting.

Immediately preceding the executive committee meeting held at the Forestry, Wildlife and Environment Building on March 19, a banquet was held for members, faculty and staff at Crooked Oaks, the farm and homestead of Pat Dye, legendary Auburn football coach.

The next morning the Advisory Council Meeting officially began with breakfast and introductions by Council Chairman Alexander McCall, and remarks from Auburn University Provost and Senior Vice President Vini Nathan as well as the CFWE's Emmett F. Thompson Dean Janaki Alavalapati.

Following the remarks, David Hinson, associate dean of research in the College of Architecture, Design and Construction (ADAC), provided an overview of the newly established Mass Timber Collaborative, a multidisciplinary partnership between Auburn's CFWE, the ADAC and the Samuel Ginn College of Engineering to advance mass timber research, teaching and outreach within the southeastern U.S.

After lunch with faculty, staff and graduate students, council members had the opportunity to interact with undergraduate students from various majors within the college.

These engagements took place during multiple breakout sessions, allowing for meaningful discussions and insights to be exchanged. The feedback gathered during these sessions was carefully synthesized by the council and subsequently presented as recommendations for the college's leadership.

"Dialogue with the students was a priority for the council during this meeting," said Alavalapati.

*"This collaborative process ensures that the voices and perspectives of all stakeholders, including undergraduate students, are heard and considered in shaping the future direction of the college."*

— Dean Alavalapati

Upon the conclusion of the Council's business meeting, Alexander McCall, executive vice president of Larson & McGowin LLC and president of Larson & McGowin Properties was recognized for his service as Advisory Council chair. Richard Hall, president of Buckhead Resources and CFWE adjunct professor, was recognized as incoming chair. Nick Wiley, chief operating officer of Ducks Unlimited was named chair elect.



## College of Forestry, Wildlife & Environment

CFWE NEWS • Spring 2024

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### 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

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



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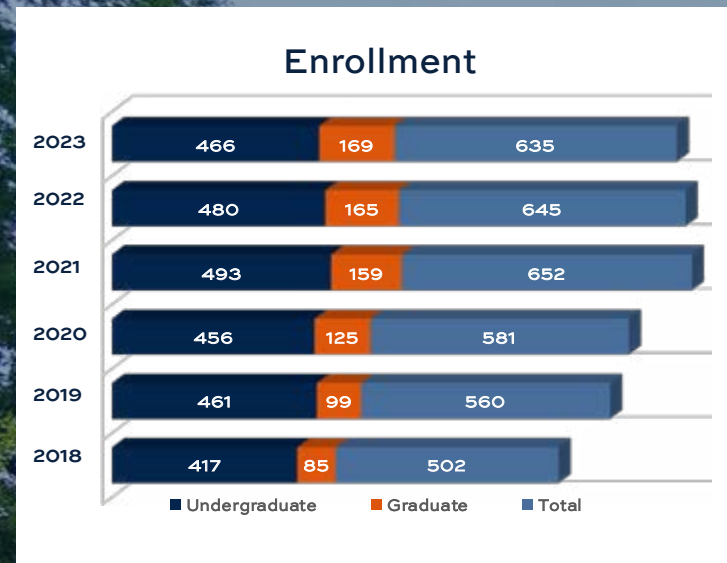
Advisory Council members engaged with students representing each of the CFWE's majors during their March meeting.

# College of Forestry, Wildlife & Environment

## 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

### Academics

**INCREASED**  
2023 FALL ENROLLMENT BY  
**43%**



**INCREASED**  
GRADUATE ENROLLMENT BY  
**200%**



The EBSCO Atrium was enhanced to include student-centric furnishings and large-format building monitors to increase student engagement and improve communications.

**104**  
GRADUATES  
LARGEST GRADUATING CLASS IN THE COLLEGE'S HISTORY.



FEWL Academy students visit Washington D.C.

### Research & Discovery

CONTRACTS & GRANTS INCREASED  
**\$3 Million to \$11.1 Million**  
HIGHEST LEVEL OF EXTRAMURAL FUNDING EVER AWARDED TO THE COLLEGE



Researchers discuss new adhesives developed in the CFWE Forest Products Center.

### Outreach & Extension

**FORESTRY, WILDLIFE & NATURAL RESOURCES EXTENSION ACHIEVED**

- 650** programs
- 70,588** participants
- 71:1** average ROI
- \$4.5 Million** IN IMPROVED FORESTED LAND VALUE
- 3 Million acres** BENEFITED FROM INVASIVE PLANT PROGRAMS
- USDA NRCS NATIONAL PRELIMINARY FINDINGS**  
Led the development of the USDA NRCS National Feral Swine Damage Assessment Preliminary Findings Report which summarized outcomes across 12 states, and was distributed to congressional staffers.



Nancy Loewenstein leads a dendrology education program.



John Gilbert instructs forestry students at summer practicum.



Wildland Firefighters holds only apprentice program in the east at Dixon Center.

**DIXON CENTER MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES**

- 9,607** RECORDED USERS DAYS
- 8,909** USER NIGHTS
- 35%** BY AUBURN
- 65%** BY OUTSIDE VISITORS
- 1,752** ACRES OF PRESCRIBED FIRE

THE CENTER FOR NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT ON MILITARY LANDS BROUGHT  
**\$2.6 Million**  
TO AUBURN UNIVERSITY IN 2023

**KREHER PRESERVE & NATURE CENTER**  
*Celebrated 30th Anniversary*  
BEGAN CONSTRUCTION OF THE KPNC ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION BUILDING  
EXPECTED COMPLETION AUGUST 2024



The KPNC's new environmental education building will showcase cross-laminated timber or CLT.

### Development



AU and the CFWE celebrate Black Alumni Weekend.

CFWE SURPASSED GOAL BY **242%**  
**\$4.84 MILLION** TOTAL RAISED  
**70%** OF PROPOSALS WERE FUNDED



Alumni visit the CFWE for the annual Homecoming Tailgate.

## CFWE honors faculty, staff and students during Spring 2024 awards celebration

The College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment (CFWE) held its 2024 Award Celebration on April 17. During the event, the CFWE proudly recognized high-achieving students for their academic excellence, leadership skills, and service.

### COLLEGE RECOGNITIONS

The President's Award & Graduation Marshal – Rory Smith

### ACADEMIC AWARDS & RECOGNITIONS

Annual Academic Improvement Award in Forestry: Bradley Gibson

Alabama Wildlife Federation David K. Nelson Game Management Award: Reese Stogner

Alabama Wildlife Federation Robert G. Wehle Non-Game Management Award: Ally Cobern

Geospatial and Environmental Informatics Student of the Year: Rory Smith

Natural Resources Management Student of the Year: Jaquie Parker  
Sustainable Biomaterials and Packaging Student of the Year: Emmie Mayson

Weyerhaeuser Forest Economics Award: Mays McMillan

Wildlife Enterprise Management Student of the Year: Dallas McCain

William Allen Carey Memorial Award in Forest Pathology: Clari Gregson

Harry Murphy Graduate Student: Marnisha Parajuli

2024 Undergraduate Research Fellows: Shelby Davis, Tess Lindow, Gigi Sharp, Emily Tice, Brianna Travis, Lexi McGrew

### LEADERSHIP AWARDS

Armistead and Woody Family Military Service Award: Eric Eisenhardt

The Wildlife Society Student Leadership Award: Lauren Stevens

Alabama Division of the Society of American Foresters Junior Leadership Award: Thomas Davis

Alabama Forest Owners Association Award: Sam Hall and Erin Colhoun

Association of Consulting Foresters Senior Leadership Award: Eric Eisenhardt

F&W Forestry Services Rising Senior Award: Thomas Davis

The Forestry Club Most Outstanding Student Member Award: Rice Nichols

Southeastern Society of American Foresters and Alabama Division Leadership Travel Award: Erin Colhoun

Outstanding Wildlife Member of the Year: Aiden Calderon-Wyant

Expressing the collective sentiment of faculty and staff:

*"We are incredibly proud of our students' dedication to their studies and their cultivation of leadership skills for their future careers in natural resources, wildlife and forestry."*

– Dean Alavalapati

### FACULTY & STAFF RECOGNITION

The outstanding work of numerous CFWE faculty and staff was also recognized and included:

Harold E. Christen Award for Service to Teaching: Dr. Chris Anderson

Harry Murphy Faculty Outreach Award: Dr. Wes Anderson

Harry Murphy Outstanding Staff Award: Carolina Miller

Harry Murphy Faculty Research Award: Dr. Steve Ditchkoff

Graduate Student Mentorship Award: Dr. Heather Alexander

Best Publication Award: Dr. Chris Lepczyk

Outstanding Forestry Faculty: Dr. Tom Gallagher

Outstanding Wildlife Faculty: Dr. Mark Smith

### CFWE ALUMNUS OF THE YEAR

The College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment also honored Dr. Nancy Loewenstein '82, who received the 2024 Outstanding Alumni Award in honor of her lifetime contributions to her field and service within the Auburn community and beyond.



Forestry students, Sam Hall and Erin Colhoun, were recipients of the Alabama Forest Owners Association Award.



## Aksoy awarded two patents expected to reduce food and aquaculture waste

Burak Aksoy, associate research professor in the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment (CFWE), developed two novel products to help reduce waste in commercial aquaculture feed pellets and meat products intended for human consumption.

The first patent was awarded for an aquafeed binder based on soybean hulls. These binders help the pellets stay intact in the water until fish and/or shrimp can consume them. Keeping the pellets stable in the water improves feed efficiency and fish health and reduces the cost to farmers from loss of feed. It also improves water quality. Poor-quality pellets will disintegrate quickly, causing excess waste, which leads to high ammonia levels and extreme algae blooms. Algae die-offs can wipe out an entire pond's fish population overnight.

Most commercial shrimp pellet binders contain urea formaldehyde, a known carcinogen that negatively affects shrimp health. Other natural solutions, like wheat gluten, starch and alginate are less effective, cost more and have a competing human use.

Aksoy's binder uses a new process to activate pectin and proteins in the soybean hulls, an agricultural byproduct with little value. The process also makes these nutrients available to fish, so this binder stabilizes the pellets and provides nutrition rather

than toxins. Aksoy says the benefits are clear to the fish, humans who consume them and the environment.

With the aquaculture feed market in the United States worth more than \$70 billion, Aksoy says his cost-effective binder provides a much-needed alternative solution to the problem of feed stability in water.

Aksoy's second patent was awarded for a packaging solution aimed at reducing waste in the human food supply. Today, the annual economic loss due to food spoilage is \$161 billion from 40 million tons of discarded food in the U.S.

The primary cause of food spoilage is bacterial growth, said Aksoy. The current standard is the familiar "Sell by" date, which can be inaccurate on either side — food going bad before or after the date. In the first case, a customer buys a spoiled product, and in the second, the store must discard a product that is still safe for consumption.

*"Everyone — consumers and retailers — will know the level of freshness or spoilage at a glance and be able to act accordingly."*

– Burak Aksoy

Aksoy has developed an inexpensive solution for real-time freshness monitoring. All meats give off certain basic volatile compounds as they



Research Professor Burak Aksoy is shown in his lab while working on one of the processing steps in the development of gas sensor components.

break down. His product is a gas-sensing coating that detects those compounds and is applied to a sticker that adheres directly to the packaging of meat products. The sticker monitors the presence of compounds that indicate spoilage and progressively changes color to indicate the freshness level of the product.

Aksoy said there has already been a great deal of industry interest, and he anticipates the products will have global appeal.

"These two innovations have great economic potential alongside their promise for advancing sustainability and reducing waste," said Janaki Alavalapati, the Emmett F. Thompson Dean of the CFWE. "Both of his solutions are scalable,

affordable and can easily be manufactured by adapting existing machinery, so there are fewer infrastructure costs at the start."

The products were developed in collaboration with the Mediha Yildirim-Aksoy and Benjamin Beck from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service (USDA-ARS), and Zhihua Jaing from the Alabama Center for Paper and Bioresource Engineering (ACPBE). Navid Etebari Alamdari of the ACPBE was also involved in developing the gas detectors.

To learn more about the CFWE's sustainable biomaterials and packaging research and academic programs, visit [cfwe.auburn.edu](http://cfwe.auburn.edu).



## Geospatial and Environmental Informatics major: a pathway to diverse careers

The next generation of geospatial professionals are being developed at the Auburn University College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment (CFWE).

One of the few programs in the Southeast, Auburn's Geospatial and Environmental Informatics (GSEI) undergraduate degree program employs a unique, interdisciplinary approach to teaching geospatial systems and technologies that prepares students for careers such as environmental data scientist, geospatial analyst, or GIS manager.

### EMERGING TECH DRIVING NEED

Auburn's GSEI program was introduced in the CFWE in 2017 when researchers, land use planners and policymakers began relying on "Big Data" derived from geospatial technologies to sustainably manage natural resources and the environment.

Geospatial technologies include tools like geographic information systems (GIS), the global positioning system (GPS), satellite-based remote sensing, computer learning simulation and drone imaging.

utilize expertise in geospatial technologies to make decisions.

"Auburn GSEI computer science courses are now based on Python, the dominant data science and machine learning program. It is explained in a beginner-friendly language, making geospatial tools and data more accessible to learn," said Todd Steury, professor and associate dean of academic affairs.

*"Across the country, the demand is high for professionals with this knowledge, meaning the career opportunities for GSEI undergraduates are endless. In fact, 100% of Auburn GSEI students find employment in the first six months post-graduation."*

– Todd Steury

### NEW FACULTY EXPAND CURRICULUM, APPLICATIONS

The CFWE has welcomed many new faculty members with geospatial expertise to facilitate this program. The Solon & Martha Dixon Endowed Professor Li An brings more than 30 years of experience and a valuable skill set that he intends to share with his students.

"My research combines ground observation, remote sensing, process-based and data-driven modeling to study environmental issues," An said. "This semester, I am teaching a Python Programming for the Environment course, which aims to familiarize students with

fundamental programming skills. This is especially useful for them to better understand and solve environmental or natural resources-related problems. I also teach space-time analysis, which will be helpful to reinforce the mechanisms or driving forces that generate data."

An adds that this curriculum should help students become stronger and more competitive in job markets requiring expertise and experience in data science. Graduates of the GSEI program will also be able to diagnose why certain global factors are occurring in the environment, plan for them and implement actions to resolve problems.

According to An, the college's Geospatial and Environmental Informatics major is set apart for several reasons.

"The Auburn GSEI program has unique features and strengths from similar programs," An said.

An believes it is this cross-disciplinary focus that will enable GSEI graduates to successfully tackle application and technical problems in their job context.

*"Unlike a program housed in a geography department, our program has a strong natural resources and environmental management context that allows the GSEI tools, courses and activities to be useful for solving impending and challenging issues facing our society."*

– Li An

The GSEI program at Auburn holds this advantage along with a robust and diverse body of faculty with expertise in various natural resource professions. Some of these areas of study include hydrology, remote sensing, modeling systems and space-time data analysis. With this dynamic combination of knowledge, CFWE graduates will be prepared to handle issues in terrestrial, coastal and marine ecosystems.

Zutao Yang, who recently joined the CFWE as an assistant professor, has devoted his work to ecosystem modeling. This research combines ground observation, remote sensing, process-based and data-driven modeling. For environmental studies, these methods are imperative for developing solutions to problems in real time.

He says that the GSEI program is ideal for students interested in the environmental fields within areas such as environmental science, geography, spatial analysis and data science-related technology.

"Students should consider the diverse career paths and job opportunities available within GSEI-related fields, such as environmental consulting, urban planning, natural resource management and GIS analysis, as well as research positions in academia, nongovernmental organizations and government agencies."

Yang also reinforces the CFWE's interdisciplinary approach to teaching the degree's technical skills and subject matter.

Read more online.



## Belsare develops app to combat rabies

By Ecotone Science Writing and Photography



CFWE Assistant Professor Aniruddha Belsare has developed an application called ZeroRabiesApp that provides critical information and tracks the availability of life-saving medications.

As a veterinarian in rural India, Aniruddha Belsare witnessed firsthand the plight of rabies. He watched in horror as teenagers bit by rabid dogs failed to receive the necessary lifesaving treatment.

Over the years, Belsare, now an assistant professor of disease ecology within Auburn's College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment (CFWE), shifted his focus from practicing veterinary medicine to studying infectious diseases of animals. His project topics include chronic wasting disease in North American deer populations and others that have implications for public health and conservation.

But along the way, he fixated on the needless rabies deaths he struggled to prevent in India, and one day he determined to take matters into his own hands.

"I realized this will keep on happening unless and until getting these medications becomes easier," Belsare said.

In 2021, Belsare began developing an application called ZeroRabiesApp that provides critical information about dog-bite treatment and also tracks the availability of lifesaving medications in developing countries, such as India and Nigeria. In a recent preprint publication, Belsare and his international collaborators outlined their strategy for preventing human rabies deaths through their interactive web application.

### THE WRATH OF RABIES

Rabies is one of the deadliest and yet most preventable diseases in the world. After being bit by an animal carrying the rabies virus, people are nearly guaranteed to die within a few days. But those who receive the proper post-exposure treatment promptly recover to full health.

In the U.S. and much of the Western world, responsible pet ownership, pet dog vaccination and access to post-exposure treatment have made rabies deaths nearly obsolete.

But the story is very different in many African and Asian countries, where large stray dog populations are largely unvaccinated and rabies treatments are much less accessible. In India, someone dies from dog-mediated rabies roughly every 30 minutes.

*"These are 100% preventable deaths. Something has to be done to save lives today."*

– Aniruddha Belsare

There are two main problems that perpetuate the rabies cycle in places like India, Belsare said. First, people in remote, rural areas are often misinformed about how essential it

is to receive post-bite treatment after a potential rabies exposure. Some wrongly assume they can wait until symptoms appear to seek medical care. Others avoid treatment because they fear they will have to receive a dozen painful shots in the abdomen, which was the case a few decades ago.

But these days, the typical treatment plan — called post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) — consists of four intramuscular injections of rabies vaccine delivered over the course of two weeks and a dose of rabies antiserum bite wound.

The second issue is one of accessibility. The PEP biologics are sparsely distributed throughout rural areas, and finding the right medications often involves "a lot of running from pillar to post," Belsare said. When prompt treatment is so urgent, knowing where biologics are in stock nearby is often the difference between life and death.

### AUBURN JOINS THE FIGHT

As a cross-disciplinary researcher at Auburn, Belsare is working to fill both of these gaps. His ZeroRabiesApp sources current post-bite treatment guidelines directly from the World Health Organization and Center for Disease Control to offer a clear, customized treatment plan based on the time of exposure.

With the help of nonprofits and citizen scientists, the app features a database of rabies biologics available in pharmacies and health care facilities across the country. The crowdsourced approach relies on volunteers to contribute the rabies biologics availability information through an online portal.

"The hope is to build upon this app to inform efficient rabies control strategies," Belsare said, and he aims to bring in undergraduate and graduate students to help him with this larger initiative.

The application is currently in use in India and Nigeria, and Belsare hopes to expand it to other countries with high rabies death rates. To do so, he's working to recruit help from students and funding agencies. He aims to have at least 1,000 rabies biologics availability locations for India, and he also plans to build a version of the app that works without internet connection.

The CFWE provides Belsare with support to pursue the ZeroRabiesApp as a passion project. His rabies project dovetails with his other disease modeling work at Auburn to address his broader goal of conquering overlooked diseases that impact human and wildlife health.

"Diseases like rabies are neglected for a reason," Belsare said.

Because they primarily impact poor communities and are often underreported and they tend to fall low on the priority list for government agencies, Belsare hopes that independent initiatives like his can support these overlooked cases and help meet the target of eliminating all deaths from dog-mediated rabies by 2030, as laid out by a coalition of international organizations in 2015.

"These are very simple, straightforward things that need to be done," Belsare said. "People should not continue to die from a disease we have all the tools to conquer."



# Auburn Forestry,

a land-grant legacy, from the campus to the community

**Forestry Extension specialist, professor driven to support landowners** *By Amy Burtch*



Adam Maggard demonstrates a portable sawmill for landowners.

The Alabama Extension Forest Business Resources Program counts this as its main goal: to build educational programs utilizing science-based information to help landowners achieve their goals. Leading that charge is Adam Maggard, Alabama Extension specialist and the Harry E. Murphy Associate Professor in the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment (CFWE) at Auburn University.

*"The biggest thing I am driven by is helping landowners. I love working with landowners — meeting them, setting up connections and helping them be better educated on whatever information they are seeking."*

— Adam Maggard

Maggard's expertise in forestry management, also positions him to serve as the coordinator for Auburn University's upcoming cross-laminated timber (CLT) conference, "The Sustainable Future of CLT in the South: Grow. Design. Build."

The conference is a unique opportunity to have a diverse audience in the same room, Maggard explains, as well as being truly relevant to the landowners as the topics link directly to timber markets and management of the forest.

**SERVING THE LANDOWNERS**

Maggard shares his process on how he works with landowners in the program. His goal is to first understand who the landowners are — discovering their goals and their interests. He then considers how he can relate their objectives to suitability and sustainability.

"What I mean by that is what is suitable for the landowners' day-to-day life," said Maggard. "They may not understand whether what they seek to achieve is suitable considering their property, resources and time commitment."

"For sustainability, we consider if their goals are sustainable, aligning with their values, as well as thinking about the sustainability of the forest resource."

Maggard covers a broad range of topics in the Forest Business Resources Program, from general forest management and timber markets to costs of forestry practices and owning and operating small businesses.

Since its inception, the program has reached just over 9,000 folks face-to-face and much more not

in person but via publications, online resources and tools, and virtual or over-the-phone meetings.

"In 2023 alone, there were over 672,000 forested land acres either owned or managed by the people attending our workshops, with a total of two million acres of Alabama forest land impacted since the program began," said Maggard.

**ALTERNATIVE MEANS OF INCOME GENERATION**

Alabama Extension noticed landowners sought alternative means to generate revenue from their property to help their livelihoods, reduce costs or for tax purposes, beyond participation in fluctuating timber markets.

Maggard and his team answered the call by developing this flexible program.

Some of the alternative revenue sources for property owners include offering recreational leasing, such as hunting; selling pine straw; working with silvopasture, which involves running livestock with their timber; and mixing their property use with other agricultural systems.

Landowners connect with Maggard in a multitude of ways. Often, regional Extension agents throughout the state are the first to make contact with landowners — there are seven agents, covering eight to 10 counties each, solely focused on forestry, wildlife and natural resources topics and issues.

Maggard creates programs based on landowners' needs, often taking the form of a workshop, which can be an evening program, a multi-day workshop or a field tour of the landowner's property with demonstrations.

**SPREADING THE WORD ON MARKET TRENDS**

Part of helping established and aspiring landowners achieve their goals includes educating them on market trends that can impact their businesses. Maggard most often speaks on timber markets and the cost of forestry practices.

"Timber markets are very dynamic," said Maggard. "I share the current situation of the timber market, expectations for the future and what is impacting different markets. I tell them 'Depending on X, Y and Z, these are the trends to look for in your specific market and on state, regional and global levels.'"

Maggard calls his education of the cost of forestry practices "unique" because he not only relays the costs of forestry practices but delves into the factors affecting these costs — and he has the data to prove it.

Starting in 1952, Extension launched a survey of 14 states in the southern region, looking at the cost of forestry management for the year. By the 1980s, the survey was regularly distributed every other year to landowners, industry professionals and government agencies, but was cumbersome for recipients to complete.

Collaborating with the Forest Landowner Foundation, Maggard has modernized the survey, resulting in more participants in recent years, and, thus, increased and more thorough data to share with landowners and industry.

"Landowners and industry professionals alike use the survey as a benchmark of forestry practices and costs to inform their decision-making," said Maggard.

**COORDINATING THE CLT CONFERENCE**

Maggard is the coordinator of the upcoming conference, "The Sustainable Future of CLT in the South: Grow. Design. Build.," focusing on cross-laminated timber (CLT) research, trends and developments specific to the South. He sees this conference directly tying into the Forest Business Resources Program.

"Everything I try to do is relatable to the program," said Maggard. "The conference ties directly to timber markets and forest management, in terms of wood quality needs or species desired for mass timber buildings."

*"Landowners are the ones producing raw materials and resources needed to create CLT, so this conference definitely relates to them."*

— Adam Maggard

The conference, to be held this Oct. 7-9 in Auburn, is presented by the CFWE in collaboration with Auburn's new Mass Timber Collaborative, a partnership between the CFWE, the Samuel Ginn College of Engineering and the College of Architecture, Design and Construction.

Given the broad spectrum of expertise involved, Maggard said the conference offers a unique opportunity to have a diverse audience in the same room, from landowners, forestry professionals, engineers and architects to contractors, insurance companies, economic development professionals and educators.

"This audience spanning all sectors of the CLT supply chain can learn and network together to advance CLT and mass timber in general," said Maggard.



Maggard supports landowners and the state's timber industry through Extension's Forest Business Resources Program.

## CFWE produces multigenerational successes for forestry families

A family of Auburn University College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment (CFWE) alumni has seen the fruits of an Auburn education. The Ziebach family of Alabama has witnessed generations of forestry graduates receive their diplomas, adding branches to the Ziebach's educational heritage within the CFWE. Their achievements highlight the CFWE's 75-year history of producing forestry graduates who have fueled the growth of the state and region's forest industry.

The Ziebachs' Auburn forestry origins begin in 1969, when Elmo D. Ziebach graduated with a bachelor's degree in forest management. At this time, the CFWE was known as the Department of Forestry within the Auburn School of Agriculture. Upon receiving his diploma, he started his career in forestry as a land manager with International Paper Company in southern Mississippi, also working at various short-wood yards. Years later, Elmo was hired as a procurement manager for Bendix Forest Products in Vredenburgh, Alabama.

Approximately 10 years after graduating from Auburn, Elmo and his colleague, Mike Webb, founded their own business, the Ziebach and Webb Timber Company. To this day, their company harvests and delivers more than 1.7 million tons of raw material to forest product mills from central Alabama to northwest Florida.

"I am the first in my family to be in the forest business," Elmo said. "I enjoy the freedom of being in the forest. It is always something interesting and different from one tract to the next."

About the time that Elmo and Webb were in the infancy of their company, the Department of Forestry was awarded "School" status in recognition of its growing prominence in research, outreach and undergraduate and graduate education. The Auburn School of Forestry was officially established in 1984. Elmo followed the college's growth as an alumnus, reminiscing on his experiences at Auburn which have continued to influence his life and work.

*"We had a well-rounded curriculum that prepared me for all different parts of being a field forester as well as running a business. Many friends I made have been lifelong, and we still work and play together."*

— Elmo Ziebach

A classmate nominated Elmo for the CFWE Outstanding Alumni Award in recognition of his more than 43 years of service to the forestry and wildlife industries. He received this award in 2021. Today, Elmo serves as a senior partner of Ziebach and Webb Timber Company, overseeing more than 20 timber crews. He graciously gave philanthropically to the CFWE and was a key figure in raising funds to build today's Forestry, Wildlife and Environment Building.

**FOLLOWING IN THE FAMILY FOOTSTEPS**

Since an early age, Douglas Ziebach, son of Elmo, always wanted to be a forester. While growing up with his father, he learned about the world of forestry and the hard work and dedication required to be successful in the industry.

"All I wanted to do was be a forester and follow in my father's footsteps," said Douglas. "This led me to Auburn to earn my forestry degree. This is all I have ever wanted to do."

After graduating high school, Douglas enrolled at the Auburn School of Forestry, majoring in forest resources. He had the privilege of learning from several of the same professors that instructed his father. Douglas says that professors like Earl DeBrunner and CFWE Dean Emeritus Dick Brinker were imperative to his academic and professional success.

"That generational crossover is very special to me," said Douglas.



*"From the first time I met Dr. Brinker at Summer Practicum in forest surveying to every interaction since, I would say he is the epitome of a professional. He instilled the standard of professionally presenting yourself as a forester, and that was very impactful."*

— Douglas Ziebach

Also at Summer Practicum, Douglas met many of his closest friends and colleagues. After completing his degree in 1995, he has interacted with many of these life-long friends while serving as chief operating officer at Ziebach & Webb Timber Company.

"I have been blessed to interact in business with many of my classmates that I met in Summer Practicum at the Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center," said Douglas.

At the family business, Douglas manages day-to-day operations including 17 foresters and timber buyers who procure timber for independent contract loggers throughout Alabama and northwest Florida as well as their two white pole mill operations in Dadeville and Evergreen. In other roles, he also serves on the board of directors for the United Bank Corporation and the Alabama Forestry Association.

Douglas adds that his education at the CFWE prepared him for his career by providing a broad basis of the many aspects of forestry and forest products and as a source of long-standing relationships with his peers. He shares some advice with all current and prospective CFWE students in that regard.

"Don't take your time at Auburn lightly," Douglas said. "Not everyone has the opportunity to earn a degree from Auburn. Stay close to your classmates and your professors. Your paths will very likely cross in the future."

**CONTINUING THE EDUCATIONAL LINEAGE**

Chase Luker, nephew of Douglas Ziebach, works with the family as an agent timber buyer in the business.

"We all work together at Ziebach and Webb Timber Co.," said Luker. "I enjoy working with family and the freedom and flexibility of completing tasks."

Luker graduated in 2014 from what was then known as the Auburn School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences, the moniker given to the School of Forestry after its merge with the Department of Wildlife Sciences in 1999.

He chose to pursue a degree in forestry after acquiring a love for the outdoors and hunting. Luker was able to expand his knowledge while progressing through his forestry degree.

"Although I had plenty of practical experience working during school breaks, I believe that



Summer Practicum at the Dixon Center does a great job preparing students for practical applications in the forestry field," Luker said.

According to Luker, Molly, Luke's sister and an Auburn alumna, is a controller helping with finances and statewide business sites. He adds that he cherished his time at Auburn. He and his wife, whom he met while at Auburn, return there often. The Plains is truly the foundation on which the Ziebach family built their careers.

*"Graduating from the CFWE means a lot to our family. Our fourth generation Auburn graduate, Chapman Luker, my son is currently in third grade, but he knows his way around Auburn already."*

— Chase Luker

**MULTIGENERATIONAL FORESTRY STARTS AT AUBURN**

Elmo Ziebach has seen four more grandchildren graduate from Auburn with the most recent being Chaney Jones, his granddaughter, in the College of Business in spring 2024. The university, especially the CFWE, provides the ultimate environment for multiple generations to earn a quality education — injecting prospective employees into the workforce and inspiring others to follow their academic endeavors.

"I am proud that my family thought enough about my forestry career that they wanted to follow after me," Elmo said. "The work can be hard. It can be hot. It is a very rewarding career, but to be successful, you must work hard, smart and be honest while having a good ethical character."

Douglas echoes his father's appreciation for Auburn and the CFWE, recognizing that his family is one of many who found new success and growth in tandem with the college itself.

"I am very proud of my father," said Douglas. "If it wasn't for an Auburn education, we would not be where we are today."



Recently CFWE celebrated another multi-generation forestry family at the 2024 spring graduation ceremony. Shown is Dean Janaki Alavalapati on the far left with recent grad Alex Warr on right, and from left to right center are his grandfather Wendon Warr, uncle Woodie Warr and father Toby Warr.

Center instills love of nature in CFWE student *By Amy Burtch*



**Kreher Preserve & Nature Center**

Michael Buckman, manager of the Kreher Preserve and Nature Center (KPNC), says the mission of the center most basically is “to instill a sense of stewardship or passion of nature” in people.

Max Nemeroff is the embodiment of that mission.

Currently a College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment (CFWE) student, Nemeroff has been a patron of the KPNC since he can remember, now working as its caretaker.

KPNC is an outreach program of CFWE, the area’s only nature center enabling people to connect with nature and providing environmental educational resources and programs to visitors and students alike.

**KPNC INFLUENCES STUDENT’S JOURNEY**

Nemeroff participated in KPNC’s summer camps every summer until he was 13 years old, the cutoff age. He still wanted to be involved with the KPNC, so he started as a counselor-in-training (CIT), volunteered as a summer camp assistant and later served as a counselor.

Nemeroff now works at KPNC as a caretaker; his responsibilities include land management, facilities and equipment maintenance, animal care and environmental education. He appreciates having a job that is outdoors with a flexible schedule.

*“Max’s time in various capacities at KPNC, from campus to CIT to counselor, taught him so much about the center and preserve that if anyone needs to know anything about the details of our operation, Max has that knowledge.”*

– Michael Buckman

Nemeroff has gained many skills working for KPNC, including working with children and leading young adults,

from his work as a counselor and as a volunteer group coordinator.

“I’ve learned leadership skills as I lead volunteer groups every day — it’s a nice way to gain practical experience,” said Nemeroff.

*“I coordinate college students, usually not CFWE students. Therefore, I get to teach them while leading them, so they normally leave KPNC knowing more about the environment than when they arrived.”*

– Max Nemeroff

According to Buckman, this demonstrates how Nemeroff is engaging the volunteers to connect them with nature.

“Max has a deep connection to the KPNC. He cares about our facilities, our visitors and our mission,” said Buckman. “In fact, he understands our mission better than most. It just clicked with him.”

**LOVE FOR OUTDOORS GUIDES COLLEGE PATH**

Nemeroff’s love for being outdoors and around animals born at KPNC influenced his decision to become a CFWE student at Auburn.

*“The interest started young, and I decided what I wanted to do with my life.”*

– Max Nemeroff

Nemeroff is exploring the academic options in this field. He took Wildlife Conservation History and Law fall semester, which focuses on the history, problems, laws and practices of U.S. wildlife conservation, and he found it interesting.

“I enjoy working with reptiles and amphibians, which is what I have the most experience in, but in the CFWE program, I am branching out to get a feel for what I want to do for a career,” said Nemeroff.

Nemeroff’s connection to KPNC benefitted his transition to Auburn’s campus. Through his participation in KPNC programs, he knew several of his Auburn professors before starting his freshman year.

“It gave me a foot in the door and made the professors more approachable. I learn better like that,” said Nemeroff.

“Even outside of Auburn, I’ve met all types of people through KPNC, like those in the Forestry Service and in biology and herpetology communities.”

**KPNC MISSION + FUTURE**

Louise Kreher Turner and her husband, Frank Allan Turner, donated 119 acres of forest land to CFWE in 1993 to ensure the acreage would become a nature preserve and educational resource for years to come.

Last year, KPNC leadership celebrated the center’s 30th anniversary, demonstrating the gift of property has fulfilled the Turner’s original intent.

KPNC, fully accessible year-round, comprises seven natural habitats and six miles of trails and serves more than 35,000 visitors per year, with 10,000-12,000 being program participants. It is open seven days a week, from dawn to dusk with free admission.

“We want to get as many community members as possible to know and understand nature in a way that helps them perceive why it is so wonderful and why it is worth keeping and protecting,” said Buckman.

“We want them to fall in love with nature.”

**KPNC GROWTH + IMPACT CONTINUE**

A new environmental education building, which is under construction with an anticipated late July completion, will significantly impact Auburn, CFWE, KPNC and the greater community, Buckman said. It will be the only building like it at the university, plus the first nature center building of its kind in the region.

The center will be free and open to the public, and Buckman anticipates a strong amount of engagement through the center, which offers the potential of a nature-based kindergarten-through-fifth-grade program and afterschool programming.

*“This is a fantastic outdoor classroom for Auburn’s faculty. There will be experiential learning opportunities, not just with the CFWE, but also with the College of Architecture, Design and Construction, the Samuel Ginn College of Engineering and the College of Agriculture.”*

– Michael Buckman

Buckman also shared that the building will be available as a special event venue for KPNC’s partners and community members.

**CONNECTING PEOPLE TO NATURE**

Nemeroff, Buckman and other KPNC team members work every day to ensure the center continues to promote its mission of connecting people with nature. And the new building will further that goal.

Nemeroff admitted that to visit, volunteer or work at the center takes a certain type of person.

“If you enjoy being outdoors, hot weather and bugs, there is something for you here,” said Buckman.

“But seriously, you can come and watch the birds or sit and listen to the streams. There are so many different opportunities for what you can do here.”

Those interested in supporting the KPNC and the new environmental education building construction project, can learn more online at [kpsc.auburn.edu](http://kpsc.auburn.edu).

Emmett & ViAnn Thompson Lectures in Forest Economics & Policy established in the CFWE

The Thompson family is establishing a new educational lecture series in the Auburn University College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment (CFWE). Designed to foster engagement among faculty, students and the community, the Emmett & ViAnn Thompson Lectures in Forest Economics & Policy will launch in 2025 and showcase topic experts of national and international acclaim.

Named after Emmett F. Thompson, founding dean of the CFWE, and his wife, ViAnn, this lecture series aims to enrich the college’s academic programs with invited speakers who possess expertise in some aspect of forest economics and policy.

Thompson began his career at Auburn as Department of Forestry head in 1977, which was then part of the School of Agriculture. Later, in 1984, he was named the first dean of Auburn’s School of Forestry — a landmark designation as a stand-alone entity. Thompson is also credited with leading the effort to establish the Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center and providing insight to erect what is now the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment Building in 2005.

ViAnn Brown Thompson grew up in South Dakota and received a nursing degree from the Fairview Hospital School of Nursing in Minneapolis, Minnesota. During her career, she served various nursing roles in South Dakota, North Dakota, Oregon and Virginia.

“When Vi and I along with our daughter, Meri, were discussing the idea of endowing a lecture series in the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment the general area of forest economics seemed a natural fit,” Thompson said. “At Auburn, I could always more than justify our programs by pointing to the economic importance of forests, forest landowners and the forest products industry in Alabama. We enjoyed particularly strong support from the forest products industry, as represented by the Alabama Forestry Association.”

Janaki Alavalapati, the Emmett F. Thompson Dean of the CFWE, says that the new lecture series embodies the dedication that the Thompsons have for land-grant education.

*“Emmett and Vi exemplify Auburn University and its creed. They are always willing to contribute to something larger than themselves and continue to be a friend of the college and its endeavors. We are excited and privileged to establish an educational lecture series in their name.”*

– Dean Alavalapati

Speakers invited for the lectures series in Forest Economics & Policy will encompass forest economics, forest markets, forest policy



Shown from left to right are Meri Pylant, ViAnne Thompson and Emmett Thompson.

and global trade. Attendees can expect to spark discussions with representatives and practitioners from a variety of experience levels from around the globe.

*“This lecture series will have many benefits such as interaction between the speakers and forest economics faculty, acquainting speakers with Auburn’s teaching and outreach activities and the possibility for future collaborative research opportunities.”*

– Emmett Thompson

“In establishing this lecture series, there are several benefits Vi and I hoped would be realized,” Thompson said.

Thompson adds that although there will be year-to-year differences, the series will emphasize bringing an individual with documented expertise in forest economics and policy to Auburn.

Stay tuned to the CFWE’s channels to learn more about this upcoming lecture series, event dates, subjects and location. For more information about current events, visit the CFWE’s events calendar.

Wadsworth contributes second gift to support wildlife scholarship



“As an Auburn graduate, I believe investing in Auburn University scholarships will always be a winner,” Wadsworth said.

Wadsworth was raised in Tuskegee, Alabama, where he worked on a farm raising cattle, building fences, bailing hay and completing other farm chores. During his time in agriculture, he gained an appreciation for the environment and the creatures that call it home.

“I enjoyed seeing the different seasons of the year come and go,” Wadsworth said. “Observing the plants and animals of the natural world is a very enjoyable experience.”

He received a Bachelor of Science in mechanical engineering from Auburn and has established scholarships in the Samuel Ginn College of Engineering, the Chilton County Auburn Club and, more recently, the CFWE — creating the James D. Wadsworth Endowed Scholarship.

For a student to be eligible for this scholarship endowment, he or she must be enrolled in the CFWE with a declared major in Wildlife Ecology and Management. The undergraduate is also preferred to reside in one of the southeastern states. However, if a student from these states cannot be identified, the scholarship will be awarded to another qualified student.

Students who receive this scholarship will be allotted funding for one academic year. Prior recipients of the endowment may also be considered in subsequent years.

Janaki Alavalapati, the Emmett F. Thompson Dean of the CFWE, shares his gratitude for this educational endowment.

“Our students are provided many educational opportunities through generous gifts,” said Alavalapati.

*“Alumni donations like the Wadsworth Scholarship Endowment for Wildlife are special because they demonstrate the impact of an Auburn education. We sincerely thank Jim and his family for their generosity.”*

– Dean Alavalapati

For more information about CFWE undergraduate award opportunities, visit the undergraduate student awards and scholarships section of the CFWE website, [www.cfwe.auburn.edu](http://www.cfwe.auburn.edu).

The James D. Wadsworth Endowed Scholarship will continue to open more doors for College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment (CFWE) undergrads, thanks to another substantial gift. This educational opportunity is supported by Auburn University alumnus Jim Wadsworth so that CFWE undergraduates may share his appreciation for wildlife and the environment.

Wadsworth has served with The Nature Conservancy since 1996 and supported other conservation efforts, such as reintroducing mussel species and creating an easement adjacent to the Cahaba River National Wildlife Refuge.

In 2018, Wadsworth was awarded the Land Conservationist of the Year by the Alabama Wildlife Federation. More recently, the Alabama chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals awarded him the National Philanthropy Day Award.

*“I believe this endowment will help others to appreciate our natural heritage and protect these special places for future generations.”*

– James Wadsworth

## Mayford Daniel Williams Endowed Scholarship established in honor of 1954 CFWE alumnus

A new scholarship to benefit forestry undergraduates was established in the Auburn University College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment (CFWE). The Mayford Daniel Williams Endowed Scholarship, a planned gift in honor of 1954 forestry graduate Mayford Daniel Williams, will support CFWE undergraduates who share Williams' love for forestry.

Mayford Williams was born and raised in Lenoir City, Tennessee. After graduating high school in 1941, he answered his country's call by enlisting in the United States Navy during World War II. He was stationed aboard the USS Biloxi, a battle-hardened cruiser that saw significant action in the Pacific Theater including the landing at Iwo Jima.

After returning home from the war, he married his wife, Inez, in 1947 and established their home in Lenoir City. Three years later, he enrolled at Auburn University, choosing to study forestry in what was then the Department of Forestry in the School of Agriculture. He was the first member of his family to attend college. After a successful academic career, he graduated from Auburn with a Bachelor of Science in 1954.

Williams' education provided the skills and knowledge necessary for a career in managing natural resources. Post-graduation, Williams spent 16 months working at one of Auburn's

Experiment Forests. Upon returning home to Tennessee, he worked in both state service and private industry with the Tennessee Department of Agriculture Division of Forestry and Willamette Corporation (subsequently bought by Weyerhaeuser Corporation) managing timberland. In 1980, he and Inez moved to Alabama where Williams established his own forestry consulting business in Cullman.

After a 35-year career in forestry, he retired and moved to Birmingham, Alabama. Several years later, he moved to Memphis to be near his daughter, Beverly Danley. Williams passed away in 2016, leaving a legacy of hard work, determination and resilience.

Continuing his legacy is important to Danley and her family.

*"My father loved Auburn University and felt a special connection to it throughout his life. This scholarship which my husband and I have established in his memory from an estate bequest, will continue my father's legacy of support and love for Auburn in perpetuity."*

– Beverly Danley

Danley is an Auburn alumna in the College of Sciences and Mathematics (COSAM) where she began the



Mayford D. Williams (center) and classmates at Auburn University forestry summer camp in Little River State Forest circa 1952.



Mayford Daniel Williams with his daughter, Beverly Danley

academic preparation for her career as a cardiologist. She has since retired and established another scholarship in COSAM, the Dr. Beverly and Col. James W. Danley Endowed Scholarship. Further, Danley has also donated to other COSAM initiatives and served on the COSAM Advisory Board, giving back to her alma mater.

According to Williams' family, he had a passion and love for the outdoors. Some of his hobbies included fishing, hunting, watching Southeastern Conference football (especially Auburn football) and cultivating roses. Williams loved Auburn so much that a descendant of the original Auburn Oaks was planted in his memory in Samford Park near the iconic Samford Hall.

Passing down the same opportunity for education is important to Williams' family.

"As the first in his family to attend college, he felt strongly that his Auburn education changed his life," Danley said. "It would have been his wish for an Auburn education to be as impactful in the scholarship recipient's life as it was in his own."

In keeping with that wish, the Mayford Daniel Williams Endowed Scholarship will continue to provide a life-changing opportunity for an Auburn student, just as it was for Williams.'

To learn more about giving opportunities, visit [cfwe.auburn.edu](http://cfwe.auburn.edu).



## A passion for plants drives alumni award recipient's career *By Amy Burtch*



Dean Janaki Alavalapati and Alabama Extension specialist Nancy Loewenstein are shown during the CFWE's recent awards celebration where Loewenstein was presented the 2023 CFWE Outstanding Alumni Award.

Self-proclaimed "plant nerd," Auburn and Alabama Extension Specialist Nancy Loewenstein has always loved being outdoors and working with plants.

That passion recently paid off, as she was named the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment's 2023 Outstanding Alumni Award recipient.

Loewenstein earned her bachelor's degree in forest management at Auburn in 1982. And although her educational and professional career took her to different locales where she earned several more degrees, she eventually landed back on campus in 2002. Luckily for colleagues, students, industry professionals and community members, she never left.

This recent award puts a nice cap on a fruitful career that will soon close when Loewenstein retires from the university in August.

### OUTSTANDING IN MANY WAYS

President of the Alabama Invasive Plant Council (ALIPC)

Michelle Isenberg nominated Loewenstein for this recognition, noting how she is engaged both professionally and personally in her industry and community.

"Nancy volunteers her time with invasive species projects in the Auburn and Opelika area, as well as serving as a church elder and participating in church choirs," said Isenberg, who pointed to Loewenstein's leadership and career achievements as a testimony to her strength as an alumni award candidate.

A charter member and executive director of the ALIPC, Loewenstein has been recognized for excellence in extension, teaching and outreach, including being named the Forest Conservationist of the Year by the Alabama Wildlife Federation and a National Project Learning Tree (PLT) Outstanding Educator Honoree. Loewenstein also received the National PLT's Leadership in Education Award.

Lastly, Loewenstein has produced numerous Extension and academic

publications. She was also a co-author of the popular Forest Service book Field Guide for the Identification of Invasive Plants in Southern Forests.

### SUPPORTING HER COMMUNITY

The ALIPC started in 2003, with Loewenstein as a charter member.

"From that first meeting, I wanted to be involved. It just clicked," said Loewenstein.

When the council's leader, Jim Miller, contemplated retirement, he encouraged creation of an executive director position with Loewenstein in mind. This leadership role became part of Loewenstein's Extension job description because so many important stakeholders are involved with the ALIPC, and her participation is a solid outreach tool.

"Nancy goes above and beyond to ensure ALIPC's growth and outreach for its grants and programs," said Isenberg. "She travels extensively, delivering informative invasive species talks to landowners, teachers and professionals for both ALIPC and Extension."

Loewenstein noted her work with the Chewacla Invasive Plant Working Group (CIPWG) as a charter member and secretary since 2021 has also been "fruitful and meaningful" for her.

She sits on the board of this all-volunteer organization, which aims to improve the overall ecology of Chewacla State Park in Auburn through control of invasive plants. Working with Alabama State Parks, the

group secures grants and schedules work days to remove invasive plant species from the park and has made a "decent dent" with its efforts.

### CONTINUING HER IMPACT

Even though Loewenstein anticipates doing what she calls "regular retirement stuff," like hiking, being outdoors and reading, she will continue her work with the ALIPC and CIPWG — therefore, continuing to use her expertise to impact her community.

"It's cool to have ended up back at Auburn," said Loewenstein. "When I was an undergrad, it never occurred to me that I would end up back at Auburn teaching dendrology, one of my favorite classes."

Loewenstein said she will miss her interactions with students but feels good about retirement, especially with her recent alumni award honoring her many years on campus.

*"We applaud Dr. Loewenstein's lifetime contributions to teaching and outreach. Though we will miss her presence, we anticipate she will continue to play a vital role within the Auburn community through her service and leadership."*

– Dean Alavalapati

