

RENEW

COLLEGE OF FOREST RESOURCES
ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

2017



MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™
COLLEGE OF FOREST RESOURCES

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COLLEGE OF FOREST RESOURCES ALUMNI NEWSLETTER 2017

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The College of Forest Resources is a unit in the Division of Agriculture, Forestry, and Veterinary Medicine at Mississippi State University.

The mission of the College of Forest Resources is to promote, support, and enable the management, conservation, and utilization of forest and other natural resources to benefit the stakeholders of Mississippi, the nation, and the world.



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CFR BY THE NUMBERS

584

STUDENTS (FALL 2017)

448

UNDERGRADUATES (FALL 2017)

93

MASTER'S STUDENTS (FALL 2017)

43

PH.D. STUDENTS (FALL 2017)

51

FACULTY (FISCAL YEAR 2017)

122

DEGREES AWARDED (2016/2017)

87

FRESHMEN (FALL 2017)

25.3

AVERAGE FRESHMEN ACT SCORE (FALL 2017)

\$1,769,942

GIFTS (FISCAL YEAR 2017)

\$288K

SCHOLARSHIPS (2016/2017)

30,729

ACRES IN THE BULLDOG FOREST (FISCAL YEAR 2017)

ON THE COVER: Wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture instructor Chris Ayers (right) is the recipient of the CFR Faculty Teaching Award. Ayers is the instructor for five courses including mammalogy, ornithology, and ecology. Pictured with wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture major Murry Burgess during an ornithology lab at the Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee Wildlife Refuge.

FROM THE DEAN

GREETINGS ALUMNI AND FRIENDS. IT IS A GREAT TIME to be a Bulldog and an alumnus of the College of Forest Resources. I am so proud of the natural resources leadership displayed by our students, faculty, staff, and alumni. Building on a long tradition of excellence, our students continue to receive national and international accolades for their leadership, scholarship, and service. Our alumni are placed in roles that allow them to influence conservation with positions of regional, national, and international importance. And our renowned faculty are developing future leaders through their instruction, research, and service.

Our 2017 student body of 584 students represents 448 undergraduates and 136 graduate students. Eighty-seven freshmen joined our college this fall, a group that continues to grow each year. We graduated 122 students in 2016/2017, and our placement is improving to nearly 100 percent for most majors.

Our Mississippi State University Student Chapter of the Society of American Foresters placed first in the quiz bowl this year and remains ranked as one of the top three student chapters in the nation. For 19 consecutive years, the students have been ranked in the top three in the nation. Likewise, our wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture students receive national and international accolades for their research and service. Our newly created sustainable bio-products major is growing and we anticipate a strong future for this program.

Ensuring student success is paramount in preparing the next generation of leaders. The Department of Forestry has recently initiated an early admittance graduate program for undergraduate students who meet academic criteria. Through this program, students are accepted into the forestry graduate program at the same time they begin their undergraduate program. Students also have the opportunity to receive both undergraduate and graduate credit for some courses. More of our students are gaining professional experience through summer internships, and then gaining employment upon graduation. Thank you to the many alumni who hire our students and allow them to gain this professional experience prior to graduation. Perhaps one of the most successful initiatives in the college is the Undergraduate Research Scholars Program. Allowing students to work alongside a professor as a junior colleague allows them to discover new knowledge, enhance their discipline-specific expertise, and gain critical thinking skills. The opportunity also lets these students contribute to vital conservation research on a local, national, and international scale.

Our scholarships continue to increase, allowing us to recruit the best and brightest students. Thanks to our wonderful alumni and friends, in 2016-2017, we awarded \$288,000 in scholarships. The impact these scholarships have on our future leaders is significant. So many alumni have told me they give back because they



remember how vital scholarships were to them when they were in college. Thank you for your support and confidence in our students.

Our alumni and friends have provided so much support to our programs this year. The Bulldog Forest currently includes nearly 40 forests across almost 32,000 acres. This year we were able to name an endowed professorship and a faculty fellowship through gifts from the St. John and Morton families. These gifts are so important and allow us to recruit and retain the best faculty.

Our alumni continue to provide outstanding leadership in natural resources. In this issue of *Renew*, we feature a female forester who is working with landowners and companies to market their timber. We also feature an alumnus who is helping landowners through his work with the Farm Services Agency. And in Arkansas the future of natural resources looks great, as five of our alumni are working to sustain wildlife and fisheries populations. I hope you enjoy the features we have prepared on prominent alumni expanding our influence in conservation and beyond.

In this magazine, you will find many of the accolades our alumni, faculty, staff, and students have received throughout 2017. The future looks bright for your alma mater. I hope you enjoy this issue of *Renew*.

Thank you for helping the College of Forest Resources at Mississippi State University become one of the best natural resources programs in the nation. I appreciate your support. Please stop by and visit when you are in Starkville.

George M. Hopper
Dean

OUTSTANDING ALUMNI



2017 ALUMNAE OF THE YEAR

Elizabeth Rooks-Barber

ELIZABETH “LIZ” ROOKS-BARBER IS A 1987 DOUBLE major graduate in forestry and wildlife and fisheries. Barber is vice president, co-owner and co-founder of Barber and Mann Inc. Her firm helps landowners across the United States protect their properties from development through conservation easements. As a certified wildlife biologist, Liz specializes in conservation planning, land use mitigation, natural resource management, and wildlife consulting. She has extensive expertise in working with non-government organizations in lands and resource protection. Barber is a highly-respected leader and considered one of the premier conservationists in the Southeast.



2017 ALUMNI FELLOW

Steven L. Pung

STEVEN L. “STEVE” PUNG IS A 1980 WOOD SCIENCE and technology graduate. A native of Oak Island, North Carolina, Pung has amassed experience with Weyerhaeuser Company and Eggers Industries, among others in his 37-year career in the forest products field. Since 2005, Pung has been vice president of technology and innovation for Columbia Forest Products. He joined the company as a division engineer in 1995 and has held progressive roles. One of his greatest career achievements has been the development and commercialization of a bio-based adhesive system to replace formaldehyde-based adhesives in interior composite wood panels. Pung is a recipient of the EPA Presidential Green Chemistry Challenge Award.

FORESTRY KEEPS BRINGING OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES FOR GINA THOMAS

BY **MONIQUE HARRISON-HENDERSON**



FLORIDA NATIVE GINA THOMAS (FORESTRY 1995) GREW up in a paper mill-dominated town, where timber and a thriving paper mill were critical to economic life.

“I lived a mile north of the paper mill,” the former Cantonment, Florida, resident recalled. “The whole community was basically centered around the paper mill. Everybody in my family worked there and in the summers when I was in college, I worked inside the paper mill, too.”

Because she was surrounded by so many paper mill employees, Thomas said she never gave much thought to the idea that forestry is a male-dominated industry. When it was time for her to decide what career she wanted to pursue, forestry just felt like a natural fit.

“The thought of being a female in the field really didn’t cross my mind,” she said. “I just knew that I found it intriguing to see how the industry worked in our community. I knew it was something I wanted to explore.”

Thomas built her forestry foundation at Mississippi State University, where she earned a degree in forest management and became a registered forester, graduating in 1995. After graduating, she worked as a county forester in Rankin County. After

the birth of her son, who is now 18, she took some time off from full-time work.

Now, she works for Forest Resource Consultants, a company based in Macon, Georgia, and with a satellite office located just outside of Quitman. In her current job, she helps both private landowners and timber investment companies with the marketing and managing of their timber.

Thomas said she works to help people understand the value of their timber, when they should harvest and the best time to sell. The company also helps to manage hunting leases.

She said her job looks a little different each day.

Some days, she spends all eight hours out in the field, examining and collecting critical data on the timber found on clients’ land. Other days, she might spend part of the day in the office preparing a timber sale contract.

“Every day is a little different and that is something I absolutely love about what I do,” said Thomas.

She said it’s important for foresters to be comfortable spending time working alone in remote locations.

“I work by myself a lot,” she said. “Sometimes, I might be out

Photo by Paula Merritt/The Meridian Star





by myself all day. That's not something everyone is comfortable with and not something everyone enjoys."

Still, Thomas said she isn't a loner and truly enjoys interacting with clients and other foresters.

"One of my favorite things about this industry is the relationships that you have the opportunity to build," she said. "I really do enjoy meeting people and working to help them And I really enjoy my colleagues in the field. There is just something about foresters. They are real salt of the earth people."

Thomas said a variety of skills are necessary to be effective in forestry. Math and science knowledge is essential. Being open to learning how to use new technology also is important, she said.

"The technology is definitely changing the field," she said. "When I first started working, we had very rudimentary technology—compasses and that kind of thing. But now we have elaborate GIS (geographic information/mapping) systems. We have photographs at our fingertips and we can know exactly where we are at any given time," she said. "Data collection is now done on ipads or handheld computers. You really have to stay current and be open to adapting to technology."

Thomas said that while she enjoys what she does now, she is always looking for a new challenge. She recently obtained her real estate license because the company she works for is beginning to conduct land sales and helping landowners to find or buy large tracks of land.

"I'm excited that we are embarking on this new opportunity," she said. "It's nothing I've experienced in the past but I always try to be open. It's really exciting." ♦

Monique Harrison-Henderson is a contributing writer for The Meridian Star. This article was first published in the Meridian Home & Style magazine, a publication of the Meridian Star. Reprinted with permission.

A RESOURCE FOR FARMERS

Demetrice Evans helps farmers when they need it most

BY VANESSA BEESON

MSU ALUMNUS DEMETRICE EVANS (FOREST PRODUCTS 2001) works as an agricultural program specialist for the United States Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency in Jackson, Mississippi. Evans spends his weekends on an 80-plus acre family farm in Starkville. (He also leases an additional 100+ acres from a neighbor.) Evans' grandparents purchased the land more than 75 years ago. Back then, it was a dairy farm. Now Evans raises nearly 50 head of cattle on the land.

"My grandparents were sharecroppers. Upon my grandfather's passing, the dairy was run by two of my uncles and was later converted to a small beef cattle operation. I started managing the farm in 2013 after purchasing cattle from my uncles, and have been implementing improvements to enhance forage quality and various conservation practices," Evans said.

Like many cattlemen, Evans also works to continuously improve the genetics of his herd.

"I've invested in some premium bulls over the years. I also took an artificial insemination class to learn AI and gain knowledge of embryo transplants," he said.

As a third generation farmer, Evans has innate understanding of the hard work, perseverance, and risk that comes with life on the farm. That understanding serves him well in his role with the Farm Service Agency. Evans makes sure other farmers have the tools they need to succeed. He oversees and/or assists with administering various price support programs for the Farm Service's 62 county offices throughout Mississippi. These offices serve the state's producers that manage a combined 10.8 billion acres of farmland throughout Mississippi. Evans' niche is specialty crops.

"One program I oversee is the Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program. It offers insurance for commercially-produced agricultural commodities for which crop insurance is not available. This program allows fruit and vegetable producers to be insured so they aren't at risk of losing their farm if they experience a substantial yield loss," he said.

Evans also works on livestock programs and has been detailed for special projects at the national level. Additionally, he administers training for more than 120 agency personnel on an annual basis.

Evans points to the mission of the USDA Farm Service Agency as inspiration for what he does day in and day out.

"The service seeks to 'deliver timely, effective programs and

services to America's farmers and ranchers to support them in sustaining our nation's vibrant agricultural economy, as well as to provide first-rate support for domestic and international food aid efforts," Evans points out. "My favorite part of the job is being able to assist producers and farmers at a time where they need us most to provide services that will help people stay in business."

While Evans grew up farming, a career in agriculture wasn't always his intended path. Right after high school, he saw himself in the wood products industry, specifically as the CEO of a furniture company. In college, Evans sought to learn the ins and outs of the furniture business, with the help of such mentors as Dr. Michael Barnes, Warren S. Thompson Professor of Wood Science and Technology.

"The supportive faculty and staff at Mississippi State coached me along the way in learning all about the wood products industry," he said. "Dr. Barnes, in particular, took me under his wing even before I started at MSU."

Evans earned an Associate of Applied Science in Forestry Technology at Itawamba Community College before coming to MSU. During his tenure as a bulldog, he earned a Bachelor of Science in Forest Products (now Sustainable Bioproducts) with a business minor. He was active in academics and industry while at MSU, serving as vice president of the Forest Products Society Student Chapter and as an ambassador for the College of Forest Resources. He was a Forest Products Outstanding Student, a member of the university's honors program, and of Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society, to name a few.

During the summer before his senior year at Mississippi State, Evans was selected to participate in the Young Home Furnishing Executive Program, which allowed college students to complete internships in an industry setting. The opportunity gave Evans a chance to learn from executives at both Leggett Platt out of Tupelo, Mississippi and the La-Z-Boy headquarters in Monroe, Michigan.



Demetrice Evans on the campus of Mississippi State University. (Photo by David Ammon)



Evans was also active in on-campus research, working in the MSU wood products environmental laboratory.

After graduating from MSU, Evans went on to earn a Master of Science in Wood Products Business Management from Penn State University. While at Penn State, he was lead author on two peer-reviewed journal articles.

“We received an 80,000 dollar grant from the U.S. Forest Service to research wood-related injuries within furniture companies,” he said. “Our results indicated that promoting a safety climate from a management standpoint helps control and decrease the amount of injuries that occur within the wood products sector.”

Upon earning his master’s, Evans returned to the Magnolia State to work for the Franklin Corporation in Houston, Mississippi, where he helped develop methods and procedures to improve business strategies and ultimately oversaw international sales before turning his focus to the agricultural industry.

In 2008, Evans decided to apply for a position with the Farm Service Agency. He started his career with USDA as a county

operations trainee. After one year in that role, he was promoted to a county executive director and was later elevated to the state office as agricultural program specialist in just a little over two years. While he possesses a clear admiration of the furniture industry, Evans has found a home in Farm Service Agency, a place he’s been for nearly a decade. He has come full circle by helping farmers like his grandparents succeed even when things don’t go as planned.

“I’m fortunate to not only have a job in the agricultural field, but to also maintain a family farm in rural Mississippi. Although I always envisioned owning a beef cattle operation, I never once thought I would have a prominent career with the United States Department of Agriculture. I now oversee farm programs through an agency my grandfather once depended upon,” Evans said. “While it’s unfortunate that I never had the opportunity of meeting him, I’m certain he would be proud that his legacy continues. There are many people that have positively impacted my life, which include my family and the wonderful people I met at Mississippi State. I am forever grateful.” ♣

Arkansas DAWGS

FIVE COLLEGE OF FOREST RESOURCES ALUMNI FOLLOWED unique paths and found themselves in the same place: the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, where they have put their Mississippi State education to use furthering Arkansas's natural resource goals. For the last century, the agency has overseen the protection, conservation, and preservation of the state's wildlife and fisheries resources, and through education and agency programs, it continues to further its mission.

Programs like the restoration of bobwhite quail to its native habitat in the grassy plains to the use of precision agriculture to create wildlife habitat on the unproductive parts of farmers' fields are part of why the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission remains on the cutting edge of wildlife and fisheries management.

Working in natural resources is often a passion that extends to the roots of one's childhood. For the Bulldogs in Arkansas, having the opportunity to share that passion with the public is a theme that stretches across their various roles and positions.

From Randy Zellers' job as communications director to Harvey Groves' job as a private land biologist, they all described the thrill of being able to make a difference in the way the public perceives the wilderness around them.

Using the experience Mississippi State gave them both in the classroom and through internships and other opportunities, the communications skills that their professors stressed, and the connections throughout the country that they established during their time at State, the Arkansas Bulldogs are an example of the excellent work of College of Forest Resources' alumni throughout the country.

*Bulldogs lead in
Arkansas game and fish
management*

BY SARAH BUCKLEITNER

BEN FIELD

BEN FIELD (FORESTRY 2010) is a private lands biologist for the north central region in Arkansas. His path to a natural resources calling was a slightly different route compared to some of his colleagues. He grew up in Monroe County, Mississippi, where he was a self-proclaimed “born and raised Bulldog fan.”

But while he always knew that Mississippi State University would be his choice if he decided to attend college, he didn’t grow up knowing that a career in natural resources was what he wanted.

“While I’ve always loved the outdoors, my family was more on the mechanics and welding side of things. So out of high school, I worked for a summer in a welding position. It was really hot and not all that much fun, so I decided to go a different route,” Field said.

That led him to Mississippi State’s College of Forest Resources, where he was able to enroll in a co-op program, which allowed him to alternately take classes and gain work experience in his field.

“It may have taken longer than a normal route through college, but I graduated with zero debt and two and a half years of work experience,” Field said.

His beefy resume right out of undergrad allowed him to land a job as a forester with Custer State Park in South Dakota, which



eventually led to the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission. Now, he works with private landowners to help them successfully manage the wildlife habitat on their land.

“We have a few different cost-share and federal and state programs that I’ll help walk them through,” Field explained.

While he has other duties as well, such as assisting local and regional staff when they burn wildlife management areas or do other habitat work, working with the landowners is his favorite part of the job.

“It’s incredibly fulfilling being able to help landowners achieve their goals. This light bulb goes off in their head when they realize that it actually works,” Field said.

Field says he’s looking forward to being part of the bobwhite quail restoration program that the state will soon begin.

“The country up here is made for bobwhite quail,” Field said. “It’s going to take a lot of work and a lot of money to get the habitat back to the way it once was, but it’s a really exciting prospect.”



HARVEY GROVES

that he would go into natural resources in some capacity, and eventually chose Mississippi State University because of its excellent reputation in wildlife and fisheries.

He earned a degree in fisheries from Mississippi State University, and cites Drs. Don Jackson, Lou D'Abramo, Steve Demarais, and Wes Burger as among his many mentors during his time at

the university, and as colleagues that he now regularly works with.

"Dr. Burger developed a profitability tool that can be applied through precision agriculture that determines which parts of a farmer's field are actually losing money. Through the federal Conservation Reserve Program, landowners can get funding to replace those unprofitable areas with wildlife habitat, which improves soil and water quality, reduces erosion, and increases habitat for vulnerable species," Groves explained. "It's one of the upcoming projects I'm most excited about."

After college, Groves managed a fishery in Mississippi before applying to the position with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission.

"It speaks to my excellent education at Mississippi State that I was able to get a job that required expertise in both wildlife and fisheries management," Groves said.

He has also found that his connections with Mississippi State continue in his professional life.

"When I first graduated and held my diploma in my hands, I didn't realize how valuable it really was. But as I've worked in the real world and seen how often our management decisions depend on research coming out of Mississippi State, I've come to realize that having a chance to be involved with all that influential work during undergrad was incredibly valuable," Groves said.

FOR HARVEY GROVES (WILDLIFE, FISHERIES & Aquaculture 1999), the value of his diploma from Mississippi State University is emphasized by the work he does daily.

Like Field, Groves is also a private land biologist. For the last nine years, he has helped manage nine counties throughout Arkansas. He spends his days visiting a variety of properties, encouraging landowners to enroll in the wildlife-friendly programs that are offered.

The variety in people and places is one of Groves' favorite parts of the job.

"Every day, I get to do something different. I may work with deer one day, waterfowl the next, and quail the day after. Since I cover such a broad range, I also get to visit a lot of different properties and talk to a lot of different people," Groves said.

But the variety from day to day is only one part of it for him; he also loves being able to solve problems for the landowners that he works with.

"My job essentially boils down to problem solving. I try to help landowners meet their objectives. They tell me what they want, and I try to solve their problem," Groves explained.

Groves has loved the outdoors since his childhood, where he grew up hunting and fishing in Clarksdale, Mississippi. He always knew

FOR RANDY ZELLERS (FORESTRY 1999), A LIFELONG passion for the outdoors and an undergraduate degree in forestry with a wildlife management concentration from Mississippi State led to a career dedicated to educating the public about their natural resources.

Randy Zellers is the assistant chief of the communications for the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission. While his days aren't spent working with landowners out in the field, he does the important work of creating material that spreads the word about what sort of work the agency is doing.

Zellers says that the best part of the job is being able to work with a group of people passionate about what they do.

"Everyone is here because they want to be here," he said. "It's in the nature of this kind of job to receive a lot of criticism, and so you know everyone who is in the office is there because they love the work they do."

He specifically is in charge of all print and online communications from annual game guides to daily social media posts. His desire to go into this line of work bloomed at Mississippi State.

"My professors made it very clear that for all of the stuff we were learning, if we couldn't communicate it to the public, it was useless. I took that to heart and spent an extra year taking just communications courses," Zellers said.

He went on to get a graduate degree from University of Southern Mississippi, and then accepted a job as a copywriter at Cabela's.

"It was a really cool experience getting to work for Cabela's, but at the end of the day I didn't feel like I had done what I wanted to as far as writing about issues that were important to the world. So I ended up at Arkansas Game and Fish Commission."

One of the first articles he published in his new position was by one of his old College of Forest Resources professors, Dr. Rick Kaminski.

"Dr. Kaminski actually was the person who told me I had an uphill battle when I first came to forestry and wildlife management. I had pursued an engineering degree for a year before switching and my grades weren't stellar. He was really straightforward about how hard I would have to work," Zellers said.

But while the tough words might have discouraged some, they only spurred Zellers to work even harder.

"From that point on, it was a challenge to show him what I could do. Then I got my job at the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission and his research on waste rice was the first thing I ran in our magazine," Zellers said.

"He was one of the first faces I saw in the wildlife and fisheries world, and he said what I needed to hear."



**RANDY
ZELLERS**



JASON OLIVE

water a lot and deal with fish, and so I decided to come to Mississippi State University for my undergrad,” Olive explained.

During his time in the College of Forest Resources, Olive became interested in all different aspects of fisheries, and had a chance to rub shoulders with some of the giants in the field.

“I had a chance to work with Dr. Don Jackson as a research technician. At the time, he was the president of the American Fisheries Society. And I had classes taught by Drs. Hal Schramm and Steve Miranda, who are two of the most well-known fisheries researchers in the United States,” Olive said.

These connections smoothed the way for his master’s degree at Mississippi State University, and also helped him create a professional network within

the field. Right out of his master’s degree, he was able to work for the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission as an assistant fisheries biologist.

“That was my first job. I did it for about five years, and then had an opportunity to move to Northeast Mississippi in Tupelo and work as a district supervisor for the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks. I was excited to get back into that part of the world,” Olive said.

But love had different plans for him.

“I got married to a former acquaintance from Arkansas, and moved back to the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission as a district fisheries supervisor. After that I was slowly able to climb my way up the ranks,” Olive said.

His advice for current College of Forest Resources students?

“Go to graduate school. And be willing to move around. If you go and do a good job somewhere, eventually you will be able to move back home if that’s your desire. A wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture degree from MSU will open more doors for you than you can imagine.”

FOR JASON OLIVE (WILDLIFE, FISHERIES & AQUACULTURE 2002, 2004), the best part of his job is having the opportunity to help direct aquatic conservation related policy within Arkansas. Olive is the assistant chief of fisheries management for the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission. He supervises all of the fisheries biologists in the southern two-thirds of the state, the black bass management program, and the data analyst for the fisheries division.

“It’s a mix between dealing with the political side of things, and being involved in the fisheries management that’s happening on the ground. I get to represent the agency on a lot of statewide working groups on water quality and quantity issues. It’s meaningful being involved in policy-related decision making and working to affect policy at higher levels,” Olive said.

His desire to make bigger changes in the world started with an initial love of the outdoors.

“I grew up on the Tennessee River, fishing all the time in northern Alabama. That led me to pursue a degree where I could be on the

DALLAS HARRELL (WILDLIFE, FISHERIES & Aquaculture 2011), a field biologist within the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, didn't always know he wanted to be in natural resources.

"I started out as a nursing major, and was accepted into two RN programs. I learned very quickly that I didn't want to work inside for a living," Harrell said.

With medicine on the mind, he thought he might like to be vet.

"I've always loved animals. I grew up on a cattle/chicken farm in central Mississippi. My love for hunting started when my dad took me deer hunting when I was 8. The more I pursued hunting and fishing, the more I realized that I loved natural resources, and would love the opportunity to work outside," Harrell said.

At that point he enrolled at Mississippi State University, and immediately started looking for jobs within the College of Forest Resources.

"I'd recommend that everyone try to work in their field while they are studying. It leads to great networking and experience. I worked at the deer research facility for a little over a year, and the next summer I went to Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks and did an internship there," Harrell explained. "Also, while at MSU, I held two more wildlife technician jobs working for Mississippi State University and the University of Tennessee."

Harrell named former professor Dr. Robbie Kroger as one of his mentors, saying that

while he was very hard and strict, he taught his students to expect only the best from themselves. These high expectations led to his first job out of college with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission.

"I got a full time position as a natural resource program technician, and then slowly moved my way up into a position as a biologist. It's way more my speed—initially I was working with predominately waterfowl areas, and now I can work with deer and turkey, which is where I really wanted to be," Harrell said.

His favorite parts of his job are any that include being outside. "I get to do a lot of cool stuff, like trapping feral pigs and using prescribed fire to help manage our landscape," Harrell said.

But perhaps the most exciting thing in the works for Harrell is that the area he manages was recently named a quail focal area.

"My number one goal for years to come will be trying to restore quail habitat. We have a lot of glades on the area that have become engulfed with Eastern Red Cedar, and the goal is to remove those cedars and return them to native vegetation. It will take multiple methods and lots of work, but it's neat that we'll be able to restore parts of our state back into an early successional stage to not only benefit quail, but many other wildlife species," Harrell said. ♣



**DALLAS
HARRELL**

MSU PROFESSOR NAMED ST. JOHN FAMILY ENDOWED PROFESSOR

BY KAREN BRASHER

BRONSON STRICKLAND HAS BEEN NAMED THE St. John Family Endowed Professor of Wildlife Management in the College of Forest Resources at Mississippi State University.

A wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture extension professor; Strickland has led a wide-ranging educational program in applied wildlife science since his arrival at MSU in 2006. In the last five years, he has participated in more than 70 workshops, assisting landowners with improved game management. Additionally, he has been awarded over \$2 million in external grants and has produced 22 peer-reviewed technical publications.

Strickland, who also holds a research appointment in the MSU Forest and Wildlife Research Center, co-directs the Deer Ecology and Management Laboratory at Mississippi State, one of the premier deer management research units in the country. He works closely with Steve Demarais, the Dale H. Arner Professor of Wildlife Ecology and Management in the Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture and co-director of the MSU Deer Lab.

Together, they have developed three smart phone applications related to improved management of white-tailed deer, one of Mississippi's most economically important game species. The duo also began Deer University podcasts in 2017 to explain how individuals can use deer research to improve hunting and management experiences. Nineteen episodes are currently available for download at <http://www.extension.msstate.edu/deeruniversity>.

"It is an honor to be named the St. John Endowed Professor of Wildlife Management," Strickland said. "I am so thankful to the St. John family for supporting wildlife education to ensure valuable resources are managed today and into the future."

The endowed professorship was established by Mississippi State University alumni Drew and Kathy St. John of Madison, Mississippi. The gift is especially important to the St. Johns, who are lifelong wildlife enthusiasts and conservationists. In maintaining a family farm near Louise, the couple implements wildlife and forestry management practices with an emphasis on white-tailed deer and waterfowl habitats.

"Drew and Kathy St. John are special friends of our college and their ongoing support demonstrates their dedication to our university and the advancement of our state," said George Hopper, dean of the College of Forest Resources. "Their gift will forever have an impact on our students and faculty through enhanced learning, discovery, and engagement."

Drew St. John, who currently serves as CEO of Jackson-based New South Access and Environmental Solutions, graduated in 1980 from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences with a bachelor's degree in landscape contracting and management. During his time as a student, he served as the university's "Bully" mascot from 1976-1978.

A 1979 marketing graduate from the College of Business, Kathy St. John is a retired contracts consultant for Kentucky-based NAPA HealthCare Connection, LLC. Beyond financially supporting MSU, she also serves on the advisory board for the business college's Department of Marketing.

Strickland earned his bachelor's degree from the University of Georgia and a master's from Texas A&M University. He earned a Ph.D. from Mississippi State University. ♣

Find out more about the MSU Deer Lab at <http://msudeer.com>.

Dr. Bronson Strickland researching
white-tailed deer at the MSU Deer Lab.
(Photo submitted)



MSU PROFESSOR NAMED JAMES R. MORETON FELLOW IN SUSTAINABLE BIOPRODUCTS

BY VANESSA BEESON

LONGTIME FACULTY MEMBER **DAN SEALE** HAS been named the inaugural James R. Moreton Endowed Fellow in the College of Forest Resources at Mississippi State University.

The James R. Moreton Fellow in Sustainable Bioproducts was established through a gift from James Reginald Moreton, a 1956 mechanical engineering alumnus. After a career in banking as founder and CEO of First Federal Saving and Loan, Moreton moved into the industrial access mat business. Access mats provide temporary roadways and work platforms during the construction of powerlines, roads and bridges, pipelines, oil fields, and other heavy industrial settings. The Moreton family had a long history in the timber business so access mats, made from large pieces of wood, were a natural fit for Moreton.

“Mr. Moreton knew of Mississippi State University’s work in research, development, and technical assistance to this industrial wood products sector,” said Rubin Shmulsky, sustainable bioproducts professor and department head. “Ultimately, Mr. Moreton provided the fellowship with the hope that the Department of Sustainable Bioproducts would continue its leadership role among land-grant universities in this discipline as a means of generating economic activity for the state and region.”

James R. Moreton Fellow, Dan Seale, has spent his career committed to research and development for Mississippi’s timber and lumber industries. Seale is

also a Warren S. Thompson Professor of Wood Science and Technology.

Shmulsky pointed out that Dr. Seale has spent considerable time and effort developing ways and means of testing mat timbers and billets, including quantifying mat strength and stiffness and extending mat longevity.

“One of the first questions Dr. Seale asks before taking on a new challenge is: ‘How will this potential activity impact our closest stakeholders?’ If the answer is in a positive way, then he’ll likely pursue the activity,” Shmulsky said. “Dr. Seale’s research answers critical questions and finds innovative ways to positively impact the access mat industry and this support from the Moreton family will further enhance this important work. We are thankful for the opportunity to have worked with Jimmy Moreton, his daughter Kathy and son-in-law Drew St. John, all avid bulldogs. It’s a special situation when the MSU bulldog connection can be made across multiple generations, multiple business sectors, and multiple university facets.”

Seale earned his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in agricultural economics from Mississippi State University. He earned a Ph.D. in applied economics from Clemson University. 🍀

Find out more about the Department of Sustainable Bioproducts in the College of Forest Resources, visit www.cfr.msstate.edu/bioproducts.



Dan Seale, center, is congratulated by Dean George Hopper and MSU President Mark Keenum.
(Photo by Karen Brasher)



COLLEGE NEWS



MSU WAS AGAIN NAMED A TREE CAMPUS USA

MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY HAS been named a Tree Campus USA, by the Arbor Day Foundation. This is the fourth consecutive year the university has been awarded this designation. As a campus with more than 10,000 trees

on 1,500 acres, MSU met five core standards of sustainable campus forestry to earn the accolade. Marcus Measells, extension associate in the Department of Forestry, serves as chair of the 10-person MSU Tree Campus USA Advisory Committee.

THOMASSON LUMBER CEO IS 2017 CARLTON OWEN SPEAKER

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF Philadelphia-based Thomasson Lumber provided this year's 2017 Carlton N. Owen Lecture Series. Pat Thomasson spoke on the topic, "Assets in the Wood Industry: Planting for the Future." Early in her career she held positions with Arthur Andersen in New Orleans and the Mississippi Secretary of State's Security Division. In 1996, at the request of her family, Thomasson returned home to work in the family lumber business. She currently serves the company as CEO and chairman of the board. Thomasson is past president of Mississippi Lumber Manufacturers Association and was named

the 2014 Business Woman of the Year by the Mississippi Business Journal. She holds bachelor's and master's accounting degrees from the University of Mississippi. Established in 1972, Thomasson Lumber is a manufacturer, supplier, and producer of wood utility poles, and ships to nearly every state in the continental U.S. and to more than 10 countries worldwide. The company is a certified Women's Business Enterprise. The Owen Lecture Series was established nearly two decades ago in MSU's College of Forest Resources by the Greenville, South Carolina, resident and 1974 MSU graduate for whom it is named. The program focuses on natural resource conservation issues.

FORESTRY PROFESSOR NAMED HEAD OF MSU COASTAL RESEARCH AND EXTENSION CENTER

JAMES E. HENDERSON HAS BEEN selected head of the Mississippi State University Coastal Research and Extension Center. Henderson oversees the daily operations of the MSU Extension Service and Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station in the southeastern region. Coastal is one of four Research and Extension Centers in the state. It is the hub of research and extension education programs for 21 counties and four branch experiment stations, including the Beaumont Horticulture Unit, the McNeil Research Unit, the White Sand Unit, and the South Mississippi Branch Experiment Station. Henderson also directs operations at the Crosby Arboretum, the Southeast's premier native plant conservatory. Henderson earned a bachelor's in forestry from Louisiana Tech University, a master's in forestry and a second master's in business administration from Mississippi State. He holds a doctorate in agricultural economics from Louisiana State University.





NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC FEATURES MSU FACULTY RESEARCH

ECOLOGICAL RESEARCH BY FACULTY MEMBERS IN MISSISSIPPI State University's Forest and Wildlife Research Center and Department of Biological Sciences was featured in a recent article by National Geographic. Titled "How a 3-Ton Mess of Dead Pigs Transformed This Landscape," the article discusses a mass mortality experiment led by **MARCUS LASHLEY**, assistant professor of wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture at MSU's College of Forest Resources. The article is available online at <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2017/09/dead-feral-pig-science-ecology/>.

In addition to Lashley, collaborators include MSU biological sciences assistant professors Brandon Barton and Heather Jordan, along with Jeff Tomberlin, associate professor and forensic and investigative sciences program director at Texas A&M University. Numerous MSU wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture students as well as biological sciences students also contributed to the project. Barton said the purpose of the experiment was to explore the effects that a mass mortality event, or a large number of deceased animals in an environment, could have on an ecosystem and its inhabitants. Since they could not predict a mass mortality event, Barton and his colleagues created their own, utilizing the university's **JOHN W. STARR MEMORIAL FOREST** off Mississippi Highway 25 south of Starkville as the research site. Lashley contacted colleagues at USDA and other state and federal agencies that have removal programs in place to help with the invasive feral swine population, which causes problems for agriculture in the South, especially the Mississippi Delta. His efforts helped the team acquire 6,000 pounds of invasive feral swine carcasses for the summer 2016 research experiment. The team observed a decrease in the pig carcass population as a direct effect of maggots, vultures, and armadillos. The indirect effects experienced by trees and plants were also explored.

SIBERIAN REWILDING EXPERT AT MSU

A RENOWNED SIBERIAN SCIENTIST PRESENTED HIS work on rewilding large herbivores in Siberia. Nikita Zimov, a Russian scientist and director of Pleistocene Park, a 14,000-acre nature reserve in the Siberian Arctic, presented a seminar titled "Rewilding megafauna in the Siberian Arctic to mitigate climate change." The departments of Forestry and Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture co-hosted Zimov's talk.

HEATHER ALEXANDER, assistant forestry professor, and **MARCUS LASHLEY**, assistant wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture professor, initiated Zimov's invitation. Alexander and Lashley collaborated on a pilot study in Pleistocene Park, where five species of herbivores have been rewilded or reintroduced. Researchers installed game cameras across a gradient of animal use while also measuring soil conditions and vegetation characteristics. Lashley studies disturbance ecology, animal behavior, and complex trophic interactions in food webs, while Alexander focuses on climate warming, wildfire severity, and forest recovery. Alexander has traveled to Siberia every year since 2010, studying the region's massive wildfires and their impact on climate change. Zimov, who runs the Northeast Science Station in Cherskiy, Russia, has served as a collaborator on Alexander's various projects in the area. Zimov's hypothesis, and the focus of his talk, is that large herbivores will transform Pleistocene Park into an eventual grassland, or a steppe, thereby protecting

vulnerable permafrost, or perennially frozen soils. Specifically, Zimov expects that rewilding will slow the melting of yedoma permafrost, a carbon- and ice-rich Pleistocene-age permafrost found in vast quantities across the Siberian Arctic. Alexander explained that the longer the yedoma stays intact; the less carbon will



be released into the atmosphere. Alexander said that during the Pleistocene Age, often referred to as the Ice Age, a high density of megaherbivores including woolly mammoths roamed the land. These animals kept the system in an active grassland state because they pushed down woody vegetation while grazing. Zimov purports that the animals can protect the permafrost by trampling the snow during the winter so that the ground is more exposed to air temperatures and stays colder. He also points out that the light-colored grasslands will reflect more of the sun's rays versus dark forests, which absorb it. Thus far, Zimov and his father, Sergey, who began rewilding the area in 1988, have reintroduced bison, musk ox, moose, horses, and reindeer to the park. The Zimovs' passion project has been featured in such publications as Science, The Atlantic, PBS News Hour, The Telegraph, and more.

FACULTY/STAFF AWARDS



DR. CHRIS AYERS

CFR TEACHING AWARD

Dr. Chris Ayers; instructor in the Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture; earned the 2017 CFR Faculty Teaching Award. Ayers is the instructor for five courses in wildlife and fisheries including mammalogy, ornithology, and ecology. He has been an instructor in the department for three years. He carries the largest load of classes among faculty and teaches some of the largest classes in the department with several over 100 students. Ayers practices a diverse range of teaching methods that appeal to all different types of learners. When asked questions for which he does not have answers, he researches topics after class and on his own time and then emails the answers to his students.



DR. HEATHER ALEXANDER

FWRC RESEARCH AWARD

EARLY CAREER ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Dr. Heather Alexander, assistant professor in the Department of Forestry, earned the 2017 FWRC Research Award and the 2017 CFR/FWRC Faculty Early Career Achievement Award. During her three-year tenure, Alexander has garnered nearly \$1 million dollars in extramural funding. She has also produced 14 refereed publications, 60 conference presentations, and 11 graduate students. Alexander guides undergraduate and graduate students in research throughout the world. To date, she has supervised 13 undergraduate research projects. Alexander has served as panelist for National Science Foundation proposals and the NASA Terrestrial Ecosystem Program.



DR. JOHN AUDEL

CFR/FWRC

EXTENSION/OUTREACH AWARD

Dr. John Auel, assistant extension professor in the Department of Forestry, is the recipient of the 2017 CFR/FWRC Faculty Extension/Outreach Award. For the past 21 years, Auel has worked with loggers throughout Mississippi through the Professional Logging Manager program. The program is part of Mississippi's Sustainable Forestry Initiative State Implementation Committee. It organizes and provides courses for loggers to meet SFI training that is required for most of the wood using industry in our state. In the past three years, almost 6,000 individuals have participated in his programs.



DR. LESLIE BURGER

CFR/FWRC FACULTY SERVICE AWARD

Dr. Leslie Burger; assistant extension professor in the Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture; is the recipient of the 2017 CFR/FWRC Faculty Service Award. Burger advises over 50 undergraduate students as the department's undergraduate coordinator. She also participates in numerous recruitment activities for the college and department. Her activities are centered towards recruitment, retention, and professional development of CFR students. Burger also leads a strong extension program for youth, including Conservation Camps, 4-H, and BioBlitz. During her eight-year tenure at MSU, Burger has been an advocate for women in natural resources.



DORIS LEE MEMORIAL STAFF AWARDS

MARC MEASELLS, extension associate in the Department of Forestry, is the recipient of the Doris Lee Memorial Staff Award in the professional non-faculty category. Measells has been with the department for 12 years.

NICOLE MEDEIROS, business coordinator in the Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture; is the recipient of the Doris Lee Memorial Staff Award in the support staff category. Medeiros has been with the department for almost four years.

OTHER AWARDS

DR. BETH BAKER, assistant extension professor in wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture, received the 2017 Dr. Joe Street Outstanding Extension Ag and Natural Resources Award.

DR. FLORENT BLEDE, research associate in wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture, received the 2017 Research Support Award for the College of Forest Resources/Forest and Wildlife Research Center from the Office of Research and Economic Development and the Division of Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary Medicine.

DR. L. WES BURGER, associate director of the Forest and Wildlife Research Center, received the National Quail Symposium Award of Excellence presented by the National Bobwhite Technical Committee and the National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative. Burger has spent much of his career contributing to bobwhite conservation including his leadership of the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Bobwhite Restoration Project and National Conservation Practice 33 monitoring program. He has authored or co-authored 14 book chapters, 52 symposia proceedings, and 90 peer-reviewed scientific publications, with much of it focused on bobwhite ecology and management. Burger was also named a Fellow of the Southeastern Conference Academic Leadership Development Program.

DR. LESLIE BURGER, assistant extension professor in wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture, received the 2017 Irvin Atly Jefcoat Excellence in Advising Award.

DR. JILEI ZHANG, sustainable bioproducts professor, received the 2017 Faculty Research Award for the College of Forest Resources/Forest and Wildlife Research Center from the Office of Research and Economic Development and the Division of Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary Medicine.

CHANGING OF THE GUARD

NEW FACULTY



DR. FREDERICO FRANÇA is an assistant research professor in the Department of Sustainable Bioproducts. His research interests include nondestructive testing and evaluation of southern pine lumber. He earned his Ph.D. in forestry resources from Mississippi State University. His doctoral research was on nondestructive evaluation of southern pine lumber. França is a native of Brazil.



DR. FRANK OWENS is an assistant research professor in the Department of Sustainable Bioproducts. He is a specialist in global marketing and sourcing of forest products. Fluent in Japanese, he earned his Ph.D. in forest resources from Mississippi State University. His research interests include statistical distributions of mechanical properties of lumber, nondestructive evaluation and testing, forest products marketing, importing/exporting, hardwood lumber trade, and structural equation modeling.



DR. YUNSANG KIM is an assistant professor in the Department of Sustainable Bioproducts. His research interests include conversion of woody and agricultural biomass into novel functional materials including nanocomposites, nanofibers, coatings, and components for building, electronics, and energy-related devices. He earned his Ph.D. from Georgia Institute of Technology. Prior to his position at MSU, he was a post doc at the University of Georgia.

RETIREMENTS



DR. HAL SCHRAMM, adjunct wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture professor and leader of the USGS Mississippi Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit retired after 40+ years of service. An international expert in fisheries populations and management, he was designated a Fellow of the American Fisheries Society in 2017 in tribute to his four decades of service. Specifically, he was cited for excellence in leadership, research, mentoring, resource management, and public outreach. He has advised both undergraduate and graduate students, and directed theses and dissertations for over 30 graduate students. A Southern Illinois University doctoral graduate, Schramm previously was inducted into the American Fisheries Society's Fisheries Management Hall of Excellence and selected for the Excellence in Public Outreach Award.

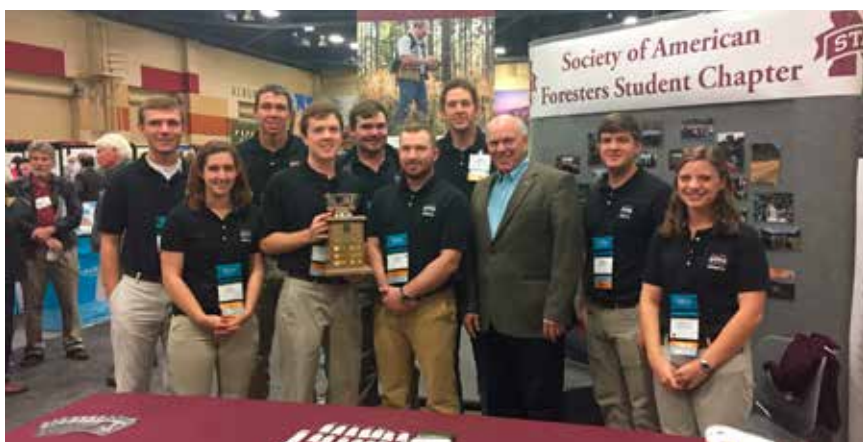
STUDENT NEWS



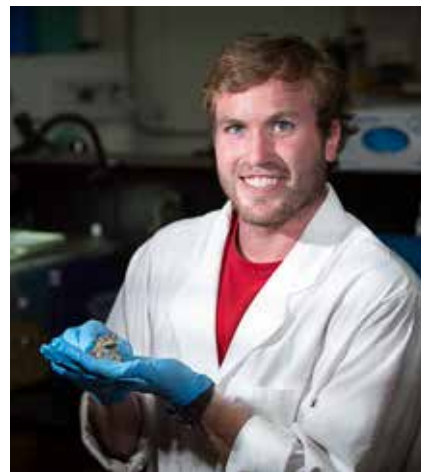
MSU HOSTS SOUTHEASTERN WILDLIFE CONCLAVE

THE MSU STUDENT CHAPTER OF THE Wildlife Society hosted the 2017 Southeastern Wildlife conclave, which annually provides college students with valuable hands-on training in wildlife management and conservation. Activities included a range of team field competitions,

quiz bowl, art and photography contests, guest speakers, and opportunities for professional development. The Southeastern Wildlife Conclave promotes networking and cooperation among students, faculty, and wildlife professionals while developing new knowledge and skills.



The **MSU STUDENT CHAPTER OF THE SOCIETY OF AMERICAN FORESTERS** won the quiz bowl during the annual meeting of the professional organization, competing against 31 other teams.



ANDREW HOUSE, wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture undergraduate student, is a U.S. Student Fulbright Scholar. House graduated in May 2017, and is now studying fish genomics at the University of Turku, specifically examining Atlantic salmon while pursuing a doctorate.



OLAN RAJI, sustainable bioproducts graduate student, won best scientific paper at the International Research Group on Wood Protection.

RICKS BURTON, forestry major, received 3rd place for his poster at the MSU Undergraduate Research Symposium in the Arts and Humanities category. Burton is under the direction of Dr. Courtney Siegert.

JEFF ROMAN CLAYTON, forestry undergraduate student, received the U.S. Forest Service Award for outstanding academic achievement and leadership.

ISABELLA DURHAM, wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture major, received the Mississippi Wildlife Federation's Scholarship.

TAMARA FRANÇA, sustainable bioproducts graduate student, received the international Schweighofer Prize. The award recognizes innovative ideas, technologies, products, and services that strengthen the competitiveness of the European forest-based sector.

MARIELA GANTCHOFF, graduate student in wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture, was named a Mississippi State University Graduate School Student Hall of Fame Scholar. Gantchoff is under the direction of Dr. Jerry Belant

KATRINA HENN, forestry major, is the recipient of the Southern Chapter International Society of Arboriculture Memorial scholarship award.

MSU Forestry graduate students swept the poster competition at the 64th Annual Southern Hardwood Forest Research Group meeting. Seven graduate students presented posters. **NICOLE HORNSLEIN** received first place, she is under the direction of Dr. Heidi Renninger. **MERCEDES SIEGLE-GAITHER** received second place, she is under the direction of Dr. Courtney Siegert. **HOLDEN MILES** placed third, he is under the direction of Dr. Andy Ezell.

JONAS A. HUDNALL, wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture major, was inducted into the Mortar Board National College Senior Honor Society.

JACOB JONES, undergraduate student in wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture received the 2017 Undergraduate Student Research Award for the College of Forest Resources/Forest and Wildlife Research Center from the Office of Research and Economic Development and the Division of Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary Medicine. Jones is under the direction of Dr. Peter Allen.

AUSTIN OMER, graduate student in wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture received the 2017 Graduate Student Research Award for the College of Forest Resources/Forest and Wildlife Research Center from the Office of Research and Economic Development and the Division of Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary Medicine. Omer is under the direction of Dr. Beth Baker.

AMBER OWEN, undergraduate student in wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture, placed third in the MSU Undergraduate Research Symposium in the Biological Sciences and Engineering category. Dr. Kristine Evans is her faculty mentor.

KELSEY PAOLINI, wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture graduate student, was selected to participate in Conservation Leaders for Tomorrow, a professional development program designed for student and professional leaders within the natural resource sciences. Paolini is under the direction of Dr. Wes Neal.

MERCEDES SIEGLE-GAITHER, forestry graduate student, won first place for her poster presentation at the 2017 MSU Annual Graduate Research Symposium, Life and Biomedical Sciences and Engineering Division. **MERCEDES SIEGLE-GAITHER** and **ZEIMA KASSAHUN**, forestry graduate students, received first and second place in the student poster competition at the Mississippi Water Resource Conferences. Kassahun is under the direction of Dr. Heidi Renninger.

SCOTT VEUM, received the 2017 David H. Nabi Memorial Award as the graduate student in wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture who best exemplifies selflessness in leadership, service, research, academics, and social endeavors. The award honors a MSU graduate student in the department who died in 1980.

The **CFR DEAN'S STUDENT COUNCIL**, partnered with the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences' Agricultural and Environmental Economics Club, to raise over \$14,000 for the Houston Food Bank after Hurricane Harvey.

ALUMNI NEWS

CARY WILLIAMS (Forestry 1962) does some private forestry work for a selected few individuals but is mostly retired.

PHIL ADAMS (Forestry 1971) is enjoying retirement from the US Army Corps of Engineers. He recently moved to Andalusia, Alabama to be closer to his children and grandchildren. He has a 1967 Chevelle which he frequently takes to car shows.

RON MCREE III (Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture 1981) works for Hankins Lumber Company in Grenada, Mississippi. McRee is the proud grandfather of two boys and has another on the way, due in May 2018.

KIMMIE MILLER VANWYCK (Forestry, 1981) reigned as Queen Kimmie XXXV during Mardi Gras festivities for The Order of Osiris in Mobile, Alabama. Her costume reflected her love for Mississippi State in many ways, most obviously with the logo and cowbell displayed prominently on the train. The emerald green color of the costume and train were representative of her degree in forestry along with the embroidered pine bough and cones in the crest. Maroon crystals accented the trim. Her introduction to the nearly 1,800 guests at the Treasures of the Caribbean Ball was punctuated with the call of "Hail Queen Kimmie" & "Hail State!"



MARK W. GIBSON (Forestry 1981, 1985) retired from the Navy Reserve as a Captain in 2015 after serving for 39 years on six ships and in 19 reserve units stationed in New Orleans, Key West, Miami, Jacksonville, Atlanta, Memphis, Tampa, and Washington DC, with overseas tours in London and Wales UK. Gibson served two tours as a Unit Commanding Officer, and

three senior staff tours including duty at the Pentagon on the Joint Staff. He and his wife Candi are active in marathon running around the country and support the MSU Bulldogs every chance they get. They also enjoy family time with Philip (wife Kacey, and two sons Tucker 6 and Sutter 4) in Gulf Breeze, Cory (wife Olivia) in Nashville, and daughter Hillaire (husband Steven and son Ben 4) in Hawaii. Gibson is pictured here with Congressman Gregg Harper (left).

CRAIG BLAIR (Forestry 1982) received the 2017 Sustainable Forestry Initiative President's Award. Blair is president and CEO of Resource Management Service LLC. Blair was recognized for providing the vision and strong leadership that helped Project Learning Tree (PLT) find a new home at SFI. Blair became president and CEO of RMS in October 2010, with responsibility for RMS' investments and operating businesses in the United States, Brazil, China, Australia, and New Zealand. As president, he leads an experienced team of forestry and financial professionals that manage a global timberland portfolio of over \$4 billion. Over a 35-year career he has held a variety of positions at RMS and in the forest products industry, with experience in acquisitions, resource planning, forest management, and wood procurement. He is Chair of the National Alliance of Forest Owners board of directors.

BOB DEW (Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture 1995, 1999) has worked for Ducks Unlimited for 17 years and is currently the director of development in Louisiana. After working 13 years as a DU biologist, he changed careers and began working with a very dedicated group of major sponsors and fund-raising professionals raising philanthropic gifts for wetlands conservation efforts throughout North America. Dew and wife Christy have three children and live in Youngsville, LA. Oldest son, Dawson, became a freshman at MSU in the Fall 2017.

PAJE OWENS (Forestry 1997) returned to Mississippi in 2015 to work for Pepper Surveying and Mapping, LLC after residing on the island of Nantucket, Massachusetts for the previous eleven years. In Massachusetts, she worked for Blackwell and Associates, Inc. as a surveyor in training/project manager. She obtained her Wetland Delineator Certification and Mississippi Professional Surveyor license in 2016 and brings 20 years of land surveying experience to her current role.

WILLIAM MCKINLEY (Forestry 1997; Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture 2002) is the Deer Program coordinator for the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks. McKinley has been with the department since 2001 and entered the Deer Program in 2003. He served as the Deer Program leader and most recently was the Deer Enclosure Program coordinator.

RUSS WALSH (Forestry 2001) is the new Wildlife Bureau director for the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks. Walsh comes to the agency from the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Prior to his employment there, Walsh spent six years with MDWFP as a private lands biologist.

AMY BLAYLOCK (Forestry 2004; Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture 2007) is a wildlife resources director for the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks. She has served MDWFP since 2007. Her most recent title was East Central Region Wildlife Management Area biologist where she oversaw management of 11 WMAs. During that time, she also served as wildlife restoration coordinator and was responsible for writing and managing grants that assisted in funding the Wildlife Bureau.



BLAKE HAMILTON (Forestry 2010), pictured right, was honored by the Quality Deer Management Association as their Professional Deer Manager of the Year for 2017. Each year, QDMA selects one individual as the world's foremost professional in the field of deer management to receive this honor. The Al Brothers Professional Deer Manager

of the Year Award is the highest whitetail deer management honor bestowed by QDMA to professionals in the private sector. Hamilton is the founder, owner, and president of Nature's Eye. The company works with landowners on a daily basis, helping them improve habitat and enhance their outdoor experience.



HEATH HULON (Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture 2016) is a conservation associate biologist for Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks.



BLAKE STEFANO (Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture 2016) is a conservation associate biologist for the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks Pascagoula Wildlife Management Area.



JADE MCCARLEY (Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture 2017) is a graduate teaching assistant at the University of Texas at Tyler. She is conducting research on the Kisatchie Painted Crayfish, a species up for listing in Louisiana.

SAMANTHA RUSHING (Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture 2017) is working for USDA APHIS Wildlife Services in Florida. Her office is located in Punta Gorda, FL, but her field work is on Gasparilla Island where she has a view of the ocean every day in the field. She also spends time working on the dunes of the island.

IN MEMORIAM

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MICHAEL JASON CAMPBELL (Forestry 2009) 41, of Starkville, Mississippi, passed away on July 6, 2017. Campbell was an Iraq and Afghanistan Army Ranger veteran.

BILL BUSTIN (Forestry 1957) 81, of Brandon, Mississippi, passed away on January 26, 2017, at his home. Bustin was born in Forest, Mississippi on August 6, 1935 to the late Robert Earl and Minnie Chambers Bustin. He was a charter member and Deacon of Brandon Baptist Church. Bustin loved music and played the guitar and violin. He was in the forestry industry for over 55 years. He was a devoted husband and father.

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