

# RENEW

COLLEGE OF FOREST RESOURCES  
ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

2019



MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™  
COLLEGE OF FOREST RESOURCES

# RENEW

## COLLEGE OF FOREST RESOURCES ALUMNI NEWSLETTER 2019

Mark E. Keenum ..... **PRESIDENT, MSU**  
Reuben Moore... **INTERIM VICE PRESIDENT, DAFVM**  
George M. Hopper ..... **DEAN**  
Ian Munn ..... **ASSOCIATE DEAN**

### CONTRIBUTORS

David Ammon	Logan Kirkland
Megan Bean	Reagan Poston
Vanessa Beeson	Beth Wynn
Karen Brasher	

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

### 619

STUDENTS (FALL 2019)

### 502

UNDERGRADUATES (FALL 2019)

### 74

MASTER'S STUDENTS (FALL 2019)

### 43

PH.D. STUDENTS (FALL 2019)

### 64

FACULTY (FISCAL YEAR 2019)

### 146

DEGREES AWARDED (2018/2019)

### 85

FRESHMEN (FALL 2019)

### 25.5

AVERAGE FRESHMEN ACT SCORE  
(FALL 2019)

### \$6,657,956

GIFTS (FISCAL YEAR 2019)

### \$255,977

SCHOLARSHIPS (2017/2018)

### 30,729

ACRES IN THE BULLDOG FOREST  
(FISCAL YEAR 2019)

**ON THE COVER:** Dean George Hopper with granddaughter Gwen at the annual CFR Alumni Tailgate. (Photo by Karen Brasher)

## FROM THE DEAN

**T**HIS IS MY LAST LETTER AS YOUR DEAN AND DIRECTOR as I have announced my retirement, effective June 30, 2020. Shortly after I announced my retirement, our country suffered a pandemic that fundamentally changed our lives, individually and collectively. The week after Spring Break, students were told that we would move online to finish the semester. Our faculty did an exceptional job making this adjustment in such a brief period of time. This has been a crisis like none other, but our collective resilience will result in a brighter future.

Unfortunately, we had to cancel our forestry summer field program, for the first time in its history. While this was a difficult decision, protecting the health and safety of our students and faculty is paramount. Students registered for the 2020 program will take it in 2021. This means they will forgo the opportunity to engage in professional experience between their junior and senior year. However, our alumni have overwhelmingly met our needs, providing additional jobs and internships so that students could still get professional experience this summer. Thank you all for your support.

On a personal note, I missed honoring our students and their families at the graduation reception, which is my favorite event of the year, and my last celebration as dean and director. However, through all of the chaos and concern that continues to evolve around the pandemic; our faculty, staff, students, and alumni have exceeded expectations and I am mindful of the commitment and dedication found in our College of Forest Resources. Thank you all for your steadfastness through these difficult times.

Dr. Wes Burger, a 26-year veteran of the CFR, has been appointed interim dean and director. Dr. Burger has served on my leadership team as the associate director of FWRC for the last 10 years and I am confident in his ability to continue the momentum we have built over the years. Dr. Ian Munn will continue as associate dean of the college.

I anticipate great things ahead for the college. During the past 15 years, our enrollment has grown, our endowment is at an all-time high, and our alumni are enthusiastically engaged in our programs. Thank you for your financial contributions, hiring our students, and continuing to support us. When I think back over the past decade and a half as the leader of the College of Forest Resources, I am proud of the many accomplishments we have made together.



This year, through a generous gift from Mr. Jim Kennedy, we added the James C. Kennedy Endowed Chair in Upland Bird Ecology and enhanced the Kennedy Chair in Waterfowl and Wetlands Ecology. Alumni have generously supported our students through scholarships. We awarded 119 scholarships totaling \$255,977 during 2018-2019. This financial support is so important to help us recruit and retain the best and brightest students. We also continue to grow the Bulldog Forest, which provides opportunities for research, teaching, and outreach on university forests; funds student internships on these forests; and provides scholarships. We now have over 30,000 acres in the Bulldog Forest.

In this issue of *Renew*, we feature several distinguished alumni who are making their mark on natural resource conservation. Jonathan Stoll, one of our alumni, has been hired as the MSU forester and speaks about his role in managing the Bulldog Forest properties. Rick Dillard, a wildlife biologist for the U.S. Forest Service and a member of our wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture advisory board, shares his passion for natural resources. And Carl Neels, a Sustainable Bioproducts graduate, recounts how he finished his degree after a long hiatus. I hope you enjoy the features we have prepared on prominent alumni expanding our influence in conservation and beyond.

I admit it is difficult to say goodbye after days, weeks, and years of doing what you love with the hope of making a difference. I have been blessed with the opportunity to work with people whom I admire, respect, and care about. My good fortune to serve as dean of the CFR has given me a purpose for which I awoke every morning, worked every day, and slept every night with peace of mind and satisfaction. I truly believe we are one of the best natural resource programs in the nation. Your support means so much to our faculty, staff, and students. Thank you all for your support during my time as your dean. It has been an honor to serve you.

**George M. Hopper**  
Dean



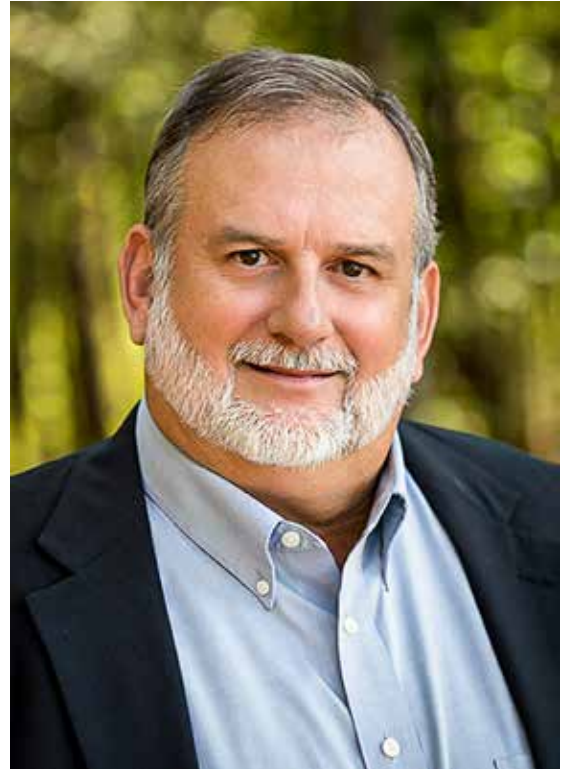
# OUTSTANDING ALUMNI



## 2019 ALUMNUS OF THE YEAR

*Edward J. Penny*

**E**DWARD J. PENNY OF HOUSTON, MISSISSIPPI IS THE 2019 College of Forest Resources Alumnus of the Year. Penny earned his bachelor's in wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture and his master's in wildlife and fisheries science in 2000 and 2003, respectively. He served in numerous roles within the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks including as waterfowl biologist, director of the Wildlife Bureau, director of Conservation Programs and, most recently, as interim director of the Wildlife Bureau. Currently, he is the director of public policy at Ducks Unlimited, handling public policy efforts in Mississippi and 12 other states.



## 2019 ALUMNI FELLOW

*Jimmy Bullock*

**J**IMMY BULLOCK IS THE 2019 COLLEGE OF FOREST Resources Alumni Fellow. Bullock earned a bachelor's degree in forest resources and a master's in wildlife ecology in 1980 and 1982, respectively. He began his career as a technician with the U.S. Forest Service and the Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture in MSU's College of Forest Resources/Forest and Wildlife Research Center. Today, Bullock oversees sustainable forestry, environmental policy, and programs and advocacy on forestry issues as Senior Vice President of Forest Sustainability for Resource Management Service, LLC (RMS).

# DEAN BIDS FAREWELL

*Hopper announces retirement, reflects on time as dean*

BY KAREN BRASHER



**A**FTER 15 YEARS AT THE HELM AS DEAN OF THE COLLEGE of Forest Resources and director of the Forest and Wildlife Research Center, **DR. GEORGE HOPPER** has announced his retirement effective June 30, 2020. For the longest serving dean in the college's 66-year history, his accomplishments span all aspects of the land-grant mission of teaching, research, and service. However, he is quick to acknowledge his faith, and the people along the way, who prepared him to lead.

## EARLY YEARS

Hopper's interest in forestry was generational, his father worked at Anderson-Tully and his grandfather was a logger. As a student at Hinds Community College, Hopper also worked for Anderson-Tully, a Vicksburg-based forest products company. Once matriculating to MSU, his natural curiosity in all living things led the first-generation college student to major in botany and chemistry. During his senior year, he taught a botany lab for then department head, Dr. Ray Watson. Little did he know at the time, but that experience would soon change his life and career.

As fate would have it, Watson was friends with Dr. Bill Elam, a forestry professor in the then School of Forestry. Elam and forestry

professor Dr. John Hodges had just received funding for a project studying the southern pine beetle and needed a technician. A conversation between Watson and Elam resulted in a position for Hopper with the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station as a research technician.

"I had just returned home to Vicksburg, right after graduation, when I received the phone call from Dr. Elam," Hopper said. "During a time when I was wondering what was next, the door opened for me to return to MSU, and set me on the path where I am today," Hopper said.

During the two-year project, Hopper became rooted in forestry. Returning to campus also allowed time with Missy, whom he met while teaching the botany lab. They were married in the Chapel of Memories later that year.

As the project neared completion, Elam encouraged Hopper to get a master's degree.

Hopper recalled, "I was always a good student, so Dr. Elam thought I should continue my degree and it seemed like a good idea at the time."

Hopper pursued a master's degree under the direction of Elam and Hodges, and USDA Forest Service adjunct professors Drs. Jack Vozzo and Frank Bonner. After he earned his master's in



George Hopper visits with Ambassador of the Republic of Kenya, Elkanah Odembo, Jonathan Stoll and Meggan Franks during a 2012 Maroon Edition tree planting at MSU Golf Course. (Photo by Megan Bean)



forestry with an emphasis in tree seed physiology, he was encouraged to continue.

He went to Virginia Tech for his doctoral degree, where he found strong mentors in Drs. David Smith and Dave Parrish. Smith was a forestry professor while Parrish was a noted seed crop physiologist.

### COMING HOME

Upon graduation from Virginia Tech, Hopper accepted a position at the University of Tennessee in Jackson, Tennessee. He moved through the faculty ranks and then was tapped to lead the Department of Forestry, Wildlife, and Fisheries at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville, a position he held for 11 years. His years at Tennessee were formative for his career in university administration.

"I made life-long friendships and memories during my 22 years at the University of Tennessee," Hopper said. "Those were some of the best years of my life and where we raised our family."

An opportunity to return to his alma mater at MSU presented itself in 2005 and Hopper became the Dean of the College of Forest Resources and the Director of the Forest and Wildlife Research Center.

"It was a chance to come home and make a difference for the university that I love," Hopper said.

Hopper quickly went to work on recruitment, fundraising, facility improvements, and all the many tasks that welcome a new dean. After four years as dean, a financial crisis impacted the state of Mississippi and the university. Hopper did his part to help steady the ship.

"We were exploring every avenue to save money," Hopper said. "Our funding was to be cut by 25 percent, and there were discussions about merging colleges, merging departments, and any other measure that would save funds. It was a difficult time for our university."

An idea emerged to consolidate the administrative units for

the College of Forest Resources, the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, the Forest and Wildlife Research Center, and the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station. The premise was that the administration would consolidate while the colleges and research units would remain autonomous. It had never been done but Hopper was up to the challenge. He assumed the role as dean of two colleges and director of two separately funded units.

Dr. Mark Keenum, MSU president, recalled the tenuous time. "Early in my presidency, during a time of austerity and budget cuts in all state institutions, George was dean of the College of Forest Resources and agreed to take on the additional role of dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and director of the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station. I will be forever indebted to him for serving his alma mater in that manner," Keenum said.

Hopper understood the importance of a stand-alone College of Forest Resources, even as other natural resource programs around the nation were being absorbed into larger colleges.

"Our faculty and staff worked hard to withstand the budget crisis," Hopper said. "We were all cutting corners and at the end of the day, we were able to keep the College of Forest Resources, one of the few natural resource colleges left in the nation."

### MAKING AN IMPACT

During his tenure, Hopper has overseen the implementation of numerous programs, with a singular objective of helping students.

"I truly believe that we are all here for a purpose and that purpose, for our university, is to impact the lives of our students," Hopper said.

During his tenure, he has seen student enrollment nearly double, a 75 percent increase in degrees awarded, and a 20 percent increase in scholarship funding.

Working with alumni, he initiated the Professional Experience program to encourage students to work in an internship in their

chosen profession during the summer. He also secured a funding model for the forestry summer field program, one of a few still offered in the nation.

Hopper also initiated the Bulldog Forest program, which has grown the college's financial portfolio by 293 percent.

"We worked with alumni and others to secure timberland and properties to serve as living laboratories for our students and faculty," Hopper said. "Our holdings now total over 30,000 acres. These timber resources will provide funds for the College of Forest Resources and support students long after I am gone. I am so appreciative to those who believed in our vision and supported the Bulldog Forest program, which has now expanded university-wide."

Hopper oversaw facility improvements, including the installation of the Colonel K.D. Johnson Courtyard at Thompson Hall, the Mid-South Forestry Equipment Show pavilion, Dorman Lake Lodge, and remodeling of the Acorn Building for graduate students. Improvements are currently underway on Blackjack Road including new forestry greenhouses, an environmental education center, and a new aviary for wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture.

He has also made an impact on the national stage, assuming leadership roles at the state and national level. He has served as the president of the National Association of University Forest Resources Programs and chair of the Experiment Station Committee on Organization and Policy, the governing body of the Agricultural Experiment Station Section of the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities Commission on Food, Environment, and Renewable Resources. He previously served as chair of the Board of Natural Resources for the Association of Public Land-grant Universities.

Hopper has been honored numerous times for his leadership.

In 2017, he received the Southern Association of Agricultural Experiment Station Directors ESS Excellence in Leadership Award.

Dr. Greg Bohach, former vice president of the MSU Division of Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary Medicine spoke to Hopper's leadership in the award announcement.

"Throughout his career, Dr. Hopper has provided exemplary leadership, forged partnerships, and epitomized the servant-leadership philosophy that permeates his management style at home and abroad. Most importantly, he is a man of high personal integrity and his care for people as individuals is illustrated in all of his interactions. His leadership has exemplified the highest level of excellence, enhancing the performance of the land-grant system in the state, region, and nation."

### CHARTING THE FUTURE

As Hopper embarks on the upcoming chapter, once again he contemplates what is next. He will remain in Starkville as his wife and best friend, Dr. Missy Hopper, a MSU professor, will continue to lead in a variety of areas at the university and in her profession. Hopper plans to remain active with service to his profession.

In his retirement, as in his leadership, he is confident about the future of the college and appreciative of the support and the people that made it all happen.

"I am honored to have led this incredible college, my alma mater," Hopper said. "I appreciate all of the people that have supported me along the way and that will continue to support the College of Forest Resources. Serving the College of Forest Resources and Mississippi State has been the highlight of my life. It has been an honor and privilege to serve as dean and director." ♣



George and Missy Hopper. (Photo by Karen Brasher)

# WILD AT HEART

*WFA alumnus love of the outdoors essential to U.S. Forest Service career*

BY VANESSA BEESON

**R**ICK DILLARD'S love of the outdoors serves him well as fish and wildlife program manager for the U.S. Forest Service. His passion has been a guiding force in his professional and personal life. The Potts Camp, Mississippi native and CFR alumnus comes from a long line of hunters, fishermen, and trappers.

"I fished with my grandmother before I could even carry a fishing pole. My most vivid memory, however, happened later. I was nine the first time I caught bass using tackle. I had a Zebco 600 casting reel with a plastic worm. I still remember wading out into the reeds to cast and that first tug on the line," Dillard said.

Those early experiences hooked Dillard on a career protecting wildlife and fisheries resources while promoting their recreational value.

Dillard has been with the U.S. Forest Service for 31 years, 25 of which have been in his current role. Dillard oversees 1.2 million acres encompassing Bienville, Delta, DeSoto, Holly Springs, Homochitto, and Tombigbee National Forests. He monitors threatened, endangered, and sensitive species and forest waterways. He also manages recreational fishing and works with the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks to manage game species and monitor migratory birds.

"I keep an eye on things like population increases and decreases, wild game trends, migratory bird patterns, water quality, and habitat conditions," Dillard explained.

Dillard said his passion for fish and wildlife began with his dad. "Growing up, I loved to listen to my father's adventures of the outdoors. I was most curious about why certain things occurred in nature," Dillard said. "Why are there bass in one lake but not another? Why do these fish get big in this river but not that one? Why are there stories of my grandfather catching paddlefish in this river, but they aren't here anymore?"

Dillard points out he's experienced the changes to the landscape where he grew up.

"Where I grew up, quail were abundant but white-tailed deer

weren't. I went on many successful quail hunts before I harvested my first deer. I began deer hunting at age 12 but didn't kill my first deer until I was sixteen," Dillard remembered.

When it came time for college, Dillard parlayed his love of the outdoors into training for a career.

"At first, my family didn't understand. At the time, African Americans our family knew who went to college majored in business, engineering, or pre-med. I was ridiculed by friends who said, 'No one has ever majored in that so what are you going to do?' Honestly, I didn't know what I would do but I knew pursuing a career in wildlife and fisheries would make me happy," Dillard said.

After high school and a year at Jackson State University, Dillard came to MSU where he earned a bachelor's in fisheries management in 1986 and a master's in wildlife and fisheries in 1989. He began working for the U.S. Forest Service upon graduation. Collaboration is what excites him most in his career now.

"Managing for fish and wildlife must extend beyond imaginary boundaries to include the public and private lands adjacent to our national forests. Working together helps invested parties—from government agencies to nonprofit organizations to private landowners—achieve the big picture goals necessary to improve fish and wildlife habitat on a larger scale," Dillard said.

The Magnolia Records is a collaborative effort that has been a defining legacy in Dillard's storied career. In 2001, he saw a statewide need for recording prized deer.

"I have always been fascinated with trophy bucks. I often wondered about the largest deer harvested in Mississippi or in Marshall County, where I grew up. At the time, Mississippi had maybe 25 deer large enough to make the Boone and Crockett Club records, though I felt more deer in our state were worthy of some kind of recognition."

Dillard spearheaded a joint venture between the Mississippi Wildlife Federation and the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks to create Magnolia Records, a statewide antler scoring system.





“We score on a county by county basis which gives bragging rights to locals across Mississippi’s 82 counties. We also include photos on a standard background, so people can see the size of each deer,” Dillard said.

Thus far, Dillard said around 10,000 deer have been scored by himself and others.

“The largest buck I’ve scored was a non-typical in Adams County near Natchez that scored 232,” recalled Dillard, who said the project inspired him to become an official wild game measurer for the Boone and Crockett Club.

He also shares his love of the outdoors with the next generation, serving as president for the Mississippi Wildlife Federation, or MWF, from 2012-2013. He’s currently on MWF’s board and has been involved in many of its programs over the years, including youth-outreach fishing events and squirrel hunts, to name a few.

He’s also visited students of all ages to speak about his career.

He still hunts with his father, uncles, brothers, and cousins, planning one big family hunt out of state each year. His two grown sons love to hunt and fish, too, when time permits.

His son Wesley followed a similar path as Dillard earning a biology degree from MSU. He’s now working on his doctorate in zoology at the University of Florida. His son Chandler is focused on baseball, as an outfield starter for Jackson State University. Dillard also fishes with his wife, Jocelyn, and credits her with supporting his career and lifelong love of the outdoors.

As for advice for individuals interested in pursuing a similar field, Dillard emphasized the importance of following your heart.

“Do what drives you and what makes you happy. I look forward to going to work every day. That’s what you really want to look for in a career,” Dillard said ♣

# A GROWING FOREST, A FINISHED DREAM

*Sustainable Bioproducts grad balances family, work, and education*

BY VANESSA BEESON

**A**t 6'4", **CARL NEELS** stands sturdy as an oak, but people tend to notice the saplings around him first. Neels, and his wife, Betty, have five children under the age of eight—three of them triplets. What's unique is that each child bears the name of a tree. Neels, who has spent his career in the forest products industry, wouldn't have it any other way.

In 2019, the busy father and fulltime forest products plant manager added another to-do to his already-exhaustive list. After a long break, Neels returned to MSU to complete his master's in sustainable bioproducts, an endeavor he began long before the saplings were even born.

Neels—a Baltimore County, Maryland native who grew up on a 33-acre farm—might have been raised along the Mason-Dixon line, but his collegiate career led him to the Deep South, first to Louisiana State University, then to MSU.

"It was a culture shock for me going to LSU as a kid from Maryland—going down to the Deep South where I didn't know a soul, but I made it through," Neels said.

In December 1991, he earned his bachelor's in forestry from LSU. A few years later, Neels started graduate school.

"While I was interested in forestry—particularly forest fire—I had a concentration in wood utilization as part of my undergrad, which introduced me to the forest products side," Neels said. "An assistantship in the MSU forest products department became available so I started the program here."

Neels completed nearly all his coursework and had finished several drafts of a thesis focused on the development of a knot and

defect location database for shop and moulding grade lumber used to estimate yield predictions based on cutting patterns. During his last semester, however, Neels was offered the position of technical director at a Temple-Inland lumber mill in Diboll, Texas.

"Honestly, I was eager to get out into industry, build a career, and start making things," Neels said. "There's an old saying that says once you get sawdust in your hair, it's tough to wash out. There's some truth to that. Even in my current job now, my favorite aspect is the production environment and seeing things transformed from one product into another."

After nearly five years in Texas, another opportunity took him to Pensacola, Florida to start up a greenfield sawmill in McDavid, Florida. He's now the plant manager and maintenance supervisor at Oren International, a paper converting company, where he's been for the last 11 years. In that time, Neels said the company has doubled its production and manpower.

"The finished rolls that paper mills produce are our raw material, which we convert into sheets, ribbons, and smaller rolls of specialty paper for both the food service industry and the industrial packaging industry," Neels explained. "An Oren International product might be the butcher paper your steak is wrapped in at the grocery store or the packaging in a parcel that arrives at your front door."

A few years ago, Neels reconnected with Dr. Rubin Shmulsky, a former classmate. Shmulsky—now sustainable bioproducts department head—earned his master's and doctorate in forest products from MSU. Neels mentioned his desire to finish the



Betty and Carl  
Neels with the Neels  
Forest: Hawthorne,  
Magnolia, Aspen,  
Willow, and Fraser  
(center). (Photo  
submitted)



degree so Shmulsky looked into the matter.

“Academically, Carl ran the marathon, but hadn’t crossed the finish line yet. He was a candidate for MSU’s lapsed student initiative wherein students that had to leave school for one reason or another could potentially come back and finish their degree,” Shmulsky said. “Carl had fulfilled most of the degree requirements before he was recruited away from MSU in the late 1990s. As it turned out, he was one course shy of the graduation finish line.”

Dr. Frank Owens agreed to serve as advisor for Neels in a M.S. non-thesis program, and Dr. Dan Seale and Shmulsky served on his committee. The team developed a three-credit course that Neels could reasonably complete from afar. He finished the lion’s share of the work from Pensacola and came to MSU to sit for the final exam.

“For students who have not yet completed their degree, I’d encourage them to contact their former departments,” Shmulsky encouraged. “It takes extra effort and a healthy dose of creativity to help these students complete their respective degree requirements, but I feel strongly that situations like Carl’s bring a lot of reward to the student and a great sense of accomplishment to all involved.”

Shmulsky said the bottom line is to at least try.

“Carl’s case demonstrates it’s better to try, without necessarily knowing the outcome, than to give up without trying. Successful

outcomes like this make us proud to be able to work at MSU,” he said.

Neels noted that while it was challenging to finish, it was worth it in the end.

“As a parent of five, you’re busy until the kids go to bed and sometimes it’s difficult to have the motivation to get the school work done after a long day,” Neels said. “Put your family first but take time when you can once they go to bed. Finishing this degree was a personal milestone—something that I started that now feels good to be able to say I’ve finished.”

As for the saplings, as they learn the importance of completing tasks both large and small, they need look no further than the sturdy oak by their side. ♣



# BULLDOG ROOTS RUN DEEP

*Forestry alumnus takes over as MSU's forest supervisor*

BY REAGAN POSTON

**A**t thirteen, selling drinks up and down the stands of Davis Wade Stadium, a seed was planted in **JONATHAN STOLL**. Now, years later, Stoll has returned to Mississippi State to reap the harvest as forest supervisor. Stoll, a 2013 forestry graduate from the outskirts of Starkville, was hired to the position in July of 2019, after having worked as a consulting forester in Louisiana before returning to Mississippi to work for a timber company.

"In one facet or another, I've been practicing forestry ever since I graduated," Stoll shared.

There are indeed many facets to forestry, and Stoll takes on the responsibility of nearly all of them in his new role as forest supervisor overseeing the day-to-day operations of MSU's Bulldog Forest. Stoll's primary responsibility is overseeing the care, cultivation, upkeep, and rotation of the forest and timberland that make up the Bulldog Forest, which includes approximately 30,000 acres across the state. Stoll said that successfully managing so many moving parts across such a vast acreage requires a new tactic every day and in every location.

"I'm doing something different every day," Stoll said. "I might be measuring trees today, riding a tractor tomorrow, managing a spreadsheet the day after, or preparing to conduct a prescribed burn next week. It's a revolving door of forest management."

Still, Stoll assures that the undertaking is a team effort. He leads his team at forest operations, directing them to the best course of action for the forest's particular need, and should the time arise that he is stumped, he calls for help.

"MSU is home to some of the South's leading experts in natural resources, agriculture, and related sciences, and I try to utilize them whenever necessary. I can easily call on a geologist, an entomologist, a wildlife biologist, and more, and everyone is always happy to lend a hand," Stoll said.

Keeping the Bulldog Forest healthy is integral both to Stoll's role as forest supervisor and to ensuring that it remains an invaluable asset to the university and Mississippi as a whole. While the timber that is harvested from within it goes directly back into the university, Stoll is committed to ensuring that the timber is

harvested in a sustainable way such that more trees are planted than cut and therefore, more opportunity offered to a future Mississippi.

"I like knowing that I'm doing something to sustain the economy of Mississippi and the health of Mississippi's forests," Stoll said.

The most intensively managed 8,000 acres is the John W. Starr Memorial Forest, located just twenty miles from Starkville's campus, making it an ideal resource as a living laboratory for research and experiential learning.

"There are plenty of benefits to having the forest so close to campus, but the largest advantage for students is the opportunity to learn and conduct research in that setting. Students can go into the Bulldog Forest, grab a handful of pine needles, feel bark in their hands or dirt under their fingernails, see the insects in the mud, and more. That experience of living what they just learned in the classroom helps solidify the knowledge better than anything else," Stoll said.

Through the years, the Bulldog Forest has seen a sweeping variety of studies done, from spacing studies in pine stands, to hardwood research, to hydrology, to mass mortality studies that are garnering national attention.

"The forest studies are scalable, which is what is really great about it. A tree may represent a single data point, but we're planting millions and millions of trees in Mississippi each year. We're able to get a better grasp on more broadly applicable management practices because the forest is just so big," Stoll said.

With studies conducted right here in Starkville being applied worldwide, it's impressive to think that the continued success of the Bulldog Forest began with Jonathan Stoll selling drinks at the stadium all those years ago.

"I'm still new to the job, but I've known foresters who planted seedlings on their first day and, thirty years later, were able to go back and harvest them. That's what I'm hoping to do here, in all aspects of the job," Stoll said. 🍀

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*To learn more about the Bulldog Forest and how you can make a lasting impact, visit [bulldogforest.msstate.edu](http://bulldogforest.msstate.edu).*

Jonathan Stoll. (Photo by David Ammon)



# FROM DECORATED VETERAN TO HONORARY DOCTORATE

*Longtime CFR supporter honored for lifetime achievements*

BY REAGAN POSTON

**C**OLONEL KENNETH “K.D.” JOHNSON IS ONE OF MISSISSIPPI’S most decorated veterans and one of Mississippi State University’s College of Forest Resources largest benefactors. In May 2019, he was awarded an honorary doctorate for his incomparable life experiences and commitment to the university community.

Affectionately known as “The Colonel” amongst CFR students, he received a standing ovation, first from graduating CFR students and then the entire graduating class for his years of service to our country. When asked about the honor, Colonel Johnson humbly said, “It only took me a little over 70 years to get a degree. I am honored to be awarded this degree by the university that I have grown to love. It is an unexpected honor that means so much to me.”

When Dr. Mark E. Keenum, MSU president, asked how to refer to the new doctorate honoree, Colonel Johnson said, “Call me Colonel, there are a lot of doctors around here but only one Colonel.”

## A WELL-RESPECTED MAN

Colonel Johnson, a native of Lena, Mississippi, began his relationship with the university in 1941, at the age of 19 when he enrolled in what was then Mississippi State College as an engineering

student. The College of Forest Resources wouldn’t be founded for a little over a decade. With the U.S. entering WWII, however, it became increasingly clear to Colonel Johnson that he needed to pause his studies in order to answer the call of duty. He joined the Army Enlisted Reserve Corps soon thereafter. In 1944, he was commissioned as a second-lieutenant pilot and served in Europe after D-Day, evacuating the wounded and transporting supplies. His last assignment for the 30-month tour was pilot for the late Justice Robert Jackson, chief prosecutor at the Nuremberg War Trial.

After WWII, Colonel Johnson flew 59 missions as a B-26 pilot in Korea, earning the Distinguished Flying Cross, an honor only given to those who have repeatedly shown exemplary heroism and achievement in combat. Throughout his engagement with the U.S. Air Force, he served in numerous capacities, including pilot, Operations Officer, Squadron Commander, Wing Deputy Commander for Operations at Norton Air Force Base in California, Deputy Wing Commander for Operations to the 322 Tactical Airlift Wing and most recently, Senior Air Force Advisor to the Oklahoma National Guard.

At his retirement ceremony in 1974, Colonel Johnson received the Legion of Merit, an honor reserved for only the most extraordinary of meritorious service members. Colonel Johnson was also



Kenneth D. Johnson, left, receives an honorary Doctor of Public Service degree from MSU President Mark E. Keenum during May 3, 2019, afternoon commencement ceremonies at Mississippi State University. (Photo by Megan Bean)



awarded the pin of Military Airlift Command for more than 15,000 hours of flight without incident. Only one percent of all U.S. Air Force aircrew members have received the honor.

### CONTRIBUTING TO THE UNIVERSITY

After his 25-year career in the United States Air Force, Colonel Johnson returned to Mississippi and began his venture into growing timberland. It was around then that he attended the Forestry Summer Field Session at MSU to better understand best management practices in timber production. His legacy in MSU's College of Forest Resources began at the field session, but 40 years later, Colonel Johnson is still adding to it.

Through the creation of the Colonel K.D. Johnson Forest near his hometown of Lena, he became one of the first contributors to MSU's Bulldog Forest, a field-based learning resource for forestry students that also generates income from timber harvesting for the CFR. Funds generated from the timber are added to the Col. Kenneth 'K.D.' Johnson Endowment for Excellence, which he established in 1998. The endowment supports scholarships for forestry majors who show promise of an outstanding career in forestry. The Colonel 'K.D.' Johnson Courtyard at Thompson

Hall is a beautifully managed landscape of native plants and water features and a favorite relaxing cove for students, faculty, and staff, made possible through Colonel Johnson's generous support. Even now in his mid-nineties, Colonel Johnson continues to serve as a mentor for student veterans and active-duty service members.

Jeff Little, director of development for the College, spoke to the many contributions Colonel Johnson has made to the university and in the lives of forestry students specifically.

"The forestry scholarship is nearest and dearest to his heart. He wants to make a difference in the lives of driven students who need it most. He's already done that for countless students, but one day, he will have put more forestry students through Mississippi State than any other donor," Little said.

Little notes that it is fitting for the university that has grown from Colonel Johnson's generosity to honor him with this award.

"There is no doubt that, through his dedicated service to both our country and our university, Colonel Johnson has earned this honorary doctorate, and we are so proud to have bestowed it upon him," Little said.

"If there's anyone deserving of the honor, it's Colonel Johnson," Little added. ♣

# DEVELOPMENT

## LEADER OF THE FLOCK

*James C. Kennedy strengthens support, establishes new endowed chair*

BY VANESSA BEESON

**W**HETHER STUDYING A COVEY OF QUAIL OR A team of ducks, the College of Forest Resources (CFR) boasts a coveted team of world-class experts in avian ecology. That expertise is amplified by **JAMES C. KENNEDY**—the leader of the flock in avian conservation.

Twelve years after establishing the first endowed chair in the college, Kennedy will establish the new James C. Kennedy Endowed Chair in Upland Gamebird Ecology. The existing James C. Kennedy Endowed Chair in Waterfowl and Wetlands Conservation will receive supplemental support to strengthen its research, teaching, and outreach.

Kennedy, a fervent conservationist of waterfowl and other wildlife habitat, has conserved thousands of acres of wetlands and associated habitat in Mississippi and throughout North America. The Atlanta resident is chairman of Cox Enterprises Inc., a media company and provider of automotive services. He has established four endowed programs in wetland and waterfowl conservation and one endowed program in gamebird ecology, two of which are in CFR. Kennedy said the purpose of his investment is to strengthen future conservation efforts in waterfowl, wetland, and gamebird ecology.

“It is important to train the next generation of leaders in these areas,” Kennedy said. “They will be responsible for the continued stewardship of our natural resources.”

Since 2008, the James C. Kennedy Endowed Chair in Waterfowl and Wetland Conservation program has graduated 18 graduate students and trained more than 50 undergraduate students for careers in waterfowl conservation. Many graduates, supported through the Kennedy scholarship program, have gone on to fill key positions in state and federal agencies, as well as nongovernmental organizations tasked with waterfowl conservation throughout the country.

Led by Dr. Brian Davis, James C. Kennedy Associate

Professor, the program currently has three master’s students, one doctoral student, 14 undergraduate researchers, and one postdoctoral fellow. The program has leveraged Kennedy support to help raise an additional \$3 million in extramural funds for students and has produced 59 peer-reviewed publications on key aspects of waterfowl migration, habitat use, and population demographics.

Support for the new James C. Kennedy Endowed Chair in Upland Gamebird Ecology will play a crucial role in understanding population declines of species like quail and turkey across their native range. Similar to the waterfowl and wetlands conservation program, funds will be used to support graduate and undergraduate student scholarships and research on upland gamebird ecology.

Dr. George Hopper, CFR dean and director of the Forest and Wildlife Research Center, said Kennedy’s generous contribution is vital in supporting the college’s role as a leading authority in waterfowl, wetland, and gamebird research.

“These gifts sustain in perpetuity an internationally recognized university program of teaching, research, and service focused on waterfowl, wetland, and gamebird research,” Hopper said. “Mr. Kennedy’s generous support helps us develop science-based knowledge for understanding and conserving waterfowl and other wetland wildlife species and upland gamebirds as well as their habitats, while educating current and future scientists and conservationists and providing outreach to public and private stakeholders invested in these efforts.” ♦

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*For more on the James C. Kennedy Chair in Waterfowl and Wetland Conservation, visit [www.cfr.msstate.edu/kennedychair](http://www.cfr.msstate.edu/kennedychair). For more on the college, visit [www.cfr.msstate.edu](http://www.cfr.msstate.edu). To establish an endowed chair in the MSU College of Forest Resources, contact Jeff Little, the college’s director of development, at (662) 325-8151 or [jlittle@foundation.msstate.edu](mailto:jlittle@foundation.msstate.edu).*







# COLLEGE NEWS



## GREBNER NAMED MSU FORESTRY DEPARTMENT HEAD

A 21-YEAR MISSISSIPPI STATE VETERAN is the new head of the university's Department of Forestry.

**DR. DONALD L. GREBNER**, George L. Switzer Professor of Forestry, began his role on July 1, 2019, in the department that operates within the College of Forest Resources. A forest economist with a research focus in natural resources and forest management, Grebner is a certified forester in the Society of American Foresters and a registered forester in the Mississippi Board of Registered Foresters.

During his MSU tenure, Grebner has co-authored five textbooks and 60 refereed journal articles. He has garnered more than \$3 million in research support and mentored 20 graduate students. He teaches several different courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Grebner received his bachelor's degree in forestry from the University of Maine, his master's in forestry from Yale University, and a master's in economics and doctoral degree in forestry and forest products from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

A fellow in the Society of American Foresters, Grebner has been honored numerous times for teaching, research and service at MSU. He has received the Phi Kappa Phi National Love of Learning Award twice, in 2014 and 2018.

## MSU ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR CONDUCTS RESEARCH IN CHILE WITH FULBRIGHT GRANT



**AN AQUACULTURE SCIENTIST** in Mississippi State's Forest and Wildlife Research Center is the newest university faculty member to receive the presti-

gious Fulbright grant to conduct research abroad as part of the U.S. Department of State's flagship exchange program.

**DR. PETER ALLEN**, an associate professor in the MSU Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture in the College of Forest Resources, spent the second half of 2019 conducting research at El Centro de Estudios Avanzados en Zonas Áridas—or the Center for Advanced Studies in Arid Zones (CEAZA)—in northcentral Chile.

Allen, who has been with MSU for 10 years, said the endeavor provided collaboration in a setting that parallels Mississippi's own aquaculture industry.

"My work here includes both physiology and ecology of fish and how both affect how fish live and utilize their environment. I'm also interested in how environmental influences and stressors affect aquaculture and how reducing stressors can help grow more fish," Allen said.

The research includes assessing hypoxia as an environmental stressor and its effect on corvina, a marine fish that is similar to redfish and speckled trout, and is cultured as a fish food. The work is applicable to Mississippi, as hypoxia is often found in the Gulf of Mexico as a result of nutrient loads traveling down the Mississippi River.

During his time in Chile, Allen also taught graduate students at Universidad Católica del Norte, or UCN, one of two universities housing CEAZA facilities.

*For more on the Fulbright program, visit <https://eca.state.gov/fulbright>.*

## RENOWNED WILDLIFE GENETICIST PRESENT CARLTON N. OWEN SEMINAR

A CONSERVATION AND LANDSCAPE genetics pioneer presented this year's Mississippi State's 2019 Carlton N. Owen Lecture Series.

Dr. Lisette P. Waits presented "Genetic monitoring of wildlife for conservation and management—examples from rabbits and large carnivores."

Waits is a distinguished professor and head of Fish and Wildlife Sciences at the University of Idaho. In addition to conservation and landscape genetics, her research includes endangered



species ecology and management.

The Owen Lecture Series, established nearly two decades ago in MSU's College of Forest Resources, is named for the Greenville, South Carolina resident and 1974 MSU graduate. The program focuses on natural resource conservation issues.



## ARBOR DAY FOUNDATION HONORS MSU'S CONSERVATION SPIRIT WITH TREE CAMPUS USA DESIGNATION

**FOR THE SIXTH CONSECUTIVE YEAR,** Mississippi State University is being recognized for its sustained commitment to environmental stewardship with the Arbor Day Foundation's Tree Campus USA designation.

To achieve this distinction, MSU met five core standards for an effective campus forest management plan, including

establishment of a tree advisory committee, evidence of a campus tree-care plan, dedicated annual expenditures for a campus tree program, an Arbor Day observance, and sponsorship of student service-learning projects.

Marc Measells, extension associate for the College of Forest Resources'

Department of Forestry, serves as chair of the Campus Tree Advisory Committee. He said at this year's Arbor Day celebration, committee members and students planted 40 loblolly pine seedlings donated by ArborGen, the largest global seedling supplier and the leading provider of advanced genetics for the forest industry.

## MSU JOINS URBAN WILDLIFE INFORMATION NETWORK

**RESEARCHERS FROM MISSISSIPPI STATE** University teamed up with the Urban Wildlife Information Network (UWIN) to discover the secret life of animals in our urban and suburban neighborhoods in Mississippi.

**ADAM ROHNKE**, senior wildlife extension associate, and **DR. DANA MORIN**, assistant professor of wildlife ecology, both in the MSU Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture, are working with UWIN, Master Naturalist volunteers, and graduate student Brittney Palode to learn what urban mammals are doing in Mississippi.

By using remote-triggered game cameras, the researchers hope to identify what species are inhabiting different habitats such as parks, golf courses, cemeteries, and other natural areas in and around cities and towns. The images will also be used to tease out interesting information about behavior, such as what animals are not active when humans are around or what spaces animals may avoid when other, larger animals are present.

UWIN, initiated by the Lincoln Park Zoo, Chicago, IL, is a partnership of

researchers from 21 cities across North America who are dedicated to studying wildlife in urban areas. The goal of UWIN is to standardize survey methods and share information gathered by the partners to identify urban wildlife population and behavioral trends with the intent to better understand urban wildlife ecology across cities. At the same time, data collected for a specific city can help inform urban planning, wildlife management, and promote public education about wildlife in our own backyards.

# FACULTY/STAFF AWARDS



## DR. GARRETT STREET

### CFR TEACHING AWARD

Dr. Garrett Street, assistant professor in the Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture, earned the CFR Teaching Award. Street inspires the researchers of tomorrow as an undergraduate student mentor for the university's Shackouls Honors College. Students note his approach to teaching essential yet technical classes, such as biometrics, as making the coursework enjoyable and palatable, even inspiring some to investigate the subject matter further. In addition to this award, Street was recipient of this year's MSU ORED Faculty Research Award and MAFES Grantsmanship Award.



## DR. KRISTINE EVANS

### CFR EARLY CAREER ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Dr. Kristine Evans, assistant professor in wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture, earned the CFR Early Career Achievement Award. In the last five year, Evans has published 17 book chapters and 15 refereed journal articles, given over 75 presentations, and is actively engaged in 11 research projects. She has also garnered over \$16.7 million in extramural grants and contracts, all while playing an integral role in establishing the Conservation Biology concentration within the wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture major.



## DR. BETH BAKER

### CFR/FWRC EXTENSION/OUTREACH AWARD

Dr. Beth Baker, assistant extension professor in the Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture, earned the CFR Extension and Outreach Award. Baker effectively communicates research findings to a network of local farms, especially in water quality. She directs the university's Research and Education to Advance Conservation and Habitat, or REACH, program. The REACH program prioritizes sustainability within agriculture without sacrificing profitability. To date, the program has impacted a combined total of 126,500 acres of agricultural lands, forests, wetlands, and prairie.





## DR. STEPHEN C. GRADO

### CFR/FWRC FACULTY SERVICE AWARD

Dr. Stephen C. Grado, professor of forestry, through tremendous dedication to his community and the university, earned the CFR Service Award. Among other impactful roles, Grado has been the undergraduate coordinator in forestry for more than 15 years and is an active member of several MSU committees. Grado consistently serves as an informal mentor with an open-door policy for students and faculty.



## DR. COURTNEY SIEGERT

### FWRC RESEARCH AWARD

Dr. Courtney Siegert, associate professor in the Department of Forestry, earned the FWRC Research Award. Siegert excels as a rigorous researcher, garnering almost \$1 million in extramural grants and fellowships this year alone. She has published 14 peer-reviewed articles and one book chapter. She also manages a dynamic forest hydrology and soils laboratory while also teaching across two majors, including forestry and natural resource and environmental conservation.



## DORIS LEE MEMORIAL STAFF AWARDS

**SUE STILLMAN**, administrative assistant in the Department of Sustainable Bioproducts, received the Doris Lee Memorial Outstanding Support Staff Award.

**CRISSY HATHCOCK**, assistant director of financial services for the College of Forest Resources/Forest and Wildlife Research Center, received the Doris Lee Memorial Outstanding Professional Staff Award.

# FACULTY/STAFF AWARDS *(cont.)*

## DEMARAIS RECIPIENT OF UNIVERSITY'S HIGHEST RESEARCH HONOR

**DR. STEVE DEMARAIS**, a Dale Arner Distinguished Professor and the Taylor Chair in Applied Big Game Research and Instruction in the Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture, was recognized with the university's top honor—the 2019 Ralph E. Powe Research Excellence Award.

Since joining the MSU faculty in 1997, Demarais has generated more than \$6 million in support of a research program that has produced 140 peer-reviewed publications by 38 graduate students, plus dozens of popular articles to disseminate research results to practicing managers. As co-director of the MSU Deer Lab, he enjoys answering deer and wildlife habitat questions of interest to managers and landowners.

A fellow of The Wildlife Society, his professional involvements include chairing two technical reviews on deer management issues, chairing the Deer Committee for the Southeast Section of The Wildlife Society for 13 years, and serving multiple terms as Associate Editor for the Wildlife Society Bulletin and Journal of Forest Research.



MSU President Mark E. Keenum, left, presents Steve Demarais with Mississippi State's highest research honor, the Ralph E. Powe Research Excellence Award, during the university's annual research awards banquet at the Hunter Henry Center on March 29, 2019. Demarais is a Dale Arner Distinguished Professor and the Taylor Chair in Applied Big Game Research and Instruction in the wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture department. (Photo by Logan Kirkland)

Demarais earned his bachelor's degree in wildlife biology at the University of Massachusetts. He earned a master's degree in wildlife ecology and doctoral degree in forest resources from Mississippi State.

The Powe Award is a memorial to the MSU alumnus and longtime research vice president who died in 1996. It is selected at the university level from nominations received from the MSU community.

## FACULTY HONORED WITH MORETON FELLOWSHIP

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**THE JAMES R. MORETON FELLOWSHIP** is awarded to faculty whose research positively impacts the fields of forestry and sustainable bioproducts. In 2019, two MSU professors were designated James R. Moreton Fellows.

**DR. RANDY ROUSSEAU**, research and extension professor of forestry, has been named James R. Moreton Fellow in Forestry. Rousseau's contribution to the field and primary research interest centers on the genetic health of pine trees, though he is also committed to extending his research to landowners, land managers, and others in the industry. He has partnered on more than 15 professional presentations internationally, authored several journal articles and a book chapter, and secured more than \$2.5 million for various research projects over the last three years alone.

**DR. DAN SEALE**, Warren S. Thompson Professor of Wood Science and Technology in the Department of Sustainable Bioproducts, has been named James R. Moreton Fellow in Sustainable Bioproducts. This is Seale's second time to receive the award. Seale has spent his



TOP: Randy Rousseau; ABOVE: Dan Seale

career dedicated to the research and development of Mississippi's timber and lumber industries. Over this time, Seale has published 17 peer-reviewed journal articles and contributed to more than 20 professional presentations. He has also secured over \$4.3 million in extramural funding.

## OTHER AWARDS

.....  
**DR. JIMMY AVERY**, extension professor of wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture, was elected president of the World Aquaculture Society. Based at the MSU Delta Research and Extension Center in Stoneville, Avery has served as the MSU Extension aquaculture specialist since 1999. He is also the director of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Southern Regional Aquaculture Center.

.....  
**DR. LESLIE BURGER**, assistant extension professor of wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture, received the Regions Bank-Division of Agriculture, Forestry, and Veterinary Medicine Superior Service Award.

.....  
**EDWARD ENTSMINGER**, sustainable bioproducts research associate II, received the research support staff award from the MSU Office of Research and Economic Development.

.....  
**MARC MEASELLS**, forestry extension associate, received both a Donald W. Zacharias Distinguished Staff Award and the Division of Agriculture, Forestry, and Veterinary Medicine Stellar Staff Award.

.....  
**NICOLE MEDEIROS**, contract and grant specialist in wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture, received the Wildlife Management Institute Administrative Excellence Award from the U.S. Geological Survey's Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit.

.....  
**DR. BRONSON STRICKLAND**, St. John Family Endowed Professor of Wildlife Management, was recognized as the Al Brothers Professional Deer Manager of the Year by the Quality Deer Management Association.



# HUNT NAMED SHARP PROFESSOR OF HUMAN DIMENSIONS

BY REAGAN POSTON

**T**HE COLLEGE OF FOREST RESOURCES AT MISSISSIPPI State University is honoring a wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture faculty member with the esteemed Sharp Professorship. “We congratulate **DR. KEVIN HUNT** on this great honor,” said Dr. George Hopper, dean of the College of Forest Resources and director of the Forest and Wildlife Research Center. “For nearly 20 years, Dr. Hunt’s research in human dimensions as it pertains to wildlife has helped answer critical questions for stakeholders invested in protecting our nation’s wildlife resources.”

Hunt’s career has focused on the study of human dimensions—specifically how humans interact with wildlife.

“A big part of resource management is actually people management,” Hunt said.

Established by Jack, Mollie and Kate Sharp of Tishomingo County, the Sharp Professorship is funded through the Sharp Forest, a 1,600-acre timber tract, which is part of the Bulldog Forest, a field-based learning resource for forestry students that also generates income from timber harvesting for the CFR. The professorship is awarded to a College of Forest Resources professor who embodies Mississippi State’s land-grant mission of research, teaching, and service.

Hunt said he was surprised by the honor.

“I know how much my colleagues contribute to the university, so I feel very gratified and honored to be representing human dimensions in this way,” Hunt said.

In 2001, Hunt and a handful of colleagues created MSU’s Human Dimensions and Conservation Law Enforcement Laboratory, which helps scholars delve into the sociological, psychological, geographical, anthropological, political, and economic factors that impact wildlife.

“We, as humans, interact with wildlife in many ways including consumptive activities of fishing, hunting, and trapping, and non-consumptive activities like wildlife watching, birding,

and providing habitats for wildlife such as pollinators. I study all of these interactions from a social and economic standpoint, so resource management practices can be a step closer to addressing stakeholder needs in all of these areas without compromising wildlife needs,” Hunt said.

His research through MSU’s Forest and Wildlife Research Center serves as a bridge between wildlife managers and the general public. Wildlife biologists and management agencies rely on Hunt and other specialists to administer, compile, and communicate countless survey data.

“Surveys are an important part of the process. A lot of times, agencies may hear only from a few ‘squeaky wheels’ in terms of public opinion on various wildlife management issues. Surveys allow agencies to gather input from the silent majority and provide them with information from their stakeholders that are more representative of the public as a whole,” Hunt said. “This enables them to make more informed management decisions that are more palatable to the public and create less friction between agencies and their stakeholders.”

Hunt strives to instill a love for human dimensions in his students and advises the MSU Wildlife Law Enforcement Club. He previously served 15 years as adviser for Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences, or MANRRS, and he is graduate coordinator for the Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture. Hunt also is active in several professional organizations, previously serving as president of the Mississippi Chapter of the American Fisheries Society.

“The most rewarding part is when I get to sit down with the stack of theses and dissertations for the semester. I love getting to read and experience the breadth of wildlife research happening in our department and stay in the loop about things that are going on outside of the Human Dimensions Lab,” Hunt said. ♣

Dr. George Hopper, College of Forest Resources dean and FWRC director, right, congratulates Dr. Kevin Hunt, left, the recipient of the esteemed Sharp Professorship. (Photo by David Ammon)



# CHANGING OF THE GUARD

## NEW FACULTY



**DR. TAMARA SUELEY FILGUEIRA AMORIM FRANÇA** joined the Department of Sustainable Bioproducts as an assistant professor. She received a bachelor's in business administration from Metropolitana College of Marabá, a master's in forest science from Federal University of Espírito Santo, and a Ph.D. in forest resources at MSU. Her research interests include biodeterioration, durability of mass timber products, and wood properties.



**DR. STACY L. HINES** joined the Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture as an instructor. She received a bachelor's in parks and recreation management and environmental sciences at the University of North Carolina-Wilmington, a master's in biology at the University of North Carolina-Greensboro, and a Ph.D. in wildlife sciences at Texas A&M University. Her current focus is on developing an online master's degree in conservation education for MSU.

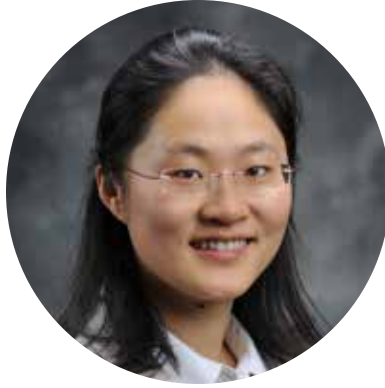


**DR. RAY IGLAY** joined the Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture as an assistant professor. He received a bachelor's in wildlife conservation and entomology at the University of Delaware, a master's in wildlife and fisheries science at MSU, and a Ph.D. in forest resources at MSU. His research interests include the conservation of biodiversity in managed landscapes, habitat management and restoration, plant succession, and bird conservation.





**DR. DERCILIO "JOE" LOPES** joined the Department of Sustainable Bioproducts as an assistant research professor. He received a bachelor's in wood industrial engineering at Federal University of Espírito Santo, a master's in forest science at Federal University of Espírito Santo, and a Ph.D. in forest resources from MSU. His research interests include wood anatomy, wood preservation, thermal modification, and computer vision.



**DR. QIN MA** joined the Department of Forestry as an assistant professor. She received a bachelor's at Nanjin University, a master's at Western University, and a Ph.D. at the University of California-Merced. Her research interests include mapping tree species and structure, forest growth via multi-temporal and multi-platform remote sensing data, how forest disturbances and climate change affect water use and carbon stock, all with the goal of forest restoration.



**DR. MARK MCCONNELL** joined the Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture as an assistant professor. He received a bachelor's in wildlife and fisheries science at Louisiana State University, a master's in wildlife and fisheries science at MSU, and a Ph.D. in forest resources at MSU. He is a galliform ecologist specializing in working landscapes, and his research is invested in developing novel and profitable ways to restore and manage northern bobwhite populations.



**DR. DANA MORIN** joined the Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture as an assistant professor. She received a bachelor's of general studies at Louisiana State University, a master's in ecology at San Diego State University, and a Ph.D. in wildlife conservation at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Her research interests include carnivore ecology, quantitative ecology, conservation genetics, and endangered species monitoring.

## RETIREMENTS

**DR. LAURA GRACE**, professor in the Department of Forestry, retired after 25 years of service. Grace worked in lumber supply systems as part of the Wood Supply Systems Group. She taught Forest Operations and Harvesting in the Summer Field program, and other courses related to logging and forest operations.



**MS. BEVERLY SMITH** retired after 25 years of service to Mississippi State University. Smith worked in the Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture and the CFR Dean's Office.



# STUDENT NEWS

## MSU FORESTRY STUDENTS AGAIN GARNER NATIONAL ACCOLADE

**MISSISSIPPI STATE'S** student chapter of the Society of American Foresters again is claiming a top honor in the national Outstanding Student Chapter competition, a feat accomplished by the organization for more than two decades.

This year, the MSU organization is being recognized as the first-place chapter.

The Society of American Foresters, or SAF, aims to prioritize professional development, community outreach, and forest health, and Mississippi State's student chapter has achieved just that, earning first place for the second year in a row. The accolade marks the 21st consecutive year that the university's chapter placed first, second, or third nationally.

**DR. ROBERT K. GRALA**, professor of forestry and chapter adviser, said the honor was well deserved.

"Our chapter is full of talented, proactive, hardworking students. Their involvement in SAF gives them a competitive edge in job opportunities. Employers recognize the importance of networking gained through involvement



MSU President Mark E. Keenum congratulated officers of the student organization on their accomplishment. Pictured, from left, are SAF member Erik Johnson of Niles, Illinois, Vice President Marshall Callicott of Bryant, Arkansas, Conclave Chair Darcey Collins of Bauxite, Arkansas, Keenum, President Rachel Nation of Milton, Florida, Treasurer Adam Lindsey of Purvis, and Junior Representative Noah Hammond of Linden, Alabama. (Photo by David Ammon)

in professional organizations," Grala said.

He also pointed out that the drive to continue the chapter's legacy is led entirely by the students.

"Each year, the students participate as much as possible, and then, the next

generation of students sees this legacy and wants to continue it. There's an internal rivalry between years, and the bar only rises," Grala said. "Winning for a second year in a row is a validation and acknowledgment of all the hard work our students put in."



## GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH FEATURED IN BASS CARE 101

**GRADUATE RESEARCH BY COLIN DINKEN** and **KEVIN KERETZ** is featured in the new Bass Care 101. Under the direction of **DRS. PETER ALLEN** and **HAL SCHRAMM**, the former graduate students evaluated the effects of water temperature, livewell temperature and dissolved oxygen, and fish landing time on largemouth bass survival. The project was funded by 10 state fisheries agencies.

Results of the study may be found at <https://aftco.com/pages/bass-care-101>.

# STUDENT AWARDS

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**RAM ADHIKARI**, forestry doctoral student, received the Society of American Foresters Diversity Scholarship. He also received the department's Moehring Outstanding Graduate Student Award, doctoral level.

.....  
**CALEB ALDRIDGE**, wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture graduate student, is recipient of the Program for Excellence in Science from the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

.....  
**GUANGMEI CAO ANDERSON**, sustainable bioproducts graduate student, received the MSU Office of Research and Economic Development graduate student research award.

.....  
Wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture students **MORIAH BOGGESS** and **RAINER NICHOLS** placed first and second, respectively, in the student presentation category at the Southeast Deer Study Group annual meeting.

.....  
**REBECCA BRACKEN**, a wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture doctoral student, placed second in the poster competition, Life and Biomedical Sciences and Engineering division, at the 2019 Graduate Student Research Symposium.

.....  
**ISABELLA DURHAM BURGER** received the 2019 undergraduate student research award from the MSU Office of Research and Economic Development. She was also awarded the Senior Academic Achievement award in wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture and placed second for her oral presentation at the Mississippi chapter of The Wildlife Society annual meeting. Burger placed third for her poster in the Undergraduate Student Research Symposium in the Social Sciences division, and placed second in the 3-minute thesis competition for undergraduate students.

.....  
**WESLEY BURGER**, wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture graduate student, received the best graduate student poster award from the Mississippi chapter of The Wildlife Society annual meeting.

.....  
**BRITTANY CRESSER**, wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture, received the Ernest Gluesing Outstanding Graduate Student Award, master's level.

.....  
Forestry major **ALEX DAVIS** received the U.S. Forest Service Science Achievement Award and the Senior Academic Achievement Award in forestry.

.....  
**ANNA DICKIE** received the Sophomore Academic Achievement Award in forestry.

.....  
**AUBREY DIFENTHAL**, wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture major, was named a freshman homecoming maid.

.....  
**ZOE DUDIAK** received the Sophomore Academic Achievement in Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture.

.....  
**ISLAM ELSAYED** and **YAWEI CAO**, sustainable bioproducts majors, both earned the Outstanding Ph.D. Graduate Student award.

.....  
**BRANDON GERHART**, wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture, received the Outstanding Undergraduate Student award.

.....  
**WILLIAM GRIFFIN**, a graduate student in sustainable bioproducts and forestry alumnus, received the Society of American Foresters Student Leadership Award.

.....  
**MACKENZIE GUNN**, wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture, placed third for student presentation at the Mississippi Chapter of American Fisheries Society annual meeting.

.....  
**CLAYTON W. HALE**, forestry master's student, placed first in oral presentation, Life and Biomedical Sciences and Engineering division, at the 2019 Graduate Student Research Symposium

.....  
**WILLIAM O. "WILL" KRUCKEBERG**, forestry master's student, placed second in the poster competition, Life and Biomedical Sciences and Engineering division, at the 2019 Graduate Student Research Symposium.



# STUDENT AWARDS

**THU YA KYAW**, forestry doctoral student, placed third in oral presentation; Physics, Mathematics, Computer Science and Engineering division, at the 2019 Graduate Student Research Symposium.

**SABHYATA LAMICHHANE**, forestry master's student, placed second in the poster competition, Arts and Humanities division, at the 2019 Graduate Student Research Symposium.

**JENNIFER MCDANIEL**, forestry graduate student, received the Moehring Outstanding Graduate Student Award, master's level.

**RACHEL NATION**, forestry major, placed second for her poster at the Society of American Foresters Annual Convention.

**NICHOLAS PRICE** received the Sophomore Academic Achievement Award in Sustainable Bioproducts.

**RYO OGAWA**, wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture graduate student, won the best student presentation at the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

**BRADLEY M. RICHARDSON**, a wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture doctoral student, earned the Preparing Future Faculty certificate. Richardson also received the David Nabi Memorial Award and the Ernest Gluesing Outstanding Graduate Student (Ph.D. level) award.

Forestry major **SAMANTHA SEAMON** received the Student Leadership Award from the MSU CFR Alumni Society. Seamon also was the winner of the George Switzer Outstanding Undergraduate Award.

**ANUSHA SHRESTHA**, a forestry doctoral student, earned the Preparing Future Faculty certificate, as well as second place in the poster competition at the International Society of Forest Resource Economics. Shrestha also placed first in the doctoral student oral presentation, Arts and Humanities Education and Social Sciences division, at the 2019 Graduate Students Research Symposium. Shrestha was also recognized as one of the university's newest Graduate School Student Hall of Fame Scholars.

**KASSANDRA STOUT**, sustainable bioproducts major, earned the Outstanding M.S. Graduate Student award.

**SHANNON WESTLAKE**, wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture doctoral student, was named Grand Champion Runner-Up in the Three-Minute Thesis Competition. A native of Cayuta, New York, her presentation was entitled, "Human Dimensions of Pollinator Conservation." Westlake also placed first in oral presentation, Life and Biomedical Sciences and Engineering division, at the MSU 2019 Graduate Student Research Symposium. She also received the Gamma Sigma Delta Graduate Student Award of Merit and placed first in outstanding oral presentation at the Mississippi Chapter of The Wildlife Society annual meeting.

The MSU chapter of **THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY** won second place overall amongst 22 universities at the 2019 Wildlife Society Southeastern student conclave. The chapter's quiz bowl team—**A.J. BINNEY, MORIAH BOGGESE, MURRY BURGESS**, and **JONATHAN SMITH**—placed third, while **MORIAH BOGGESE, ISABELLA DURHAM**, and **LOGAN MILLS** all placed in the top three for individual competitions.

Sustainable bioproducts students, **BOJAN COSOVIC, SACHIN TRIPATHI, JENNIFER WHITLOW**, and **GANESH SEDHAIN**, won first place in the quiz bowl competition at the International Forest Products Society annual meeting.

# ALUMNI NEWS

**CARLTON OWEN** (*Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture 1976*) received the Gifford Pinchot Medal from the Society of American Foresters. The medal recognizes outstanding contributions by a forestry professional in the administration, practice, and professional development of forestry in North America.

**RICHARD MCINNIS** (*Forestry 1988*) has been named the assistant state forester for the Mississippi Forestry Commission.

**MISTY BOOTH** (*Forestry 1999*) joined the Mississippi Forestry Commission (MFC) as the new urban forestry coordinator.

**TODD MATTHEWS** (*Forestry 2000*) is the new assistant forest management chief for the Mississippi Forestry Commission.

**RUSSELL BOZEMAN** (*Forestry 2002*), the state forester, received the 2019 Outstanding Young Forester Award from the Mississippi Society of American Foresters.

**PETER C. SMILEY JR.** (*Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture 2002*) and Christian Lenhart edited "Ecological Restoration in the Midwest: Past, Present, and Future" from Bur Oak Books. He is a research ecologist for the USDA-ARS soil drainage research unit in Columbus, Ohio, and is co-founder, past president and at-large representative of the Midwest-Great Lakes Chapter of the Society for Ecological Restoration.

**CANDICE STEVENSON** (*Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture 2004, 2008*) has been named as the new fire communication and education specialist for the National Park Service (NPS) Division of Fire and Aviation, based out of Boise, Idaho. Stevenson has 15 years of experience with the USFWS, serving as refuge manager for Lake Woodruff National Wildlife Refuge in central Florida for the past five years. She became a wildland firefighter in 2011 and a public information officer (PIO) in 2013. She currently serves as the USFWS representative and deputy chairperson on the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCWG) PIO Subcommittee (PIOSC).

**BRIAN ALFORD** (*Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture 2008*) is the new assistant director for Stone Laboratory, Ohio Sea Grant.

**STEVEN BYRD** (*Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture 2018*) is a biologist with Wildlife Mississippi in Amory.

**WILLIAM PIGOTT** (*Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture 2018*) is working for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Vicksburg.

**MEGGIE STEWART** (*Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture 2018*), is the new aquarist at the Audubon Aquarium of the Americas in New Orleans.

## OBITUARIES

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**JAMES JAGERS FOREMAN** (*Forestry 1958*)

James Jagers Foreman died November 20, 2018. He served in the U.S. Air Force from 1950-54 and worked for the U.S. Forest Service for 16 years before turning to private real estate for the remainder of his career.

.....  
**BRUCE A. BURNHAM** (*Forestry 1991*)

Bruce A. Burnham died on May 15, 2019 at his home following a 3 year battle with colon cancer. He was born on January 8, 1968. He is survived by his wife, Debbie Russell Burnham, and his son, Barron Bruce Burnham. Bruce was a native of Puckett and resided in Forest. He was a registered forester, holding membership with the Society of American Foresters and the Mississippi Forestry Association, in which he held numerous leadership positions over the years. He was an employee of Georgia Pacific Corporation for over 25 years, serving as the Environmental Health and Safety Manager for Environmental Compliance at the time of his death. He was a Christian by faith and a member of Forest Baptist Church.

.....  
**KATHY RIGGS SHELTON** (*Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture 2000*)

Kathy Riggs Shelton died on July 17, 2019. Shelton was a Wildlife Biologist with the Mississippi Museum of Natural Sciences, a member of the Mississippi Bat Working Group, and a lover of animals her entire life. Shelton is survived by her parents, brother, stepchildren, and step-grandchildren. Kathy was born on October 16, 1964 in Greensboro, North Carolina. She graduated from North Carolina State University with a B.A. in Wildlife Management and from Mississippi State University with her master's degree in Wildlife Sciences.



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