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Upcoming Events
75th Anniversary “7 for 75” Speaker Series
- John Burrell, 9/23
- Nick Wiley, 10/7
Summer 2021 Commencement, 8/7
Dean’s Forum and Alumni Social
- Emmett Thompson, Virtual 10/28
- Richard Brinker, Virtual 11/18

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AUBURN UNIVERSITY
School of Forestry & Wildlife Sciences
Honoring a Legacy

Working with Nature for Society’s Well Being

New Faculty Make Groundbreaking Discoveries pg. 6

First graduating class of sustainable biomaterials and packaging major

Aubie visits KPNC’s Woodland Wonders Nature Preschool

Dixon Center hosts Yale University students

MANRRS Hoops for Trees
A Message from the Dean

Dear alumni and friends,

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

Despite the challenges presented by COVID-19, our faculty, staff, students, and alumni have continued to push the boundaries of excellence and innovation in our research, teaching, and service. The school has made significant progress in its strategic plan, A Forest for a Better Future, and has continued to make strides in several key areas.

In the spring, the school opened the new Research and Extension Building, which will serve as a hub for collaborative research and extension efforts. The building features state-of-the-art facilities and equipment, including a new field operations lab, which will allow us to conduct research in a more efficient and sustainable manner.

The school has also continued to expand its outreach efforts, with the establishment of the Wildfire Education Center, which provides educational opportunities for fire and aviation managers to federal agencies such as the U.S. Forest Service and the National Park Service. The center has also become home to the Wildland Firefighting Apprentice Program, which trains the next generation of wildfire managers.

Furthermore, the school has continued to invest in its online offerings, with the launch of several new online courses and programs. These include the Master of Science in Forestry and Wildlife Sciences, which is designed to provide flexible and accessible education to working professionals.

Finally, the school has continued to make significant progress in its fundraising efforts, with the establishment of the Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center, which will serve as a hub for research and education in forestry and wildlife sciences.

In closing, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all of our alumni, friends, and supporters who have contributed to the success of the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences. Your ongoing support is essential to our continued success and I look forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely,

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

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

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

The deanship is designed to fund new research and educational initiatives in forestry and wildlife sciences. The School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences and SFWS, or SFW, by Auburn University, by phone at 234-244-5891.

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

July 2021
School of Forestry & Wildlife Sciences

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

Academics & Research

Students mount cameras to track efficacy of feral hog traps.

Yucheng Peng studies uses of forest biomass from downed timber.

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

Undergraduate Degrees
- Forestry
- Forest Engineering Option
- Geospatial and Environmental Informatics
- Natural Resources Management
- Sustainable Biomass and Packaging
- Wildlife Ecology and Management
- Wildlife Sciences – Pre-Set Concentration
- Wildlife Enterprise Management

Undergraduate Minors
- Natural Resource Ecology
- Natural-Based Recreation
- Watershed Sciences

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

Online Graduate Programs
- Forest Finance and Investments Certificate
- Natural Resource Certificate
- One-Health Certificate
- Master of Natural Resources

Development

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

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

Extension

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

Extension Specialist Nancy Lieiwenshine leads an invasive plant control program.

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

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

57% FEMALE
43% MALE
MORE THAN 621,895 forestland acres owned and/or managed by participants

APPAREXIMATELY $171 MM ESTIMATED VALUE OF SERVICE

5,531 Continuing education credits generated

114:1 Return on investment for Alabama Extension

113% OVER GOAL Deer Lab
126% OVER GOAL KPNC Turtle Pond

TIGER GIVING DAY

KPNC hosts its annual Earth Day celebration.

15% INCREASE in visitor traffic to KPNC

25% INCREASE in social media consumers of KPNC educational content

Orchard operations students learn best practices.

Deer Lab

KPNC Turtle Pond

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Narine demonstrates NASA satellite’s ability to observe forest health, generate data to support sustainable forest management
Luna Narine, an assistant professor of geospatial analytics in the Auburn University School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences, is part of a research team whose recent study overturned a long-held belief in the capabilities of a high-tech satellite to measure the three-dimensional structure of forests.

The study, “Using ICESat-2 to Estimate and Visualize Forest Structure — A First Example” in the Remote Sensing journal, shows how NASA’s Ice, Cloud and Land Elevation Satellite-2, or ICESat-2, can be used to observe aboveground biomass, height of trees and mean area distribution. The report of ICESat-2 was delivered to the team, which included researchers from NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory, the University of Colorado, Boulder, and the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

Narine said her team was surprised by the three-dimensional structure of forests when compared to their understanding of these forests, as well as the amount of data it was possible to capture. However, ICESat-2 can capture the information to help researchers understand the potential for change in forests.

“Changes in soil CO₂ emissions will have consequences for future climate change,” said Narine, who is an assistant professor of geospatial analytics in the Auburn University School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences. “Our study examined how rising atmospheric carbon dioxide levels influence soil CO₂ emissions from grassland soils.

The findings of the study indicate that rising atmospheric carbon dioxide levels will increase soil CO₂ emissions from grassland soils, which could have implications for future climate change.

Aspinwall co-authors study finding that carbon dioxide levels within plant communities influence soil carbon dioxide emissions
Predicting future climate and ecological change is among the top priorities, and an Auburn University faculty member is among a group of researchers who have been studying these topics.

Aspinwall, an assistant professor of soil science, is part of a team that has been studying the relationship between soil carbon dioxide emissions and plant communities.

The study, “Soil CO₂ emissions in a semi-arid ecosystem: the role of plant diversity,” was published in the journal Environmental Research Letters.

“Aspinwall’s work has been instrumental in understanding the relationship between soil CO₂ emissions and plant diversity,” said Narine, who is an assistant professor of soil science.

“Changes in soil CO₂ emissions will have consequences for future climate change,” said Narine, who is an assistant professor of geospatial analytics in the Auburn University School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences. “Our study examined how rising atmospheric carbon dioxide levels will increase soil CO₂ emissions from grassland soils, which could have implications for future climate change.”

Kumar and team embark on soil moisture study combining big data, artificial intelligence and earth system modeling
Auburn University Faculty Member, Sanjoy Kumar, in the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences, is leading a team of researchers who are working on a project to combine big data, artificial intelligence and earth system modeling to improve soil moisture forecasts.

The project, “FACT: Interactive Deep Learning for Improved Soil Moisture Forecasting,” was funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

“These results show that this approach can improve soil moisture forecasts,” said Kumar, who is an assistant professor of soil science.

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Alexander co-authors new study finding deciduous trees offset carbon loss from Alaska boreal fires, published in Science
Alexander, an assistant professor of forest ecology in the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences, is a co-author of a new study published in the journal Science that describes the deciduous trees replacing burned forest stands more than 200 years after a fire.

The team, led by researchers from the University of Alaska Fairbanks, Auburn University, and Yeshiva University, found that the presence of deciduous trees can help offset carbon loss from boreal fires.

“Changes in soil CO₂ emissions will have consequences for future climate change,” said Narine, who is an assistant professor of geospatial analytics in the Auburn University School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences. “Our study examined how rising atmospheric carbon dioxide levels will increase soil CO₂ emissions from grassland soils, which could have implications for future climate change.”

The study was supported by the U.S. Department of Defense, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the NASA Arctic-Boreal Vulnerability Experiment, the National Science Foundation, the USDA Forest Service, and the Foundation for the North American Long-Term Ecological Research Program.

“This project is one of 12 projects funded by NASA grant that will use remote sensing and artificial intelligence to improve soil moisture forecasts,” said Kumar, who is an assistant professor of soil science.

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Governor Kay Ivey visits Dixon Center

Gov. Kay Ivey joined the Alabama Forestry Commission’s Forestry Academy spring graduation ceremony at the Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center where 24 students graduated in the Class of 2021. She was joined by State Forester Rick Oates, Dean Janaki Alavalapati, and several other government representatives. The ACF established the original forestry Academy in 1979, and it continued through 1994. Now, after 24 years, the academy has been reinstated. This first graduating class of the ‘new’ academy is composed of seventy hand-picked employees from 26 counties across Alabama. These individuals have completed eight weeks of intensive classroom study and field exercises in forest protection, forest management, and teamwork building at the Dixon Center.

“We are honored to host Governor Kay Ivey as our keynote speaker,” Janaki Alavalapati, School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences Dean said. “Governor Ivey has always been an enthusiastic advocate and supporter of the Academy and the forestry industry in Alabama.”

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

Dean Janaki Alavalapati

SFWS Students Receive Top Awards

Auburn Research Student Symposium
Top Graduate Oral Presentation Award: Biren Datta (Major Professor Maria Celeste Iglesias) 
Top Graduate Poster Presentation Award: Upul Perera (Major Professor Maria Celeste Iglesias)
Graduate Student Awards
Outstanding Master’s Students for 2020-21: Diego Gomez Maldonado (Major Professor Maria Celeste Iglesias)
Graduate Student Awards
Outstanding Master’s Students for 2020-21: Diego Gomez Maldonado (Major Professor Maria Celeste Iglesias)

"These major contributions will go far to establish the Emmett Thompson Deanship, which will elevate our already esteemed school to a top tier level, and we are extremely grateful.”

- Dean Janaki Alavalapati

SFWS News sfwauburn.edu
Why Stumpage Prices are Low Despite Historic High Lumber Prices

Over the last decade, the markets for both paper and lumber have experienced rapid fluctuations. While lumber prices have spiked, prices for paper and paper pulp have been volatile, too. This has led to concerns about the long-term sustainability of the forest products industry.

Executive Secretary Mark Smith by phone at (334) 844-6699 or email mailbox@auburn.edu

Tiger Giving Day success benefits students and community

Although nominations for the Mosely Environmental Achievement Award may be submitted any time of year, the deadline for this year’s spring nominating committee meeting was April 1, 2021, while the deadline for the fall meeting was Aug. 15, 2021. Award recipients receive a $500 honorarium, a framed certificate, and the opportunity to reproduce a commissioned painting. The award is open to anyone interested in natural resource conservation, and nominations are encouraged from all walks of life.

School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences 2020 Names of Award Recipients

Several factors contributed to the high lumber prices seen during the second quarter of 2020 and the first quarter of 2021. The most significant of these factors was the strong demand for new housing. This demand was driven by high demand for new housing over the past several years, coupled with low mortgage interest rates and low unemployment. As more people move into new homes, the demand for lumber is expected to remain high for the foreseeable future.

Conclusion

The current supply and demand situation is causing lumber prices to remain high, and it is likely that this trend will continue for some time. However, it is important to remember that lumber prices are subject to change, and there is always the possibility of a decrease in demand or an increase in supply that could affect prices.

Tiger Giving Day, held on April 17, 2021, was a huge success. The initiative raised $10,000, representing 125% of its total goal. MANRRS is a national organization of students and professionals of all races and ethnic groups who take part in agricultural and natural resource careers. The program is designed to support researchers, educators, and students looking at forestry or wildlife.
**Eric Gee, ’94**

Eric Gee, a 1994 forestry graduate, is the new executive director of the Southern Forest Products Association, or SFPA, which represents Southern Pine and other wood products industry, which has met every two years since 1950.

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

**How did SFWS prepare you for your career?**

“Career preparation at Auburn’s School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences is all about being well-rounded, having the knowledge and solid understanding of forestry and silviculture principles. Even 27 years later, it is information I use every day, especially when communicating how the lumber we produce come from abundant, sustainable forests.”

**What is your current position at the SFPA, and what are your major responsibilities?**

“As the executive director of SFPA, I am responsible for directing the domestic and international product promotion programs. The SFPA receives nearly $11,000,000 in funding from the USDA Foreign Agricultural Service, with which we use to promote Southern Pine lumber throughout the world. I also direct and produce Woodland Machinery & Equipment Exposition, which provides industry professionals a place to gather and engage with the latest technology and services used to produce lumber products. Our next event is scheduled for August 11-13, 2021 at the Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta.”

**What is your favorite thing about being an SFPA alumnus?**

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

**Do you have any advice for students entering the work force right now?**

“Keep an open mind. Recognize the forest products industry offers so much more than just field work. Learn all you can about developing your leadership and interpersonal skills, because these skills, combined with the school’s foundational knowledge, can get you where you want to go.”

For more detailed information on Eric Gee’s career and experience with the SFWS, visit sfws.auburn.edu/category/development/

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**Compass Circle Members**

Learn more about Compass Circle at sfws.auburn.edu/compass-circle.

- **Mr. Tyler D. Baxter** ’77
- **Mr. James S. Clark** ’10
- **Mr. Samuel C. Cockrell** ’68
- **Mr. Chase Lee Dixon** ’11
- **Mr. Eric Lee Doebery** ’18
- **Mr. Adam T. Frame** ’19
- **Mr. William M. Green** ’14
- **Mr. William Noll Harp** ’12
- **Mr. George Stephenson Hazard III** ’08
- **Mr. Michael W. Heathery** ’08
- **Mr. Marshall B. Herron** ’18
- **Mr. Christopher Watson Lewis** ”10
- **Ms. Jenny Marie Lightfoot** ’10
- **Mr. William Thomas Liner** ’14
- **MBA Brandon James Lemus ’66
- **Mr. Eddie L. Love** ’15
- **Mr. Rufus H. McRae Jr.** ’18
- **Mr. Mike McQuaid** ”10
- **Mr. Michael A. Setzler** ’11
- **Mr. Yancey L. Smith** ’18
- **Mr. Charles T. Taylor** ’06
- **Mr. Martin R. Taylor** ’08
- **Mr. Ted Toth** ’10
- **Mr. Ashley Sanders Winfree** ’06

**Auburn University School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences**

sfws.auburn.edu

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**Spotlight on Alumni**

Written by Aly Elmore

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**Woodlands and Wildlife Society Members**

Learn more about the Woodlands and Wildlife Society online at sfws.auburn.edu/woodlands-and-wildlife-society.