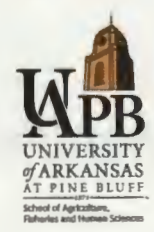




4TH ANNUAL
 SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY AND
 AFRICAN AMERICAN LAND RETENTION
 JOINT REGIONAL CONFERENCE



4TH ANNUAL
SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY AND
AFRICAN AMERICAN LAND RETENTION
JOINT REGIONAL CONFERENCE
AUGUST 29-30, 2024

Hosted by Prairie View A&M University
and University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff

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**PRAIRIE VIEW
A&M UNIVERSITY**
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD, AND NATURAL RESOURCES

RESEARCH
PVAMU AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH CENTER



Greetings To All:

On behalf of Prairie View A&M University (PVAMU) College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources (CAFNR) Cooperative Agricultural Research Center (CARC) Small Farm Institute (SFI) Program and the SFLR Committee Members, we embrace you with a warm welcome to our 1st in-person and 4th Annual Sustainable Forestry and African American Landowners Retention (SFLR) Joint Regional Conference.

Our objective is to help forestland owners be efficient in managing forestry with the climate in mind as they manage their property for maximum production and promote best practices to retain land in the family and avoid heir's property issues. Conference hosts, PVAMU and the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, comprised of our SFLR Committee, have worked immensely to present topics that are important, relevant and resourceful.

Within the last two years, the SFLR program was awarded over \$600,000 in grant funds to include the Resilience for Land Retention, Growing the SFLR Network, and the US Endowment for Forestry and Community grants to support landowners. In 2021, the PVAMU SFLR program received a certificate of Congressional Recognition on behalf of the US Congress 18th District of Texas constituents presented by Representative Sheila Jackson Lee; may she rest in peace. Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee was an advocating supporter since the start of our program.

Once more, welcome to the conference. If you are interested in more information about the SFI SFLR Program in Texas or becoming a project participant in Texas, please contact the Small Farm Institute Program Coordinator, Rozenia Toney, at (936) 261-5123. We hope you enjoy the conference and it be a pleasantly memorable event.

Best regards,

Clarence Bunch

Clarence Bunch, Ph.D.

SFI Project Manager

PVAMU Cooperative Agricultural Research Center



**UNIVERSITY
of ARKANSAS
AT PINE BLUFF**
1873

SCHOOL OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND HUMAN SCIENCES
Small Farm Program

August 29, 2024



Greetings:

I welcome you to the fourth annual and first in-person Sustainable Forestry and African American Landowners Retention (SFLR) Joint Regional Conference. The conference is sponsored by Prairie View A&M University and the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff.

Our outstanding SFLR Team (Outreach Coordinator, Conservation Consultants, Foresters, and Program Assistant) is dedicated to helping forest landowners maximize their land's economic potential to build generational wealth. They have worked very hard with Prairie View SFLR Staff to bring this great conference to you.

The past year, 2023, was an exciting time for the project team. The team helped participants obtain over \$300,000 in conservation funds to improve their forestland and approximately \$30,000 in funding to identify property boundaries with land surveys. This team was also highlighted at the 65th Annual Rural Life Conference by USDA Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment Dr. Homer Wilkins on March 15, 2024.

Again, welcome to the conference. Anyone interested in learning more about the SFLR Program in Arkansas or becoming a project participant in Arkansas may contact the Small Farm Program at (870) 571-9428. As for now, please sit back, relax, ask any questions, and enjoy the conference. Please do not forget to share what you learn with others.

Sincerely,

Henry English

Henry English, PhD
Small Farm Program Director

1200 N. University Drive, Mail Slot 4906 • Pine Bluff, AR 71601

Office: (870) 575-7226 • Fax: (870) 575-4682

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UAPB is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Institution

THURSDAY, AUGUST 29, 2024

Moderator: Horace Hodge

9 A.M. WELCOME & GREETINGS PANEL

Clarence Bunch, Project Manager III
CARC Small Farm Institute, Prairie View A&M University

Henry English, Director
Small Farm Program

Gerard D'Souza, Dean and Director of Land Grant Programs
Prairie View A&M University

Tomikia P. LeGrande, President
Prairie View A&M University

Kristy Oates, State Conservationist
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Kelly Adkins, State Executive Director
USDA Farm Service Agency

Al Davis, Director
Texas A&M Forest Service

9:45-9:55 A.M. SFLR OVERVIEW

Bethany Wilkinson, Director
Sustainable Forest African American Land Retention
Network

10-10:55 A.M. CONCURRENT SESSION 1

Front Left Auditorium (Downstairs)
Topic: Planning and Managing Forest Operations
Ben Plunkett, District Forester Texas A&M Forest Service
Moderator: Roy Mills, International Farmers and Ranchers

Back Right Auditorium (Downstairs)
Topic: Alternative Income for Forest Landowners
Justin Mallet, Forestry Consultant, Deciper Creek Forestry
Moderator: Levell Foote, Conservation Consultant

Ballroom C (Upstairs)
Topic: Heirs Planning to Keep
Audra Rod Smith, PLLC, Attorney
Moderator: Amy Pritchard, Pritchard Law Firm

Ballroom D (Upstairs)
Topic: Forest Cycle and Financial Assistance (Introduction
to NRCS for Forest Landowners)
Anthony Lowey, NRCS Forester Area 4
Moderator: Joseph Johnson, Texas Agriforestry Small
Farmers, Ranchers, and Landowners

11-11:55 A.M. CONCURRENT SESSION 2

Front Left Auditorium (Downstairs)
Topic: Planning and Managing Forest Operations
Ben Plunkett, District Forester Texas A&M Forest Service
Moderator: Roy Mills, International Farmers and Ranchers

Back Right Auditorium (Downstairs)
Topic: Alternative Income for Forest Landowners
Justin Mallet, Forestry Consultant, Deciper Creek Forestry
Moderator: Levell Foote, Conservation Consultant

Ballroom C (Upstairs)
Topic: Heirs Planning to Keep
Audra Rod Smith, PLLC, Attorney
Moderator: Amy Pritchard, Pritchard Law Firm

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Topic: Forest Cycle and Financial Assistance (Introduction
to NRCS for Forest Landowners)
Anthony Lowey, NRCS Forester Area 4
Moderator: Joseph Johnson, Texas Agriforestry Small
Farmers, Ranchers, and Landowners

12 P.M. LUNCH & EXHIBIT VISIT

Recognition of Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee

1:05-1:55 P.M. KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Bishop James Dixon, Senior Pastor at The Community of
Faith Church and Houston Branch President of the NAACP

2-2:55 P.M. CONCURRENT SESSION 3

Front Left Auditorium (Downstairs)
Topic: Texas Climate Smart Programs
Eric Wannlund, Staff Forester II, Texas A&M Forest Service
Moderator: Ram Ray, PVAMU Associate Professor

Back Right Auditorium (Downstairs)
Topic: Scheduling Silver Culture Practices
Joseph D. Friend, UAPB Small Farm Program, Forest
Extension Specialist
Moderator: Charley Williams, UAPB Conversation
Consultant, TaskONE, LLC

Ballroom C (Upstairs)
Topic: Impact of Heirs Property
Stephen Hubbard, Attorney, Hubbard Law Firm
Moderator: Jocelyn Bennett, Land Retention Specialist

Ballroom D (Upstairs)
Topic: Sustainable Forest and Land Leasing
Elliot Washington, AgNR Extension Specialist
Adam Watts, Deer Texas Leases and Hunt Private
Moderator: Teki Hunt, UAPB 4-H Youth Leadership Director

3-3:55 P.M. CONCURRENT SESSION 4

Front Left Auditorium (Downstairs)
Topic: Texas Climate Smart Programs
Eric Wannlund, Staff Forester II, Texas A&M Forest Service
Moderator: Ram Ray, PVAMU Associate Professor

Back Right Auditorium (Downstairs)
Topic: Scheduling Silver Culture Practices
Joseph D. Friend, UAPB Small Farm Program, Forest
Extension Specialist
Moderator: Charley Williams, UAPB Conversation
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Ballroom D (Upstairs)
Topic: Sustainable Forest and Land Leasing
Elliot Washington, AgNR Extension Specialist
Adam Watts, Deer Texas Leases and Hunt Private
Moderator: Teki Hunt, UAPB 4-H Youth Leadership Director

4 P.M. CLOSING REMARKS

Clarence Bunch, Project Manager III
CARC Small Farm Institute, Prairie View A&M University

Henry English, Director
Small Farm Program

PV Campus Tour on Bus, Limited Seating

FRIDAY, AUGUST 30, 2024

Moderator: Evette Browning

9-9:30 A.M. WELCOME & GREETINGS

Clarence Bunch, Project Manager III
CARC Small Farm Institute, Prairie View A&M University

Henry English, Director
Small Farm Program

Erdogan Memili, Associate Director
Cooperative Agricultural Research Center, PVAMU

Obadiah Njue, Interim Dean
University of Arkansas Pine Bluff

Kennard D. Williams, State Outreach Coordinator
Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

Charley Williams, Conservation Consultant, TaskONE, LLC

9:30-10 A.M. FOREST SUSTAINABILITY

Robert Hughes, Director
Texas Forest Association

10-10:30 A.M. POLICIES ON ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATION, LAND & RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Ronald Reynolds, Texas State Representative

10:30-10:35 A.M. BREAK & VISIT EXHIBITS

10:40-11:25 A.M. MORNING KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Dewayne Goldmon, Senior Advisor
Racial Equity to the Secretary of Agriculture

11:30 A.M.-12:12 P.M. PANEL DISCUSSION

Panelists: Denise Arnold-Austin (AR)
Shawn Boler (AR)
Althea Adams (TX)
Debra Christian (TX)

Moderator: Alfred Parks, Regents Professor of Agricultural
Economics and Agribusiness
Prairie View A&M University

12:15-1 P.M. CLOSING KEYNOTE SPEAKER BUILDING GENERATIONAL WEALTH

Karama Neal, Principal Owner, Neal Firm

1 P.M. CLOSING REMARKS*

Clarence Bunch, Project Manager III
CARC Small Farm Institute, Prairie View A&M University

Henry English, Director
Small Farm Program

*Grab and Go Lunch

GENERAL INFORMATION: PRAIRIE VIEW A&M UNIVERSITY



Excerpts taken from: "Prairie View, A Study In Public Conscience" by Dr. George Ruble Woolfolk - "A Centennial History of Texas A&M University, 1876-1976 Vol. II" by Henry C. Dethloff Edited by Frank D. Jackson

ESTABLISHMENT - 1876



Prairie View A&M University, the first state supported College in Texas for African Americans, was established during the Reconstruction Period after the Civil War. This was an historical period in which political and economic special interest groups were able to aggressively use the Federal Government to establish public policy, in an attempt to "alter or reshape the cultural milieu of the vanquished southern states". The University had its beginnings in the Texas Constitution of 1876, which, in separate articles, established an "Agricultural and Mechanical College" and pledged that "Separate schools shall be provided for the white and colored children, and impartial provisions shall be made for both." As a consequence of these constitutional provisions, the Fifteenth Legislature established "Alta Vista Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas for Colored Youth" on August 14, 1876.

ENROLLMENT OF THE FIRST STUDENTS - 1878



The Board of Directors purchased the lands of the Alta Vista Plantation (1388 acres), from Mrs. Helen Marr Kirby, the widow of the late Col. Jared Ellison Kirby, for the establishment of the State Agriculture & Mechanical College of Texas for Colored Youth. The College was named "Alta Vista Agriculture & Mechanical College for Colored Youth". The A&M Board of Directors was authorized to appoint a President of A&M College and Alta Vista College with an assigned principal station at Alta Vista to administer the college's day to day affairs. Confederate President Jefferson Davis recommended Mr. Thomas S. Gathright of Mississippi, also from Mississippi and he brought Mr. L.W. Minor, of Mississippi to serve as Principal. Eight young African American men, the first of their race to enroll in a state-supported college in Texas, began their studies on March 11, 1878.

NAMES GIVEN TO THE UNIVERSITY - 1998



The Fifteenth Legislature August 14, 1876, established "Alta Vista Agriculture & Mechanical College of Texas for Colored Youth"; The Sixteenth Legislature April 19, 1879, established "Prairie View State Normal School" in Waller County for the Training of Colored Teachers; The Twentieth Legislature in 1887 attached the Agriculture & Mechanical Department to Prairie View Normal School; The Twenty-sixth Legislature in 1899 changed the name to "Prairie View State Normal & Industrial College"; The Forty-ninth Legislature June 1, 1945, changed the name to "Prairie View University"; The Fiftieth Legislature March 3, 1947, established "The Texas State University for Negroes (Texas Southern University) and changed the name of Prairie View University to "Prairie View Agricultural & Mechanical College of Texas"; The Sixty-third Legislature in 1973 changed the name to "Prairie View A&M University"

THE PVAMU STORY



The Fifteenth Legislature August 14, 1876, established "Alta Vista Agriculture & Mechanical College of Texas for Colored Youth"; The Sixteenth Legislature April 19, 1879, established "Prairie View State Normal School" in Waller County for the Training of Colored Teachers; The Twentieth Legislature in 1887 attached the Agriculture & Mechanical Department to Prairie View Normal School; The Twenty-sixth Legislature in 1899 changed the name to "Prairie View State Normal & Industrial College"; The Forty-ninth Legislature June 1, 1945, changed the name to "Prairie View University"; The Fiftieth Legislature March 3, 1947, established "The Texas State University for Negroes (Texas Southern University) and changed the name of Prairie View University to "Prairie View Agricultural & Mechanical College of Texas"; The Sixty-third Legislature in 1973 changed the name to "Prairie View A&M University."

The University's original curriculum was designated by the Texas Legislature in 1879 to be that of a "Normal School" for the preparation and training of teachers. This curriculum was expanded to include the arts and sciences, home economics, agriculture, mechanical arts and nursing after the University was established as a branch of the Agricultural Experiment Station (Hatch Act, 1887) and as a Land Grant College (Morrill Act, 1890). Thus began the tradition of agricultural research and community service, which continues today.

The four-year senior college program began in 1919 and in 1937, a division of graduate studies was added, offering master's degrees in agricultural economics, rural education, agricultural education, school administration and supervision, and rural sociology.

In 1945, the name of the institution was changed from Prairie View Normal and Industrial College to Prairie View University, and the school was authorized to offer, "as need arises," all courses offered at the University of Texas. In 1947, the Texas Legislature changed the name to Prairie View A&M College of Texas and provided that "courses be offered in agriculture, the mechanics arts, engineering, and the natural sciences connected therewith, together with any other courses authorized at Prairie View at the time of passage of this act, all of which shall be equivalent to those offered at the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas at Bryan." On August 27, 1973, the name of the institution was changed to Prairie View A&M University, and its status as an independent unit of the Texas A&M University System was confirmed. In 1981, the Texas Legislature acknowledged the University's rich tradition of service and identified various statewide needs which the University should address including the assistance of students of diverse ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds to realize their full potential, and assistance of small and medium-sized communities and businesses in their growth and development.

In 1983, the Texas Legislature proposed a constitutional amendment to restructure the Permanent University Fund to include Prairie View A&M University as a beneficiary of its proceeds. The Permanent University Fund is a perpetual endowment fund originally established in the Constitution of 1876 for the sole benefit of Texas A&M University and the University of Texas. The 1983 amendment also dedicated the University to enhancement as an "institution of the first class" under the governing board of the Texas A&M University System. The constitutional amendment was approved by the voters on November 6, 1984.

In January 1985, the Board of Regents of the Texas A&M University System responded to the 1984 Constitutional Amendment by stating its intention that Prairie View A&M University become "an institution nationally recognized in its areas of education and research." The Board also resolved that the University receive its share of the Available University Fund, as previously agreed to by Texas A&M University and the University of Texas.

In October 2000, the Governor of Texas signed the Priority Plan, an agreement with the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights to make Prairie View A&M University an educational asset accessible by all Texans. The Priority Plan mandates creation of many new educational programs and facilities. It also requires removing language from the Institutional Mission Statement which might give the impression of excluding any Texan from attending Prairie View A&M University.

Grow Innovatively. Farm Sustainably.

ADAPT RELEVANTLY WITH US.



The Small Farm Institute (SFI) is part of the College of Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources (CAFNR) Cooperative Agricultural Research Center (CARC). Dr. Clarence Bunch, Project Manager III, believes that SFI's mission is to serve as a premier outreach and agriculture educational leader for limited resource landowners and communities, and provide equality, research, education, service, and training to Texans.



CORE VALUES

The Small Farm Institute (SFI) is committed to engaging communities, limited-resource, socially disadvantaged, and veteran farmers and ranchers to educate, encourage, promote, improve, and develop economic and land sustainability.

- Partners and Teams
- Innovation and Adaptability
- Relevant and Responsive
- Integration and Excellence
- Integrity, Credibility, and Honesty

EDUCATION PROGRAMS

- Climate Smart Program
- The Small Farm Outreach Assistance Program
 - Sustainable Forestry African American Land Retention (SFLR)
 - The Reckoning Program (Heirs' Property Education)
 - Socially Disadvantaged and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers Program (2501)
 - Urban Agriculture Program
 - Sustainable Agriculture Research Education (SARE)
 - Small Farm Institute Technical Assistance
 - Resilience for Land Retention
- Outreach Education & Technical Assistance Program

INSTITUTION OBJECTIVES

- Advocate for agriculture policies on behalf of limited-resource producers with federal, state, and local government.
- Improve the overall economic conditions of underserved, limited-resource, and small farm producers in Texas.
- Provide training and education programs on food systems, technology, and sustainable agricultural production to underserved and limited-resource landowners.
- Help Small Farm farmers and ranchers implement new research findings relevant to production and management issues through Education, Training, and the Technical Assistance Program.
- Promote and foster agricultural land growth and family wealth through land-loss prevention, land transfer, estate planning, and heirs' property programs.

ENROLLMENT BENEFITS

- Receive notice of all PVAMU CARC upcoming workshops and conferences
- Eligible for drone area view of property
- Eligible to be included in Heirs' Clinic Workshops
- Eligible to be involved in experimental research with PV CARC
- Eligible to receive program grant
- Provided one-on-one land management
- Receive Natural Resources Management Plan of Farm
- Eligible to attend Ag Seminars
- Eligible to participate in the Agriculture Leadership Program

SFI provides premier outreach and agriculture research services, which includes a high concentration of limited-resources and socially disadvantage land owners in Texas.



GENERAL INFORMATION: COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD, AND NATURAL RESOURCES



The rich tradition of the College of Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources (CAFNR) dates back to 1879. We are leaders in the **true land-grant tradition** of academics, research, and extension.



ACADEMICS

CAFNR programs and education impact some of the largest industries and make invaluable strides in the areas of nutrition, food science, and dietetics.



RESEARCH

Research helps Prairie View A&M University fulfill its land-grant mission of teaching, research and service.



EXTENSION

Extension delivers practical research-based knowledge to small farm producers, families, aspiring entrepreneurs and youth in over 56 Texas counties.

With high impact practices, professional development activities, experiential learning activities, and an array of concentrations available for undergraduate programs in human nutrition and foods, agriculture, and agribusiness, as well as graduate programs in human sciences, the **Department of Agriculture, Nutrition and Human Ecology** turns out productive people who excel as park rangers, veterinarians, food inspectors, dietitians, and more.



Viewed as a trusted resource for information, **PVAMU Extension** agents and specialists respond not only with answers, but meet people where they are and move them along to the next level. We offer programs that work for people in the areas of 4-H & Youth Development (4H), Agriculture and Natural Resources (AGNR), Community and Economic Development (CED) and Family and Community Health (FCH).



The **Cooperative Agricultural Research Center (CARC)** within the College of Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources, plays an important role in agriculture, natural resources and life sciences. CARC is divided into the following areas: Animal Systems, Plant Systems, Food Systems, Natural Resources and Environmental Systems and Social Systems and Allied Research.



GENERAL INFORMATION: UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS AT PINE BLUFF

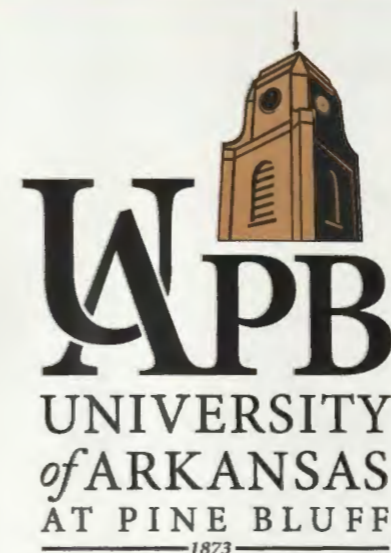


MISSION STATEMENT



The University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff is a public comprehensive HBCU 1890 Land-Grant Institution. The University embraces its land-grant mission of providing cutting edge research, teaching, outreach, and service programs that respond to the social and economic needs of the state and region. Its mission is to promote and sustain excellent academic programs that integrate quality instruction, research, and student learning experiences responsive to the needs of a racially, culturally, and economically diverse student population. Ultimately, the University is dedicated to providing access and opportunity to academically deserving students and producing graduates who are equipped to excel through their contributions and leadership in a 21st century national and global community.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW



In 1873, State senator John Middleton Clayton sponsored a legislative act calling for the establishment of Branch Normal College, but it was not until 1875 that the state's economic situation was secure enough to proceed with it. That year, Branch Normal was established as a branch of Arkansas Industrial University, now the University of Arkansas (UA) in Fayetteville, Arkansas. Its primary objective was educating black students to become teachers for the state's black schools. Governor Augustus Hill Garland, Arkansas Industrial University board chairman D. E. Jones, and Professor Wood Thompson hired Joseph Carter Corbin in July 1875 to make a determination about locating Branch Normal in Pine Bluff (Jefferson County) because of the town's large black population and its place as the major economic center in south-central Arkansas. Corbin was subsequently elected as principal at a salary of \$1,000 a year. The first class consisted of seven students. During the year, seventy-five to eighty students were enrolled, but the average attendance was forty-five to fifty the last three months of the school year.

Several setbacks occurred that delayed the actual opening of the school. The first building was an old frame house in need of much repair, but repairs were delayed because of illness among the workers. Lumber and furniture were ordered for the new building, but the boat carrying them sank in the river.

The first location for the Normal School was a one-story frame house built to serve as a barrack and located on the corner of Lindsey and Sevier streets (now Second Avenue and Oak Street). The school opened on September 27, 1875, with seven students in attendance. Corbin described these students as scholastically heterogeneous - one could read very well but not write legibly. Others knew enough mathematics to cipher through ratio and proportion but were reading at less than first grade level. The students entering Branch Normal College were certainly disadvantaged since: 1.) They and their parents were just ten years removed from slavery and 2.) "Few" if any preparatory schools of proper character had existed prior to this time in the State.

In June 1882, after seven years, Corbin reported with great pride that "The first colored student that ever graduated and received a college degree in the State was graduated from Branch Normal College. Between 1882 and 1895 ten students would receive the Bachelor of Arts degree before the reduction of the collegiate program at Branch Normal.

OTHER MILESTONES

1882 – Corbin and his students moved to a new structure, a 20 acre plot on the west side of the city between West Second and Fourth Avenues.

1892 – Branch Normal was designated as a Land Grant Institution under the Morrill Act of 1890.

1902 – Isaac Fisher, a graduate of Tuskegee Institute and a disciple of Booker T. Washington, headed the institution until 1911.

1911 – After Fisher's resignation, W.S. Harris and Frederick T. Venegar both led the institution. During their administration in 1914-1915, a student strike occurred and lasted for more than two weeks, which led to the school closing and ending the Harris-Venegar administration.

1915 – Jefferson Ish became the first Arkansan to be named head of the school. The school was organized into departments and intramural sports were initiated.

1922 – Robert Malone was named superintendent and developed the school as a multipurpose institution.

1927 – Branch Normal College name changed to Arkansas Agricultural, Mechanical and Normal College (AM&N).

1928 – John Brown Watson was elected as head of the college and hired a strong faculty.

1928 – The first intercollegiate sports teams were organized. The Lion became the school mascot.

1929 – On December 15, Watson and his students moved to the new campus (UAPB's current site). Eight new buildings were constructed.

1943 – Dr. Lawrence A. Davis, Sr. was named head of the college at age 29, then the youngest college president in the United States

1947 – W.E. O'Bryant Bell Tower was built.

1949-1968 – A time of unprecedented growth for the university as new facilities were built to accommodate student, faculty, and staff. Among these new buildings were: The L. A. Davis, Sr. Student Union, Hazzard Gymnasium, Woodard Hall, Larrison Hall, the infirmary, two dormitories, the library and, the Fine Arts Center.

1972 – AM&N merged with the University of Arkansas system, thus becoming the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB).

1972 – Dr. Lawrence A. Davis, Sr. assumed role as UAPB's first chancellor. Dr. Davis resigned in 1973 after having served 30 years as head of the institution.

1974 – The campus underwent a major renovation. Several older buildings were demolished, and Kountz-Kyle Science Hall was constructed to house the Department of Biology.

1986-1991 – Under the direction of Chancellor Dr. Charles Walker, the Center of Excellence in Fisheries Biology on Education, Diagnostic Chemistry and Education Opportunities was established.

1991 – Following the resignation of Chancellor Charles A. Walker during the summer of 1991, Dr. Carolyn Blakely served as interim chancellor, becoming the first female to head UAPB in its 130th history. Dr. L. A. Davis, Jr. was appointed chancellor in November 1991.

1991 – Dr. Lawrence A. Davis, Jr. was unanimously elected chancellor of UAPB.

1991 – UAPB football program is restored, leading to two national championships.

1997 – A new home for the School of Business and Management is built (Henderson-Young Hall) along with the SJ Parker 1890 Extension Complex.

2001-2002 – Dawson-Hicks and Caine-Gilleland Halls are built.

2012 – Ground is broken to build the STEM Academy and Conference Center.

2012-2013 – Dr. Calvin Johnson is appointed Interim Chancellor.

2013 – Dr. Laurence B. Alexander is selected as UAPB's next Chancellor, making him the first permanent chancellor since Dr. Lawrence A. Davis, Jr. who served for 21 years.

2014 – STEM Building is completed

2017 – An annex to the Delta Housing Complex is completed

2024 – Dr. Andrea Stewart is appointed UAPB's interim chancellor as of July 1

GENERAL INFORMATION: SCHOOL OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND HUMAN SCIENCES



The School of Agriculture, Fisheries and Human Sciences (SAFHS) lives up to its motto. Our goal is to equip students with the skills necessary to live and work effectively and successfully. The School is an integral part of the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff and fulfills its 1890 Land-Grant mission through education, research, Extension and public service. With an emphasis on rural development, the School strives to help improve the quality of life for people in Arkansas, the nation, and the world. The Office of International Programs, within SAFHS, is vital to achieving global effectiveness and success.

Agriculture is a scientific discipline that involves research and its application to agricultural problems. **The UAPB Department of Agriculture** prepares graduates to be employed in all areas of the food and fiber system, from production agriculture to banking and business, the management of supply chains, research applications and graduate study. The Department offers a bachelor's degree with four program options, a regulatory science degree with three program options and a master's degree in agricultural regulations.



Established in 1988, the Center of Excellence at UAPB integrates instruction, research, and extension to support Arkansas's aquaculture and fisheries sectors. It provides research-based solutions and timely information to stakeholders, including producers, support industries, and resource managers. UAPB is the state's sole institution with statewide responsibilities for aquaculture and fisheries, focusing on research, educational advancement, and the responsible management of aquatic resources. **The Aquaculture/Fisheries Center** aims to drive economic development and enhance aquaculture practices in the Delta region.



The Department of Human Sciences' mission is to provide quality education and scientific knowledge to students (individuals), families and communities through teaching, research and meaningful outreach opportunities, while preparing graduates for careers, graduate studies and leadership roles in a competitive global environment.



SPEAKER BIOS



Horace D. Hodge | Horace D. Hodge is the USDA Program Liaison at Prairie View A&M University (PVAMU) and has been with the Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement, 1890 Programs Division, since 1989. He also serves as the acting USDA Liaison at Lincoln University. Hodge holds both a B.S. and M.Ed. in agriculture from PVAMU and has 45 years of federal service, including roles as a soil conservationist and District Conservationist. In his current role, he coordinates USDA projects at PVAMU, recruits and counsels students on USDA careers, and manages a \$2 million USDA Scholarship Program. Hodge is a Life member of several organizations, including the PVAMU National Alumni Association and the

Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. He was awarded the FFA Honorary Lone Degree and the USDA Secretary of Agriculture Honor Award in 2008. Hodge enjoys fishing and community service and has three daughters and two grandchildren.



Clarence Bunch | Dr. Clarence Bunch has demonstrated exceptional leadership in agriculture and natural resources at Prairie View A&M University, where he expanded the Cooperative Extension Program from six to 50 counties and developed nine key agriculture programs. He established the Small Farm Institute to support socially disadvantaged producers with programs in Urban Agriculture, Wildlife Management, Sustainable Forestry, and more. Since joining PVAMU, he has secured nearly \$9 million in funding. Previously, Dr. Bunch served as Associate Director of Extension at Central State University, helping it become the 19th 1890 Land Grant Institution and founding its Cooperative Extension

Service. He also worked for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, offering strategic leadership and building partnerships with various agriculture organizations. Dr. Bunch, a former Senior Pastor and community leader, holds degrees in Agricultural Industrial Technology, Agricultural Economics, Management, and Leadership and Change.



Henry English | Dr. Henry English directs the Small Farm Program at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB), focusing on small, limited resource, and socially disadvantaged producers in eastern and southwest Arkansas. The program provides education and technical assistance in farm financial planning, crop and livestock production, marketing, USDA programs, and heirs' property, with a special emphasis on diversifying into vegetables and fruits. It also offers risk management and beginning farmer training and participates in the Sustainable Forestry Land Retention Program (SFLR). Dr. English has earned several accolades, including the UAPB University Outreach and Engagement Award, the Outstanding

Community Service Award from the Black Farmers & Agriculturalist Association of Arkansas, and the George Washington Carver Public Service Hall of Fame Award. He has served on the Advisory Committee for Beginning Farmers and Ranchers, the NRCS State Technical Committee, and the Jefferson County Conservation District Board.



Tomikia LeGrande | Dr. Tomikia P. LeGrande became the ninth president of Prairie View A&M University on June 1, 2023. Prior to this, she was Vice President of Strategy, Enrollment Management, and Student Success at Virginia Commonwealth University, where she developed the university's strategic plan and enhanced its national prominence. Dr. LeGrande has dedicated her career to advancing equity, accessibility, and affordability in higher education, creating supportive environments for faculty, staff, and students. She is an active national advocate on issues of access, equity, and higher education policy, having testified before Congress and received the Governor of Virginia's "Champion for Change

Award" in 2021. A Savannah, GA native, Dr. LeGrande holds a B.S. in Chemistry from Savannah State University, an M.S. in Chemistry from North Carolina A&T State University, and an Ed.D. from Texas Tech University.



Gerard D'Souza | Dr. Gerard D'Souza is the Dean of the College of Agriculture and Human Sciences at Prairie View A&M University and Executive Director of Land Grant Programs. He oversees nearly 200 employees, a \$100 million asset portfolio, and a \$30 million annual budget. Under his leadership, the college has expanded its facilities, partnerships, and academic programs, and developed a strategic plan to double student enrollment and enhance performance metrics. He played a key role in the Healthy Houston Initiative, a collaboration with Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner's Complete Communities Initiative. Prior to PVAMU, D'Souza was a professor and director at West Virginia University, with a notable

grant portfolio of \$5 million and over 150 scholarly works. He has received several awards, including the Albert Nelson Lifetime Achievement Award and the Gamma Sigma Delta Outstanding Service Award. D'Souza holds a B.S. in Agricultural Sciences from the University of Agricultural Sciences in Bangalore, and an M.S. and Ph.D. in Agricultural Economics from Mississippi State University.



Kristy Oates | Kristy Oates, a member of the United States Senior Executive Service, is the State Conservationist in Texas for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. With 29 years of service, she has held various technical, supervisory, and leadership roles, including Acting Division Director in Washington DC and Acting State Conservationist in Iowa and Minnesota. Kristy manages a diverse team of about 700 employees across 228 field offices in Texas, overseeing conservation efforts on approximately 142 million acres of private lands. Her leadership has enhanced efficiencies and leveraged resources to maximize conservation impact. Kristy holds a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture from Sam Houston State University

and is a graduate of the USDA Emerging Leaders Development Program at The George Washington University. She received her Senior Executive Service (SES) certification in 2020.



Justin Mallett | Justin Mallett graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Forestry and an Associate of Science in Land Surveying Technology from University of Arkansas-Monticello in 2010. He has been a Registered Forester under the Arkansas Board of Registration for Foresters since 2013. He was a County Forester for the Arkansas Department of Agriculture-Forestry Division for over 9 years. Since he has left the state government, he started his own company, Deceiper Creek Forestry Services, LLC where he manages timberland and assists private landowners, as well as doing consulting for UAPB's Keep it in the Family Program. He has been an American Tree Farm Inspector since 2013 and is the current Secretary-Treasurer

of Arkansas Tree Farm Committee and Co-Chair of the Arkansas Tree Farm Communications Committee.



Kelly Adkins | Kelly Adkins was appointed State Executive Director of the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) in Texas by the Biden Administration in May 2022. A native of Haskell, Texas, Adkins grew up on a family farm and now operates his own agricultural business in Randall and Haskell counties, focusing on wheat, hay, and pastureland. His extensive FSA career includes roles such as County Executive Director, District Director, and Mediation Coordinator. Adkins has also been involved in local organizations, serving on the board of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church and as President of the Nominating Committee for the Consumers Coop. He is a member of the Texas Cattle Feeders Association and Texas Wheat

Producers. Recognized by Randall County Texas A&M AgriLife Extension with the Outstanding Demonstrator/Top Hand Award, Adkins holds a BBA in accounting and economics from Texas Tech University. He lives in Canyon, Texas, and continues to manage a small farming and cattle operation.



William E. Oates | William E. (Bill) Oates graduated from Stephen F. Austin State University in 1981 and began his career with the Texas A&M Forest Service (TFS) in Jacksonville, Texas. Recognized for his leadership, he was promoted to District Forester in Palestine in 1984 and later served in Nacogdoches and Lufkin. From 1996 to 2003, he led the Southern Region of TFS and became Chief Regional Forester for East Texas in 2003. Since 2008, Bill has been the Associate Director for Forest Resource Development, overseeing programs in Forest Stewardship, Urban Forestry, Forest Health, FIA, Economic Development, and Water Quality. Bill's career has earned him numerous honors, including the SAF Leadership Award, TFA

Certified Forester distinction, Chair of the Southern Group of State Foresters Management Chief Committee, and the Texas A&M University System's Regent Fellow Service Award. He serves on the national SAF Accreditation Committee and is a proud second-generation forester. Bill and his wife, Connie, have been married since 1977 and have three children and three grandchildren.



Bethaney Wilkinson | Bethaney Wilkinson is a facilitator, spiritual director, and non-profit leader dedicated to fostering meaningful change. She authored *The Diversity Gap: Where Good Intentions Meet True Cultural Change* and hosts a podcast with the same title, which has over a quarter of a million downloads. Bethaney founded A More Beautiful Way, The Diversity Gap, Grace Dialogues, and Atlanta Harvest, focusing on community, racial healing, and social change in organizational settings. She has spoken at major conferences and collaborated with top companies like Google and Ball. With degrees in Education from Emory University and Theology from Fuller Theological Seminary, Bethaney is also a

Certified Spiritual Director and Breathwork Facilitator. Recently, she was appointed the first executive director of the Sustainable Forestry and African American Land Retention Network, supporting African-American landowners through forestry and conservation. Outside work, she enjoys spiritual reading, time with her dogs, and managing her homestead and market garden with her husband Alex.



Ronald Reynolds | State Representative Ronald Reynolds, sworn in on January 10, 2011, represents House District 27 and is currently serving his seventh term. The first African American State Representative in Fort Bend County since Reconstruction, Reynolds was named "2021 87th Session Legislator of the Year" by Fort Bend United and The Young & the Politics, and earned accolades as "Freshman Legislator of the Year" and "Public Servant of the Year" from the Houston Minority Contractors Association. He served as House Minority Whip during the 83rd and 84th Legislative sessions and is currently Chair of the Texas Legislative Black Caucus and 2nd Vice Chair of the Texas Energy & Climate Caucus. Reynolds is also the

Founder and Chair Emeritus of the Texas House Progressive Caucus, ranking member on the House Committee on Environmental Regulation, and serves on the Committee on Land & Resource Management. He is a National Board Member of the NAACP and Legislative Leader for the Texas State NAACP and Texas Coalition of Black Democrats. Previously, Reynolds was an Associate Municipal Judge for Houston, Past President of the Houston Lawyers Association, and the Missouri City & Vicinity NAACP. He holds three honorary doctorates and is a devoted Christian and father of three.



Obadiah Njue | Obadiah Njue earned his Ph.D. in Horticulture from Mississippi State University in 1995. He joined the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB) in 2005 as an Extension Horticulture Specialist and became Chairman of the Department of Agriculture in 2012, where he led diverse degree programs and mentored faculty and students. In August 2018, he was appointed Interim Assistant Dean for Extension and Outreach in the School of Agriculture, Fisheries and Human Sciences (SAFHS) and confirmed as Assistant Dean in October 2020. Dr. Njue is dedicated to supporting small-scale, socially disadvantaged producers and gardeners through UAPB's extension programs, including Small Farm,

Family and Consumer Sciences, 4-H and Youth, Horticulture, Animal Science, and Aquaculture and Fisheries. He continues to support the Dean/Director and SAFHS in managing Cooperative Extension programs and activities.



Charley E. Williams | Charley E. Williams, a 1975 Agronomy graduate from the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, began his career with the USDA Soil Conservation Service (now NRCS). Over his tenure, he earned over 25 certificates of recognition and held various roles, including Soil Conservationist and Strikeforce Coordinator. As Regional Strikeforce Coordinator, he led an initiative across eleven states, significantly increasing participation and funding for underserved producers by a factor of 10. Charley was also Project Coordinator for the Resource Conservation and Development Program and District Conservationist. Inducted into the UAPB Hall of Fame in 2021, he founded Task ONE, LLC in 2019 and now works as a

Conservation Consultant with UAPB's Small Farm Program. Charley is married to Lynn, and they have two children and two grandchildren.



Evette Browning | Evette Browning, who relocated from Los Angeles to Little Rock, began her agriculture career at the Arkansas Forestry Commission in 2002. She has held various roles, with a special dedication to her position as Outreach Coordinator, which earned her a spot in Communication's Group Women in Industry's 2019 class. In 2023, she joined the Women's Forest Congress Steering Committee, Arkansas Forestry Association Committees, and became an AgFTap Educator and certified instructor for Understanding Heirs Property at the Community Level. She serves on the Board of Directors for the Arkansas Land & Farm Development Corporation and the Arkansas Land & Community Development Corporation.

Evette completed a two-year term as President of the Arkansas Women in Agriculture Board in 2024 and is involved with the Sustainable Forestry and Land Retention's Policy and Communications Committees and the Arkansas State Employees Grievance Appeals Panel. She enjoys shopping, volunteering, spending time with family, and traveling. Evette is married to Robert and has one grown child.



Robert E. Hughes III | Robert E. Hughes III began his forestry career at Stephen F. Austin State University where he earned a BS in Forestry with a focus on Wood Science. His career spans various roles in the forestry industry from working in Champion's Mills in Georgia and Texas to Logging Coordinator and Hardwood Forester for Temple-Inland. In 2007, Rob became a Harvest Manager and Silviculture Manager for Campbell Global on those Temple legacy properties. His dedication to the forestry sector and its community led him to the Texas Forestry Association where he has served as Executive Director since 2017. Rob advocates for forestry and rural issues in Austin and Washington, D.C. And, as the current Chair of the

Texas Agriculture Council, Rob collaborates with a 75-member ag policy coalition. Underscoring his commitment to learning, Rob is also a proud graduate of the Governor Dolph Briscoe, Jr. Texas Agriculture Lifetime Leadership program and now serves on their board.



Dewayne L. Goldman | Dr. Dewayne L. Goldman earned his bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Arkansas and his Ph.D. in agronomy from Iowa State University. With 25 years at Monsanto (now Bayer Crop Sciences), he worked in technology development and government affairs before retiring as Outreach Lead in 2019. In 2020, he became Executive Director of the National Black Growers Council, a role he helped establish and advised on for over a decade. Dr. Goldman has served on numerous advisory boards, including those for 4-H, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and MANRRS. On March 1, 2021, he was appointed as the inaugural Senior Advisor for Racial Justice and Equity at

USDA, advising the Secretary of Agriculture on racial equity and transformation initiatives. Dr. Goldman also farms corn, rice, and soybeans in southeast Arkansas.



Denise Arnold-Austin | Denise Arnold-Austin is an entrepreneur and property manager of a historic 172-year-old farm in Solgohachia, Arkansas, established by her great-great-grandfather. As one of twenty-six heirs, she has spearheaded efforts to clear title, harvest timber, and apply for Century Farm status. In 2021, Denise secured a \$90,000 EQIP contract from NRCS to implement six conservation practices on Arnold Abundant Acres. In January 2023, she founded Arnold Heir's Consulting LLC, where she serves as managing partner, focusing on research and networking. Denise is also an active member of the peer-to-peer committee at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, which supports and uplifts Black

landowners in Arkansas. Her passions for food, fashion, finance, and travel inspired her to create Dee's Delight, a venture that helps people travel the world affordably through points programs.



Shawn Boler | Shawn Boler, a Chicago native now based in Los Angeles, is a dedicated husband and father with a degree from Northeastern Illinois University. With over 30 years in corporate automotive aftermarket Ecommerce, Buying, and Marketing, Shawn has worked with both domestic and international entities. He has significantly advanced Timber Landownership for his family, managing over 60 acres with USDA CSP Conservation practices and establishing an Heir's Family Land Trust, which earned recognition as a 2020 Arkansas 125 Year Century Farm. He also completed a Carbon Capture agreement and contributed to UAPB SFLR Landowner Training/Webinars. Shawn actively participates in

community organizing through various Boards and political campaigns, providing analytics on market trends and enhancing outcomes. He leverages technology for effective communication, mentors at-risk youth, and is committed to positive role modeling. Known for his strategic approach, compassion, and faith-centered values, Shawn enjoys reading, smooth jazz, outdoor activities, international travel, and genealogy research.



Althea Adams | Althea Adams has devoted 43 years to supporting the deaf community, currently serving as an educational interpreter at Bastrop Independent School District and leading the deaf ministry at her church. She is also a dedicated wife and mother of two adult daughters, both Prairie View A&M graduates. A fourth-generation descendant of Wille and Hatti Stewart from Magnolia Springs, Texas, Althea grew up with a deep appreciation for land stewardship, influenced by her mother's management of their ancestral property. After her mother's passing in 2018, Althea and her family focused on sustainable land management. In 2016, she consulted Texas A&M Forest Service for a management plan and joined the

Texas A&M Forestry Association, discovering the Sustainable Forestry & African American Land Retention (SFLR) program at Prairie View. Attending the SFLR Conference in 2023 was a significant step, providing her with essential resources and connections to revitalize her family's land legacy.



Debra D. Christian | Debra D. Christian is the Executive Director of Christian Restoration Community Residential Care Program, Inc. (CRC), a non-profit offering veteran medical transportation, homeless/transitional housing, education, job training, and apprenticeships. She earned her B.A. from Texas College, Tyler, TX, and spent nearly 30 years with Goodyear Tire Company. Debra has been active with the Smith County Landowners Association and has advocated for disadvantaged women farmers and new technology through lectures and field trips. Her organization recently received a USDA greenhouse, and she was honored by the Program Administrators for the DFAP under the Inflation Reduction Act. For 20 years,

Debra fought to reclaim her family's land, facing legal battles with the Gregg County Appraisal District and the Texas Railroad Commission, ultimately winning when the TRC revoked an oil and gas operator's license. She now collaborates with Where's My Land to help Black families reclaim their land.



Alfred L. Parks | Dr. Alfred L. Parks is a Regents Professor of Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness at Prairie View A&M University. A native of Arkansas, he earned a BS in Agricultural Economics from the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, followed by an MS and Ph.D. in Agricultural Economics with a focus on Marketing from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Over his 40-year career, he has worked at Southern University, The University of Yaoundé in Cameroon, Texas A&M University, and Prairie View A&M University. Parks has authored numerous manuscripts, book chapters, and business plans, and has been recognized for his teaching, research, and leadership. He has served on various university

and advisory committees, including those for the Texas Department of Agriculture. His current research focuses on food security, sustainability, food and medical deserts, and rural infrastructure.



Karama Neal | Dr. Karama Neal, is the principal of the Neal Firm, specializing in consulting and mediation with 15 years of experience in personal and rural development finance. Her mediation work focuses on families with heirs' property. In 2021, she launched the Heirs Property Information Project, stemming from a grassroots organization she founded in 2013 that successfully promoted the Uniform Partition of Heirs Property Act, passed in Arkansas in 2015. Dr. Neal previously served as the Biden Presidential appointee and Administrator of the Rural Business-Cooperative Service at the USDA and as President of Southern Bancorp Community Partners, which supports economic mobility in rural areas. Her career began

in biosciences, teaching at various educational levels. She holds a BA in biology from Swarthmore College, a doctorate in genetics from Emory University, a master's in bioethics from Loyola University Chicago, and completed executive education in impact investing at Oxford Said School of Business.



Erdogan Memili | Dr. Erdogan Memili, a veterinarian with a DVM from Istanbul University, pursued graduate research in microbial genetics and mammalian embryo development at Wisconsin-Madison, and postdoctoral studies in epigenetics stem cell research at Harvard. He continued research on transgenic animals at Genzyme Transgenics and completed a sabbatical at Cornell University in 2015. At Mississippi State University, he advanced from Assistant to Full Professor in Animal and Dairy Sciences, focusing on improving livestock fertility using systems biology. With a background in animal and veterinary sciences from his childhood on a Mediterranean farm, Dr. Memili now leads a globally recognized research

group on sperm fertility markers and sperm cryopreservation. His work, funded by diverse agencies and shared in numerous journals and conferences, reflects his commitment to agricultural science and education. Currently, as Executive Associate Director at Prairie View A&M University's Cooperative Agricultural Research Center and Director of the University Research Farm, he aims to integrate research, teaching, and outreach through the Vision of Excellence in Research.



Al Davis | Al Davis is currently serving as Agency Director for Texas A&M Forest Service. Prior to assuming his current duties on June 1, 2021, he was the Deputy Agency Director & Chief of Staff of Texas A&M Engineering Extension Service (TEEX) since April 1, 2014. Al Davis has been employed with TEEX since 2005 and has served in several capacities to include Director of National Emergency Response & Recovery Training Center and Chief Operating Officer. He is a 2019-2020 recipient of the TAMUS Board of Regents Fellows Service Award. Davis is the immediate past chairman of the National Domestic Preparedness Consortium (NDPC), co-founder and principal emeritus of the National Cyber Security Preparedness

Consortium (NCPC), and a former advisory board member of the National Center for Spectator Sports Safety and Security (NCS4). Prior to joining the Texas A&M University System, he worked as a consultant with United Water and served as a chief executive of the Public School District in New Orleans. He is a 27-year veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps, retiring at the rank of colonel. Davis earned a bachelor's degree in marketing from Southern University and A&M College, Baton Rouge, Louisiana; a master's degree of Business Administration from Averett University, Danville, Virginia; and a master's degree in National Resource Strategy from the National Defense University, Washington, D.C.



Stephen Hubbard | Attorney Stephen L. Hubbard is the Principal at Hubbard Law Firm in Tyler, Texas, specializing in Probate and Estates. He graduated Magna Cum Laude from Prairie View A&M University in 1987 and earned his Juris Doctor from South Texas College of Law in 1990. Admitted to practice law in Texas in 1991 and in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Texas in 1992, Stephen previously served as an Assistant Attorney General in the Child Support Division and as Senior Regional Attorney. Since 2021, he has collaborated with Dr. Clarence Bunch of PVAMU on the Sustainable Forestry and African American Land Retention Program, providing education on property issues and estate planning. Stephen has served on various boards, including the Boys & Girls Club of East Texas, Boy Scouts of America, and the University of Texas Health Center's Institutional Review Board and Cancer Committee Treatment Board.



Elliott J. Washington | Dr. Elliott J. Washington has been a Program Extension Specialist Forester in the Agriculture and Natural Resources Unit at Prairie View A&M University since 2021. He earned his Ph.D. in Urban Forestry and Natural Resources from Southern University and A&M College in 2015. With extensive expertise in forestry, environmental science, and GIS, Dr. Washington works with forest landowners and agricultural producers in East Texas, collaborating with agencies like the Texas Forest Service, Farm Service Agency, and USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service. He is a member of the Texas Forest Association and serves as the staff forester for the Sustainable Forestry and African American Land Retention Program, aiding African American landowners with heir's property issues and forest stewardship. Dr. Washington frequently speaks at forestry events and serves on various committees at Prairie View A&M University. He lives in Katy, Texas, with his wife and three daughters and is interested in drones, cyber security, urban agriculture, and coding.



James Dixon II | Dr. James Dixon II, a visionary leader and Senior Pastor at The Community of Faith Church for over 40 years, is dedicated to empowering individuals through biblical principles. His ministry, inspired by Matthew 5:13-16 and Matthew 25:31-46, emphasizes outreach beyond the church's walls. Bishop Dixon also serves as the Presiding Prelate of Kingdom Builders Global Fellowship (KBGF), which seeks to establish the Kingdom of God across communities globally. His Kingdom-focused initiatives include Toys of Hope, Coats of Compassion, and the Light It Up Crusade, among others. He is the Co-founder of Loving Kids and Founder of Good Gang USA, a S.T.E.A.M. program for youth. An advocate for racial reconciliation and social justice, Dr. Dixon is involved with One Family One Future and serves as Chairman of the Harris County Sports and Convention Corporation. He is also the Houston Branch President of the NAACP and contributes to various organizations aimed at promoting equity and justice. Dr. Dixon's commitment to service reflects his belief that "the difference we make is the difference that matters."



Audra Rod Smith | Audra Rod Smith is the owner and principal of Audra Rod Smith, PLLC, located in Wharton County, Texas. While practicing in a variety of areas, Audra spends most of her time on real estate matters with a focus on farm and ranch transactions, partitions, title examination and title disputes. Her current practice also includes a range of agricultural law, particularly in areas involving cattle. Audra received her Bachelor of Science degree from Texas A&M University in Agricultural Science. In 2014 she received her Juris Doctorate degree from South Texas College of Law and was admitted to practicing that same year. Her professional activities and memberships span over 10 years and most recently was a guest columnist for Progressive Cattle Magazine. Audra has shared her legal expertise over the years through numerous publications, seminars, and presentations to bring awareness to landowners of their legal obligations and rights in relation to understanding agriculture law. In addition, she continues to assist clients with civil litigation cases, estate planning, probate, and business transactions.



Jacquelyn Tatum | Jacquelyn Tatum, a proud Houston native from Fifth Ward, is deeply connected to her roots and family heritage. A graduate of Bruce Elementary, E.O. Smith Jr. High, and Phillis Wheatley High School, she holds degrees from Prairie View A&M University in Nursing, Reading, and Special Education. A devoted daughter, mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, sister, and friend, Jacquelyn cherishes family unity. Her role as a Harris County Master Gardener inspired her to work on heirs' property in Mount Gillion, Texas, leading to her involvement with the Center for Heirs Property Preservation and PVAMU's Farm Land Retention program. Jacquelyn finds joy in sharing her acquired wisdom through community outreach, focusing on heirships and family trees. Her motto, "Honoring our Ancestors is what we do," reflects her dedication to preserving family legacy and education.



Karen Lee | Ms. Karen Lee is an Extension Program Specialist at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB), focusing on the Small Farm Program, which supports historically underserved and socially disadvantaged landowners in Arkansas. Her work includes providing education, training, technical assistance, and financial planning, with an emphasis on conservation and climate-smart practices to enhance land and income potential. Ms. Lee has over 20 years of experience in agriculture, specializing in forestry, soil health, conservation, heir property resolution, marketing, and business planning. Additionally, she has 16 years of experience in family self-sufficiency and credit counseling, earning numerous community service and professional awards. A dedicated volunteer, she has tutored youth in math and reading for over 15 years. Ms. Lee is committed to fostering inclusion, sustainability, and viability, believing that success comes from dedication and understanding the necessary processes.



Robert Blakeley | Mr. Robert Blakeley, a Land Surveyor from Hamburg, Arkansas, graduated from Hamburg High School in 2008 and earned a B.S. in Spatial Information Systems with a Land Surveying option from the University of Arkansas at Monticello in 2012. He began his career with an internship at the Arkansas Department of Transportation, which led to a full-time position. With over nine years of experience, Robert has worked on Control, Topographic, Construction, and Boundary Surveys. As an Arkansas Professional Licensed Surveyor, he founded Blakeley Land Surveying, LLC. Notable among his projects is the Boundary Survey for the Bass Pro Shops site in Little Rock. Robert enjoys spending time with his wife and two daughters, fishing, and exploring together.



Gregory Phillips | Attorney Gregory Phillips is the Founding Partner of Phillips Kaiser PLLC and serves on its Management Committee. His extensive legal career includes roles as Associate General Counsel at Compaq Computer Corporation, Assistant General Counsel at Enron Corp., and Vice President and General Counsel at Petroci-USA, Inc. He has also worked as a Corporate Securities Associate at Bracewell & Giuliani and was the founder of Phillips & Reiter, PLLC. Additionally, he served as Managing Director at Morae Legal Corporation. Greg began his career at Bracewell & Giuliani and played a key role in the Enron Bankruptcy Estate, managing the sale of international assets and the dissolution of over 3,000 subsidiaries. He specializes in corporate transactions, business development, and commercial contracts in the oil and gas industry. Greg's proudest accomplishment is his family with his wife, Cynthia, and their three children.



Brandon Leonard | Brandon Leonard, a Houston native with East Texas roots, earned his Business Administration degree in accounting from the University of Hamburg and his Juris Doctor from the University of Texas. His career began in commercial litigation and included a role as Assistant District Attorney at the Harris County District Attorney's Office, where he prosecuted serious cases such as murder and drug offenses. He has also worked in tax litigation and business consulting. Since 2016, Leonard has run a successful criminal defense practice, handling both state and federal cases, including high-profile acquittals. His entrepreneurial spirit led him to co-found Deer Texas Leases, a marketplace for hunters and landowners. Leonard is married to Judge Genesis Draper, and they live in Houston with their two children.



Eric Wannlund | Eric Wannlund is a staff forester for the Texas A&M Forest Service and is currently based out of the College Station office. He is currently filling the role of being a Climate Smart Ambassador for the Texas Climate Smart Initiative, where he works to assist interested applicants with the enrollment process. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in forest management and ecological restoration from Northern Arizona University.



Joseph K. Johnson | Joseph K. Johnson, who spent his career in the Information Technology and Information Services Industry has enthusiastically embarked to a life in AgroForestry. As a first-generation farmer, rancher, and landowner, he and his family are now proud residents of Deep East Texas; where their focus is using Silvopasture to manage their timber stand and evolving small ruminants practice. He feels enormously blessed to have the opportunity to meet and learn from the many elders he has encountered as part of his journey.



Ben Plunkett | Ben Plunkett is a District Forester for the Texas A&M Forest Service, where he has been employed since 2011- serving in the Conroe District Office from 2011-2016, the Jasper District Office from 2017-2020, and the Huntsville District Office since 2021. Ben graduated from Texas A&M University in 2014 with degrees in Forest Science and Rangeland Ecology and Management. In his free time, Ben enjoys hunting, fishing, and scuba diving all over the world.



Anthony Keagan Lowey | Anthony Keagan Lowey has been employed with the USDA since May of 2016. He has been with the Natural Resources Conservation Service as the Zone 4 Forester now for a year and seven months. His previous experiences include being a Silviculture Forester and Silviculture Technician on the Ouachita National Forest. He graduated from Tarleton State University in 2015 with an undergraduate degree in Wildlife, Sustainability & Ecosystem Sciences and Colorado State University in 2019 with a Master of Natural Resources Stewardship in Forest Sciences.



Levell Foote | Levell Foote is a Conservation Consultant with the UAPB Small Farm Outreach Program and a retired district conservationist from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) with over 40 years of service. His career began in 1976 as a summer worker in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, and he became a Cooperative Education Student Intern in 1978. He served as District Conservationist in Cleveland, Lee, and Jefferson Counties in Arkansas. Retiring in January 2017, Levell is recognized for his expertise in NRCS conservation practices and USDA programs like CRP, CSP, EQIP, ACEP, and RCPP. His contributions have earned him numerous awards, including the Harvey W. McGeorge Award and the

NRCS "And Justice for All" Award, along with 15 Superior Performance Awards and 6 Outstanding Performance Awards. In December 2017, he founded Foote Conservation Consulting LLC to assist farmers and landowners in conservation, environmental protection, and production enhancement.



Amy Pritchard | Attorney Amy Pritchard is the legal director for the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff's Keeping it in the Family Program, which helps family landowners address the barriers that keep them from unlocking the full potential of their land. In her previous role as a clinical law professor at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, Pritchard developed the school's heirs' property clinic and spearheaded initiatives to increase access to attorneys in rural Arkansas. Now in private practice, Pritchard's work focuses primarily on protecting property ownership, preventing housing instability, and increasing neighborhood stability and economic opportunity. She was raised in rural Vermont and has called Arkansas home

for over a decade.



Joseph D. Friend | Joseph D. Friend, known as Joe, is an extension specialist for the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff's Small Farm Program and leads the "Keeping It in The Family" initiative within the Arkansas Sustainable Forestry and African American Land Retention Program. He joined the program in 2016. Previously, Joe worked for the Arkansas Forestry Commission for 34 years, earning the Spencer Fox Award in 2003. His career includes roles at the Arkansas Highway Department, Georgia Pacific, and Osmose Wood Preserving. A B.S. graduate in Forest Management from the University of Arkansas at Monticello (1976), Joe has been an active member of the Society of American Foresters

since 1992, holding various leadership positions and receiving numerous awards. He is also a board member of the Arkansas Forestry Association and served as the State Tree Farm Committee Chair. Joe has taught ATV safety to over 1,400 people and is an Elder and Bible class teacher at Pine Street Church of Christ.



Adam Watts | Adam Watts is the co-founder of Hunt Private. Being a lifelong hunter and seeing landowners in his area forced to sell, Adam co-founded Hunt Private to help landowners fight inflation and increasing costs while also creating new hunting opportunities. Adam is also an MBA student at Rice University. Previously, he served in the United States Army as an Engineer Officer. He has lived in Hawaii, Arkansas, Missouri, and Georgia before calling Texas home. He now resides in the San Antonio area with his wife and two sons.

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

Clarence Bunch, Ph.D., Project Manager,
Cooperative Agricultural Research Center
Prairie View A&M University

Henry English, Ph.D., Director, Small Farm
Program
University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff

Elliott Washington, Ph.D., Forester
Prairie View A&M University

Rozenia Toney, Business Administrator I
Prairie View A & M University

Carrie J. Poole, SFLR Program Coordinator
The JP & CP Companies, Inc.

TeKedra Pierre, Ed.D., Director, Information,
Impact, and Sustainability Center (IISC)
Prairie View A&M University

Trevior Mays, Assistant Director, IISC
Prairie View A&M University

Ebony Ohen, Graphic Designer, IISC
Prairie View A&M University

LaBeaula Times, Communications
Specialist, IISC
Prairie View A&M University

Joshua Rieger, Software Applications
Developer, AITC
Prairie View A&M University

Kandi Williams, Steering Committee Co-
Chair, KIITF Outreach Coordinator
University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff

Karen Lee, Program Specialist SFP
University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff

Evette Browning, Outreach Coordinator
AR Department of Agriculture

Deseray McKinzy, ES II-Project/Program
Manager-Communications
School of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Human
Sciences
University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff

Justin Mallett, Forestry Consultant
Deceiper Creek Forestry Services

Joseph D. Friend, Forester
University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff

Levelle Foote, Conservation Consultant
Foote Conservation Consulting, LLC

Charley Williams, Conservation Consultant
TaskOne Consulting, LLC

A SPECIAL THANKS TO THE INDIVIDUALS BELOW FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THIS YEAR'S PROGRAM:



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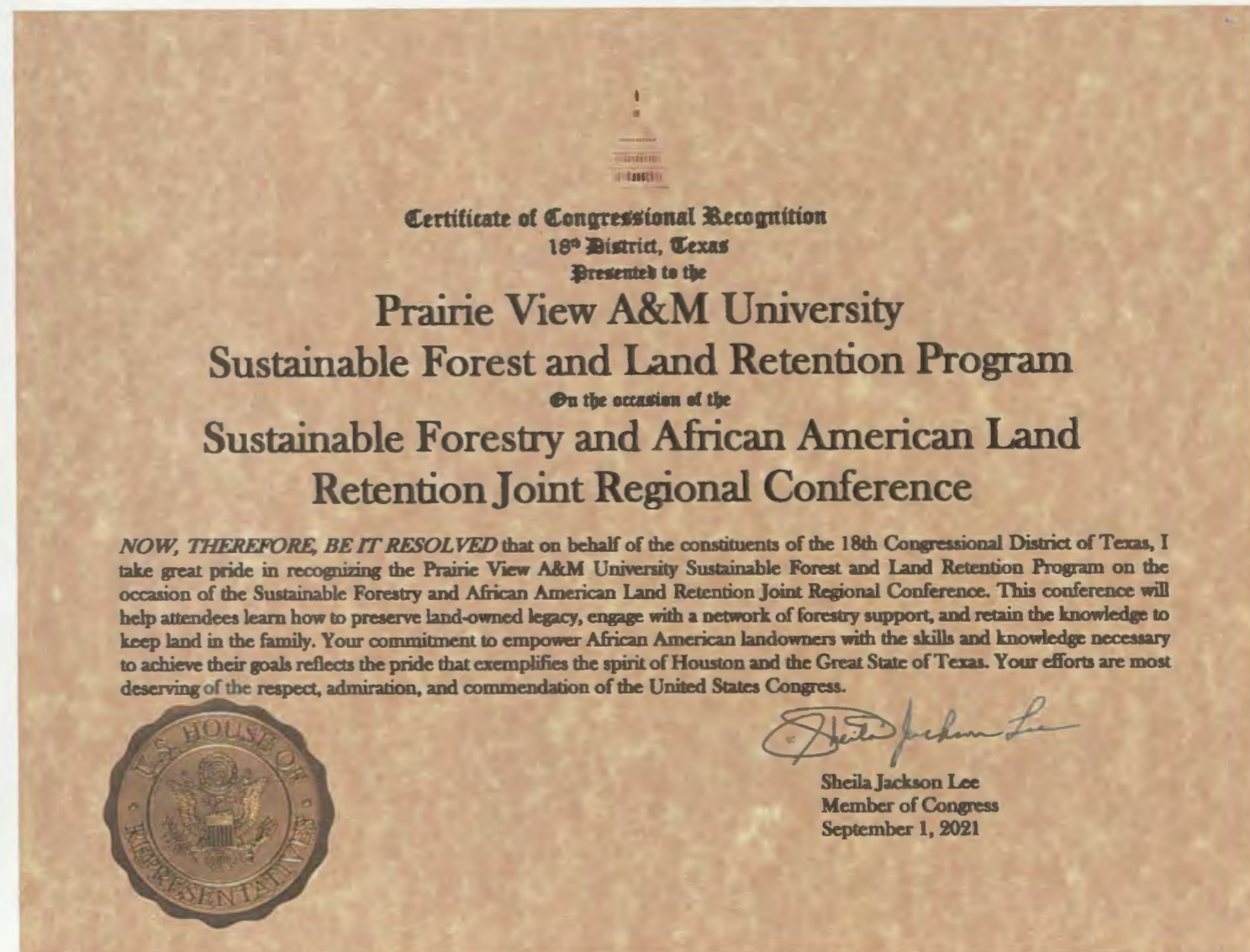
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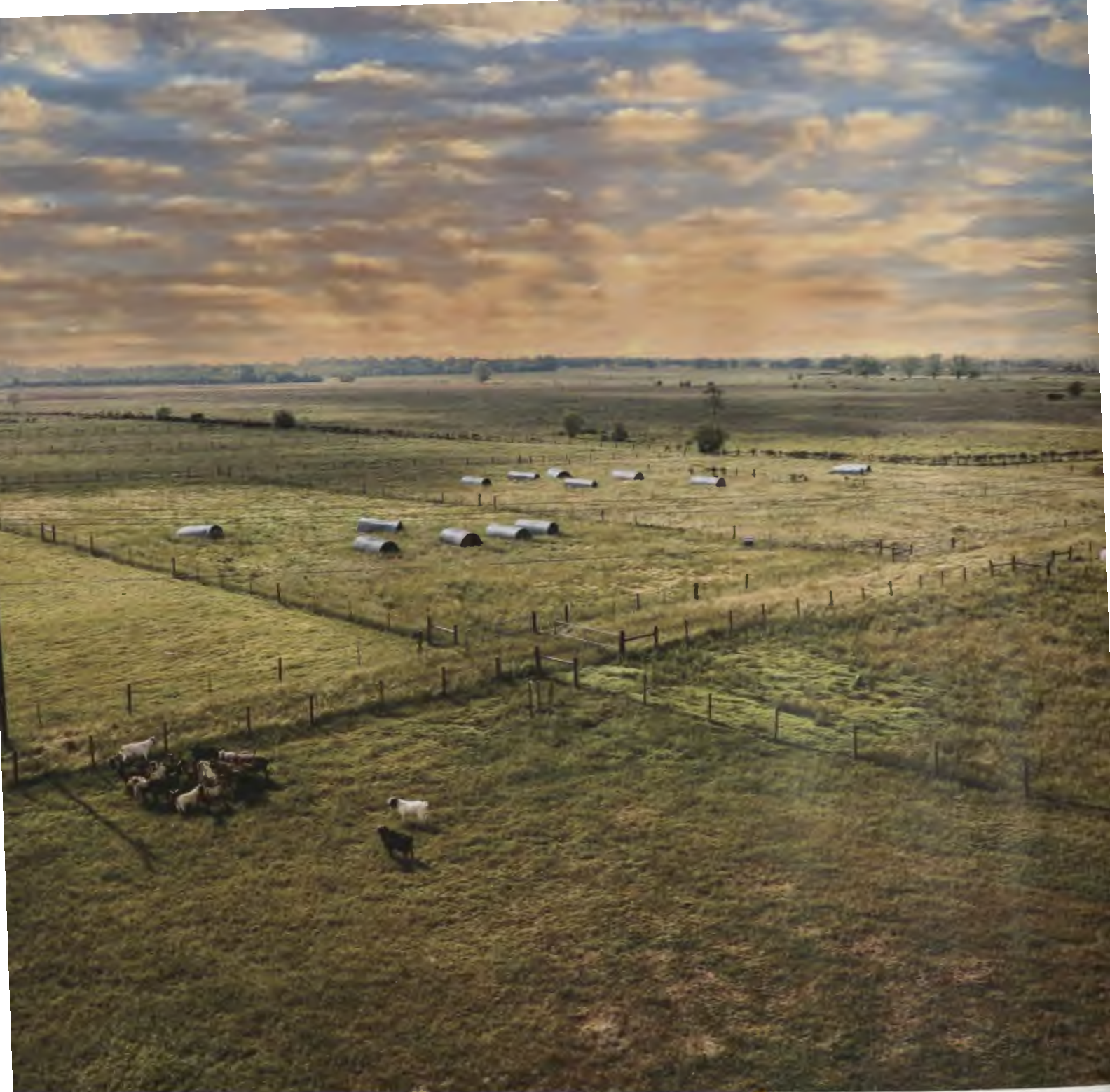


Remembering Sheila Jackson Lee

January 12, 1950 – July 19, 2024

In loving memory of Sheila Jackson Lee, whose unwavering dedication and impactful service as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives profoundly shaped our nation, reflecting her deep commitment to justice, equality, and the betterment of her constituents.





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