

Cultivator

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Lawsuits Filed On EPA's WOTUS Rule

Numerous states and agricultural organizations have filed suit against the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) since it released a final Waters of the U.S. (WOTUS) rule.

On June 30, Alabama Attorney General Luther Strange joined eight other states on a lawsuit asking a federal district court in Georgia to strike down the controversial rule.

"The final WOTUS rule adds vague definitions to the Clean Water Act that could expand the administration's jurisdiction to previously unregulated areas, including dry land," said Alabama Farmers Federation President Jimmy Parnell. "We're happy to see Attorney General Strange do what is in his power to stop this detrimental rule from being implemented."

Other states involved in the suit are West Virginia, Florida, Georgia, Kansas, Kentucky, South Carolina, Utah and Wisconsin. Michigan and Ohio have filed a separate suit in an Ohio court.

The American Farm Bureau Federation and 13 other agricultural groups also filed suit in a Texas federal district court July 2 in an attempt to stop WOTUS rule implementation.

The EPA formally published the WOTUS rule in the Federal Register June 29. It will take effect Aug. 28, unless Congress or the courts stop adoption of the rule.

The U.S. House of Representatives has passed a bill to prevent implementation, while a similar bill awaits a vote in the U.S. Senate. However, President Barack Obama has defended the regulation.



The last report of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in the U.S. was June 17, but Alabama poultry farmers are concerned about the potential effects of wild bird migrations this fall. HPAI has been responsible for the death of more than 48 million birds since last December.

Poultry Farmers Keeping Tabs On HPAI

It's been weeks since new cases of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) were reported in the U.S.

However, farmers and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) officials are concerned about fall when wild birds migrate. On July 2, the USDA announced plans to increase HPAI monitoring by collecting 41,000 samples from wild birds through March 2016.

"The cause of the HPAI outbreak is unknown, but officials suspect the disease was brought in by wild birds and spread by people and equipment moving among farms," said Guy Hall, Alabama Farmers Federation Poultry Division director. "As these birds begin moving south through the major flyways, there's a threat of the disease spreading again."

USDA suggested biosecurity measures include disinfecting poultry houses between flocks, keeping poultry away from water sources used by wild birds,

providing clean clothing for employees and permitting only essential workers and vehicles on farms.

"Our modern housing system and increased biosecurity protocols at the farm should help protect flocks from the disease," Hall said.

For more information on HPAI, visit tinyurl.com/USDA-hpai.

HPAI By The Numbers*

- **223** - Detections reported since Dec. 19, 2014, with 75 in Iowa and 105 in Minnesota.
- **48.1 million** - Birds affected, including 32 million laying chickens and 7.7 million turkeys.
- **15** - States with confirmed detections.
- **June 17** - Last date an HPAI detection was reported.

*Source: USDA



Pictured with Gov. Robert Bentley, from left, are Federation Area 9 Organization Director Robert Utsey; Dallas County farmer Travis Wilson and his sons, Trevor and Cole; Hale County farmer Townsend Kyser and his daughter, Laura; Federation State Catfish Committee Chairman and Dallas County farmer Will Pearce; Lawrence County farmer Milton Taylor; Perry County farmers Catherine and Jim Brady; Federation Governmental and Agricultural Programs Director Brian Hardin; Federation State Senate Legislative Programs Director Matthew Durdin; and Federation Area 6 Organization Director Wallace Drury.

Governor Signs Queen Honeybee, Catfish Label Bills

Gov. Robert Bentley signed two Federation priority bills on catfish and the queen honeybee June 30.

The country-of-origin-labeling bill tightens rules on labeling catfish and catfish-like foods in Alabama restaurants.

"This law will help strengthen the catfish industry and the rural areas in which it is concentrated," said Hale County catfish farmer Townsend Kyser.

Bentley also signed a bill to make the queen honeybee the official state agricultural insect. Federation State Bee & Honey Committee members attended the bill signing.

"If Alabama didn't have queen honeybees, our agricultural industry wouldn't be as successful as it is," said Bill Mullins of Madison County, State Bee & Honey Committee chairman.

WTO Ruling Leads to COOL Repeal Requests

The Alabama Farmers Federation is asking Congress to repeal mandatory Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) on beef, pork and chicken.

The request follows a May World Trade Organization (WTO) ruling that said U.S. COOL regulations violate trade obligations and impose unfavorable treatment on meat from Canada and Mexico.

Current regulations require labels to identify where animals were born, raised and slaughtered. Canada and Mexico have requested \$3.2 billion in restitution in the form of tariffs on U.S. goods, including agricultural products.

Federation policy supports COOL so long as the rules do not violate the WTO.

The House of Representatives voted to repeal COOL on beef, pork and chicken. The Senate has not yet taken action.

Upcoming Events

- **July 23-25** - 17th Southern Peanut Growers Conference at Callaway Gardens in Pine Mountain, Georgia. For online registration, visit CallawayGardens.com/ASPGC2015.
- **July 23** - Central Alabama Crops Tour at E.V. Smith Research Center in Shorter. Visit aces.edu for more information.
- **July 24-25** - 8th Small Ruminant Conference at Lakepoint Resort State Park in Eufaula.
- **July 31** - Registration deadline for Auburn University's Ag Solutions Day in Orange Beach. Visit aces.edu/go/551 for details.
- **July 30-Aug. 1** - Alabama Farmers Federation Commodity Producers Conference in Montgomery. For details, visit AlfaFarmers.org.
- **Aug. 6-7** - Deep South Stocker Conference in Montgomery. Visit DeepSouthStocker.com for more information.
- **Aug. 8** - Beef Cattle Conference at Ham Wilson Livestock Arena at Auburn University. For more information, visit ag.auburn.edu/ansc/.

Alfa Insurance Hosts Farmers Market Day



Alfa Insurance Vice President of Corporate Services and Reporting Rhonda Sikes, left, buys produce from Chesnee Aplin who was helping her uncle, John, during the Alfa Farmers Market Day at the home office in Montgomery June 17. The Aplins grow fruits and vegetables at Aplin Farms in Geneva County. The farmers market event was revived this year after a four-year absence. A second Alfa Farmers Market Day is being planned for July 22.

Young Farmers Tour Cotton Gin



Young Farmers from Elmore, Macon and Montgomery counties held a joint meeting June 30, which included a tour of Milstead Cotton Gin in Shorter. Gin manager Joey Scarborough, right, talked with attendees about new technologies they are using at the gin.

Commodity Corner

Horticulture

A hearing is set for July 27-29 in Tifton, Georgia, on the U.S. pecan industry's proposed marketing order for pecans grown in 15 states, including Alabama. It would allow the American Pecan Board to collect data, conduct research and promote the industry. The program would be funded by assessments on pecan handlers. Visit tinyurl.com/pecans15 for more information.

-Mac Higginbotham, division director

Cotton, Soybean, Wheat & Feed Grains

The National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) estimates U.S. farmers planted a record 85.1 million acres of soybeans, up 2 percent from 2014; 88.9 million acres of corn, the lowest acreage in 50 years; and 9 million acres of cotton, down 18 percent from last year and the lowest acreage since 1983.

-Carla Hornady, divisions director

Catfish

This month, NASS will begin collecting data for the 2015 Catfish Production Report. Approximately 130 Alabama catfish farmers will be asked to provide total water area and estimated fish inventory. The report may be used to make industry marketing decisions.

-Rick Oates, division director

Peanuts

NASS recently released a revised planting forecast that shows Alabama farmers planted 215,000 acres of peanuts this year, up from earlier estimates of 185,000 acres. Overall in 2015, U.S. farmers planted an estimated 1.6 million acres of peanuts, an 18-percent increase over 2014.

-Caleb Bristow, division director

Dairy

Dairy farmers may enroll in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Dairy Margin Protection Program through Sept. 30 for coverage in 2016. More than half of U.S. dairy farmers enrolled in the 2015 program.

-Guy Hall, division director

Equine

Few historic feats are as elusive as the Triple Crown of thoroughbred racing. This year, American Pharoah became the first Triple Crown winner since Affirmed in 1978. The thoroughbred is owned by an Egyptian immigrant and has ties to Alabama. American Pharoah's great grand dam, Zeta Jet, was owned by Montgomery native Fred Hooper, who also owned the only Alabama-trained Kentucky Derby winner, Hoop Jr.. The horse won the Derby in 1945.

-Nate Jaeger, division director

Alabama Timberland Acreage Increases

Alabama timberland has reached an all-time high of 23 million acres, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service's Forest Inventory & Analysis (FIA) data.

The report shows Alabama timberland increased 1 million acres from 2013 to 2014.

Despite public perception that forests are vanishing, FIA data show timber growth exceeds the amount of timber harvested annually. For every ton of timber harvested, 1.55 tons of new growth are added to Alabama's forests annually. Total timber volume increased 18.7 percent since 2000, to 1.17 billion tons.

On The Move In Ag

- **Dr. Arthur Appel** is interim dean for Auburn University's College of Agriculture and interim director of the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station. He succeeds Dr. Paul Patterson, who served as acting dean and director.
- **Dr. William Puckett**, former state conservationist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), is the new executive director of the Alabama Soil & Water Conservation Committee and the Alabama Agricultural & Conservation Development Commission. He replaces Steve Cauthen, who retired June 1.
- **Charles Ramsey** is the acting state conservationist with NRCS.

Soybean Producers Offering \$10,000 Award

Alabama soybean farmers can win up to \$10,000 in the 100-Bushel Yield Soybean Challenge. Contestants must prove a yield of 100 bushels per acre of soybeans over 10 acres.

Entries may be from any location in Alabama on irrigated or dry land. Initial entry forms are due July 21 with harvest reports due by Nov. 21.

For more details, visit tinyurl.com/SoybeanChallenge. The award is sponsored by the Alabama Farmers Federation State Soybean Producers.

Award-Winning Peaches



Mark Knight of M&M Farms, left, won first place for the eighth straight year with his basket of Lucky 13 variety peaches at the Chilton County Peach Auction June 27. The Chilton County Farmers Federation, represented by President Wendell Kelley, right, purchased the winning basket for \$2,100. Funds benefit the Clanton Lions Club charities.



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Farm Foundation Meeting Focuses On Extension, Land-Grant Universities

The U.S. Extension system and land-grant universities have a bright future according to presentations given during the Farm Foundation Round Table in Columbus, Ohio, June 10-12.

Leaders from Alabama agricultural groups, including Alabama Farmers Federation President Jimmy Parnell and Executive Director Paul Pinyan, attended the event.

"It was encouraging to hear from experts in industry, agriculture and education about where agricultural research is heading," Pinyan said. "Agriculture-related jobs are in high demand, from farmers and university faculty to private research and development. Land-grant institutions are in a prime spot to capitalize on this opportunity to bring in skilled students who are seeking hands-on training."

The conference also covered university outreach, the future of agriculture research and agricultural infrastructure.

The Farm Foundation is a non-advocacy charity that promotes dialogue about agriculture, food systems and rural communities.



Alabama agriculture was well represented at the Farm Foundation Round Table in Columbus, Ohio, June 10-12. From left are Alabama Cooperative Extension System Director Gary Lemme, Alabama Farmers Federation President Jimmy Parnell, Madison County farmer Steve Tate, Auburn University College of Agriculture Associate Dean for Instruction Paul Patterson, Tuskegee University College of Agricultural, Environmental and Natural Sciences Dean Walter Hill and Federation Executive Director Paul Pinyan. Not pictured, Jack Odle of *The Progressive Farmer*.