

# Cultivator

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## Men On The Move In Political Carousel

Gov. Robert Bentley appointed Steve Marshall of Marshall County to the position of Alabama attorney general Feb. 10.

Marshall filled a vacancy created when Bentley appointed Luther Strange to fill the post of former U.S. Sen. Jeff Sessions, the new U.S. attorney general.

"Attorney General Marshall is well respected by the farmers and residents of Marshall County, where he's served as district attorney since 2001," said Brian Hardin, director of Governmental and Agricultural Programs for the Alabama Farmers Federation. "He understands the importance of agriculture to our communities and state."

On the national stage, Strange was appointed to serve on the U.S. Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee.

"Agriculture is Alabama's No. 1 industry, and it is exciting to have a senator on the Ag Committee," said Federation Director of National Legislative Programs Mitt Walker. "Sen. Strange will play a pivotal role in the design of the next farm bill and will also be in a strong position to advance other policies that benefit farmers, consumers, and Alabama as a whole."

In other good news for Alabama farmers, a former peer of Strange's was recently confirmed to lead the Environmental Protection Agency.

As Oklahoma attorney general, new EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt led the fight against EPA's Waters of the U.S. rule, which would have expanded EPA's regulation of private lands. He was confirmed Feb. 17.



*U.S. Rep. Robert Aderholt, R-Haleyville, who represents Alabama's 4th Congressional District, visits with Blount County Farmers Federation President Tim Whitley and Marshall County Farmers Federation President David Ellis March 8 during the Congressional barbecue. The dinner is a highlight of the Alabama Farmers Federation's Washington Legislative Conference.*

## Hope Reigns At Washington Conference

Optimism filled the air as 140 Alabama farmers descended on the nation's capital March 7-10 — a stark contrast to trips during the previous administration, said Alabama Farmers Federation President Jimmy Parnell.

"Being in D.C. confirmed my belief that agriculture will experience real change under the Trump administration," Parnell said. "We've seen this with his order to review the Waters of the U.S. rule and look forward to other improvements over the next few years."

During the Federation's 2017 Washington Legislative Conference, farmers were updated on federal issues including immigration and regulatory reform, biotechnology and the Endangered Species Act.

On March 8, U.S. House Agriculture Committee Chairman Rep. Mike Conaway, R-Texas, encouraged farmers to share ideas about the upcoming farm bill.

"The beauty of doing farm bills every five years is you get to address the things you didn't get right," Conaway said. "We're going to get this bill done, and we're going to get it done on time."

Earlier that day, farmers were briefed by Special Assistant to the President and Director of White House Messaging Strategy Cliff Sims, who founded Yellowhammer News, and American Farm Bureau Federation Public Policy Executive Director Dale Moore.

Farmers met with Alabama's U.S. representatives during Congressional breakfasts March 9, followed by meetings with U.S. Sens. Richard Shelby and Luther Strange.

Other events included a Congressional barbecue, U.S. Department of Agriculture visit and British Embassy tour.

For photos, visit the Federation's Facebook page. Follow the Federation on Twitter for additional event coverage.

## Local School, Local Farmer Recognized By Forestry Organizations



Talladega County's Lincoln High School FFA recently received \$500 for pre-ordering the most Alabama TREASURE Forest Association tags. From left are Lincoln Jr. High FFA Adviser Paige Siegler, Lincoln Jr. High FFA Chapter President Skyler Hickman, Lincoln High FFA Chapter President Evan Dulaney and Lincoln High FFA Advisor Amy Stephens.



U.S. Marine Corps Major Lee Stuckey of Macon County, center, received the W. Kelly Mosley Award from the Alabama Natural Resources Council Feb. 17. Stuckey owns and operates AHERO Farm, which offers hunting excursions to help veterans deal with PTSD. He is pictured with Dr. Mark Smith of Auburn University, left, and Jon Matt Tucker of the Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC). Photo credit: AFC.

### Upcoming Events

- **March 21** - National Ag Day  
• [agday.org](http://agday.org)
- **April 1** - Deadline to apply for Alfa Foundation and Alabama Farmers Ag Foundation Scholarships  
• [alfainsurance.com](http://alfainsurance.com)  
• [alfafarmers.org](http://alfafarmers.org)
- **April 5-7** - Alabama Farmers Federation's Women's Leadership Conference  
• [cvent.com/d/5vqf1b](http://cvent.com/d/5vqf1b)
- **April 6** - Farm-City Luncheon  
• [cvent.com/d/0vqhvs](http://cvent.com/d/0vqhvs)
- **April 15** - Deadline to apply for Alabama Ag in the Classroom Summer Institute  
• [alabamaaitc.org](http://alabamaaitc.org)

### OBITUARY

**Prentiss "Dan" Danforth Neal Jr.** of Seale died Feb. 7. He was 75.

Neal was a Russell County Farmers Federation board member. He was a member of the county Cattlemen's Association and the Alabama TREASURE Forest Association.

He is survived by his wife of 49 years, Peggy; daughter Julie Neal Rydberg (Andrew); son Danny Neal; and four grandchildren.

Memorials may be made to Grace Baptist Church, 2915 14th Ave., Columbus, Georgia 31904.

### Commodity Corner

#### Peanuts

Golden Peanut and Tree Nuts Co. plans to build a new warehouse in Headland, which will hold 20,000 tons of farmer stock peanuts. It should be completed by the 2017 harvest.

-Caleb Bristow, division director

#### Pork

Pork farmers Tim Gates and Johnny Miller served as Alabama's delegates to the Pork Industry Forum during the Pork Act Delegate Assembly in Atlanta, Georgia, March 1-3. The 170 delegates from 49 states nominated members to the National Pork Board, established the portion of Pork Checkoff dollars returned to state organizations and provided direction on pork promotion, research and education. The National Pork Board approved a \$55.4 million budget for 2017.

-Guy Hall, division director

#### Forestry

In the last month, Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC) surveys reported approximately 250 beetle spots in eight counties. This represent 14,000 trees infested with beetles and is already one-third of total spots found last year. The increase is likely due to last year's severe drought. Landowners are encouraged to call AFC if they have groups of dead trees.

-Rick Oates, division director

#### Greenhouse, Nursery & Sod

According to Nursery Magazine's annual State of the Industry Report, 2016 sales increased 58 percent. Confidence in the growth of the market remained at 84 percent, and 54 percent said profits were up over 2015. Crops with highest sales volume were field-grown trees, container-grown shrubs and container-grown perennials. For the full report, visit [tinyurl.com/Nursery16Report](http://tinyurl.com/Nursery16Report).

-Mac Higginbotham, division director

#### Equine

Over 2,000 people from four states attended the Alabama Horse Fair March 4-5 in Montgomery. Headliners for clinics were Cowgirl Hall of Famer Stacy Westfall, Gaited Horse Expert Michael Gascon and Vaquero Trainer Carson James. State Equine Committee members participated in the trade show, educating others about the division and benefits of membership.

-Nate Jaeger, division director

#### Cotton

The National Cotton Council (NCC) supports [AgExportsCount.org](http://AgExportsCount.org), a new website which includes information on agricultural export market development programs that help drive U.S. agricultural trade. It features stories about the programs' successes and challenges.

-Carla Hornady, division director

## Alabama Representin' Ag

- **Townsend Kyser** of Hale County was elected Catfish Farmers of America president Feb. 17 during the group's annual meeting in Orange Beach. He will serve a two-year term.
- Chilton County farmer **Jimmy Parnell**, president of the Alabama Farmers Federation; Dallas County farmer **Jimmy Holliman**; and Houston County farmer **John Downs** were inducted into the Alabama Livestock Hall of Fame Feb. 16.
- **Debbie Roberts** of Fayette County was appointed to the Alabama Water Resources Commission, effective Feb. 23. Members serve six-year terms.

## AAES Aims To Provide Accurate Weather Data

Guest column from AAES Outlying Units Director Dale Monks

Just as Precision Agriculture has captured the focus of many Alabama farmers, the need for accurate climate and weather data has also become critical.

Over 25 years, the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station (AAES) has partnered with AWIS Weather Services to provide current and historical weather data for research, Extension and agricultural programs.

We started replacing older weather stations with more modern technology in 2016. Data accessibility and accuracy are our primary goals, especially in an era where precision can provide opportunities for additional profit.

## New Law Lets Purple Paint Protect Property

A new law allows landowners to paint purple stripes on trees or fence posts to ward off trespassers.

According to the Code of Alabama, vertical stripes of purple paint must be longer than 8 inches; wider than 1 inch; 3-5 feet from the ground; readily visible to people approaching the property; and 100 feet or less apart on forestland and less than 1,000 feet on non-forestland.

## Record Crowd Of Young Farmers Enjoys Farm Tours

The future of agriculture looked bright as a record-setting 385 members attended the Alabama Farmers Federation's Young Farmers Conference in Montgomery March 3-5.

Representatives from 55 counties enjoyed a change in format this year as farm tours replaced the usual indoor workshops

"While workshops can be very beneficial, there's nothing like visiting with other farmers and seeing how they make a living," said Limestone County's Jerry Allen Newby, who is the 2017 State

Young Farmers Committee Chairman.

The announcement of Outstanding Young Farm Family finalists highlighted the Saturday closing banquet. They are Ben and Jessica Johnson of Fyffe in DeKalb County, Beth Hornsby of Auburn in Lee County and Eric and Carrly Lovvorn of Heflin in Cleburne County. The overall winner will be announced at the Federation's Commodity Producers Conference in Birmingham Aug. 5.

For more Young Farmers coverage, visit the Federation's Facebook page or read the April issue of Neighbors.

## Peanut Farmers Plan For 2017 Planting



Over 270 Alabama farmers attended one of eight peanut production meetings held across the state last month, including a Feb. 28 evening meeting at the Wiregrass Research & Extension Center in Headland. The meetings were hosted by the Alabama Peanut Producers Association.

## Nominations Open For Bama's Best Catfish Contest

Alabama catfish farmers want to know which restaurant is the state's best at serving up their favorite fish.

The Alabama Catfish Producers, a division of the Alabama Farmers Federation, is sponsoring the second annual Bama's Best Catfish Restaurant Challenge. Catfish lovers are asked to nominate a favorite restaurant on the Federation's Facebook page or at AlabamaCatfish.org. Nominations end June 12.

"Our farmers sponsor the contest to encourage consumption of delicious, U.S. farm-raised catfish," said Alabama Catfish Producers Chairman Sid Nelson of Epes. "We're thankful for all the restaurants in Alabama that serve the fish we raise, and we appreciate their customers."

While fried is a Southern favorite, nominated restaurants may serve the dish any variety of ways — blackened, baked, sautéed or deep-fried.

From nominations, four finalists will be selected. A team of judges, including an Alabama catfish farmer, will visit the finalists to taste-test the nominated dishes and present each restaurant owner a plaque.

The winner of Alabama's Best Catfish Restaurant will be announced in August — National Catfish Month. The overall winner will receive a plaque and cash prize; and all four will be featured in Neighbors magazine. An additional "People's Choice" Award will be chosen by Federation Facebook followers.

## Talking State Politics



The Alabama Farmers Federation hosted over 250 state leaders and farmers during the annual Taste of Alabama Legislative Reception at its Montgomery home office Feb 15. Attendees included State Treasurer Young Boozer, left, and Marshall County Farmers Federation member Corey Hill, who also serves as mayor of Douglas, Alabama.



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## Trump May Dump Waters Of The U.S. Rule

On Feb. 28, President Donald Trump signed an executive order requiring the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to reconsider the controversial Waters of the U.S. (WOTUS) rule.

The Alabama Farmers Federation's Mitt Walker applauded the move, saying it will benefit Alabama farmers.

"President Trump has followed through on his commitment to withdraw this ridiculous rule and thus ensured farmers and landowners will not be unjustly penalized for making a living on the land," said Walker, the Federation's National Legislative Programs director.

American Farm Bureau President Zippy Duvall and EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt also praised Trump's move.

EPA released the final WOTUS ruling in 2015 and added vague definitions to the Clean Water Act. The rule expanded the administration's jurisdiction to previously unregulated areas and required permits for simple changes to land, including building fences, spraying fertilizers and digging ditches.

## Holmes Crowned Catfish Farmer Of The Year



Mary Quitman Holmes, left, who farms in Perry County, was named Alabama's Catfish Farmer of the Year Feb. 17 at the Catfish Farmers of America (CFA) annual meeting in Orange Beach. Outgoing CFA President Bari Cain, center, and CFA Board Chairman Ben Pentecost, right, presented the award.