



## Items of Interest

## Webinars:



### December 2022: Message from the Director

I am sending you holiday greetings from all of us with the Southern Rural Development Center (SRDC). As we approach the start of a new year, coupled with the many faith and cultural observances that are part of our richly diverse society, there is much for us to reflect on and to celebrate in this holiday season. Although we face challenges that oftentimes seem insurmountable, we also have many gifts and opportunities. This is a time that we can pause for a bit and come together on the basis of our shared humanity and desire for dignity, respect, and wellbeing.

Focused on building capacity to enhance the quality of life in rural communities, the SRDC is thankful for the opportunity to do this work in concert with so many wonderful partners. Having spent this past year celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the Rural Development Act which was instrumental to all the Regional Rural Development Centers, we are approaching 2023 with the hope of advancing this mission for another fifty years.

Best wishes,

John J. Green

## New Report on Rural Communities and Digital Device Ownership



A recent report, authored by Brian Whitacre of Oklahoma State University, looks at the digital device ownership issue from a rural perspective.

Recent data shows that rural residents are less likely to (1) own a desktop or laptop computer, (2) participate in the Affordable Connectivity Program, and (3) have access to computer repair services. The report breaks the rural-oriented difficulties into 3 distinct categories: Status Quo, Supply, and Support – and cites recent studies discussing the challenges in each. The report concludes with recommendations for helping rural America address these issues.

You can find the report webpage here: <https://links.digitunity.org/rural-communities> or download the report directly from here: <https://links.digitunity.org/rural-communities-download>

## Building Community and Farming Sustainability

In agricultural communities, the community is just as important as the agriculture. Farmers love to get together to swap stories, share advice, and learn from and support each other. Fenton Pope, of the Covington County Self Help organization, has been creating positive environments to do just that in Mississippi for years. The Covington County Self Help organization creates an atmosphere of learning and networking to work alongside growers as they obtain skills that help make a positive impact in the agricultural communities where they farm and live.

Recognizing that conservation on the farm and conserving our natural resources plays a role in that positive impact, Mr. Pope partnered with the Farm Innovation Project to co-host a day for farmers to build community and learn ways to lower produce safety risks and increase conservation benefits on their farms in Mt. Olive, Mississippi.



*Felicia Bell (NCAT) and Billy Mitchell demonstrate how to connect a CoolBot for on-farm cold storage.*

### Resources for Producers and Educators

Alabama Extension and its partners are pleased to share the development process and materials with educators who would like to expand this work. Contact Kristin Woods at 334-830-0305 or [1996kwoods@gmail.com](mailto:1996kwoods@gmail.com) for more information. For more information about the project and links to many resources, please visit the [Farm Innovation project webpage](#).

**[TO READ THE FULL ARTICLE, CLICK HERE.](#)**

## Regional Spotlight

### University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB) Forestry Program Helps Keep Landowner's Legacy Alive

In the summer of 2020, Patrick Gulley, pastor of Antioch Baptist Church in Deann, Hempstead County, Arkansas, suddenly found himself in the position of being responsible for his family's forestland in Nevada County when his father, Henry Gulley, died in an automobile accident at the age of 72. Alongside his mother, Viola, he began looking for ways to carry out his father's vision for the family land.

Before his father's passing, Gulley visited the local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office and asked about ways he and his father could improve their timber stand. Though they had harvested trees years ago, the area had been left unmanaged. The NRCS personnel informed Gulley about the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff's (UAPB) "Keeping it in the Family" (KIITF) Program, which provides educational resources and technical assistance to African American forest landowners to protect and retain their family land for future generations.



*Patrick Gulley and his mother, Viola Gulley.*

Determined to carry on his father's plans for the land, Gulley and his mother arranged for the KIITF team to conduct a site visit on their property.

Levell Foote, a retired NRCS district conservationist who works as a conservation consultant for the KIITF Program, was assigned to help the family with their forestland management goals. "From day one, working with Patrick and Viola Gulley gave me a glow in my heart," Foote said. "It was immediately apparent they were so passionate about accomplishing the goals that Henry Gulley originally set out to do."

Gulley asked Foote for assistance with two main objectives: revitalizing forestland on the property and setting up a viable cattle operation. "Patrick told me the NRCS had not accepted his forestry management plan," Foote said. "After reviewing the plan, I noticed issues such as a lack of fire lanes along property boundaries and some inconsistencies regarding the number of trees that would be planted. We corrected these issues in the plan, and I also identified several conservation practices that could be implemented and funded through the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)." Thanks to Foote's assistance and guidance, Gulley received EQIP funding for conservation practices such as prescribed burning and tree and shrub site preparation and establishment. Now that tree planting is underway on Gulley's property, Foote aims to help him with his goals related to enhancing pastureland and raising livestock. In addition to having a productive timber stand, Gulley hopes to raise 50 head of cattle per year.



*Two consultants for UAPB's forestry program, Charley Williams, left, and Levell Foote, center, instruct Gulley on how to use the Web Soil Survey application to identify soil type.*

“The Keeping it in the Family team has been wonderful – thanks to them we have gained so much knowledge,” Gulley said. “We have learned just how many government resources are available to families like us. A lot of people think the state wants to take your property, but this is far from the truth. They want you to stay on your land and help you reap its benefits in a sustainable and profitable way. Some may think it sounds too good to be true, but we have learned firsthand that it is true.”

## Grant Connections

---

### STAKEHOLDER ANNOUNCEMENT: USDA Accepting Applications to Spur Job Growth and Economic Development in Rural Areas

**WASHINGTON, Aug. 31, 2022**

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development (RD) is accepting applications for funding to help create jobs and economic growth in rural communities. USDA is making loans and grants available under the Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant (REDLG) program. Through this program, USDA provides zero-interest loans and grants to current and former Rural Utilities Service (RUS) Electric Program and Telecommunications Program borrowers and utilities that are eligible to receive assistance from the RUS Electric or Telecommunication Programs.

Applicants will use the funds to help local businesses finance projects that will create and retain jobs or finance community facility projects. Projects must be in rural areas or towns with a population of 50,000 or less.

Applications must be submitted to the USDA Rural Development State Office where the project is located no later than 4:30 p.m. local time on the following dates: Second Quarter: Dec. 31, 2022; Third Quarter: March 31, 2023; Fourth Quarter: June 30, 2023.

Interested applicants are encouraged to contact their local USDA Rural Development State Office well in advance of the application deadline to ask questions about their project, the program, or the application process. Additional information is available on page 53443 of the [Aug 31, 2022, Federal Register](#). If you'd like to subscribe to USDA Rural Development updates, visit our [GovDelivery subscriber page](#).

## Job Opportunities

---

### Assistant Professor & Extension Specialist - Community Economic Development - Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

**Position is set to start in 2023.**

The Department of Agricultural Economics within the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service seeks an Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist for Community Economic Development. This PhD-level position is a permanent, full-time, 12-month, 100% extension appointment to begin in 2023.

The Specialist will provide statewide leadership and coordination of extension education programs enhancing business and community capacity. They will provide subject matter expertise and educational program development related to community and economic development, strategic planning, business planning, disaster resilience, community food system economics, and/or related areas. The position offers ample opportunity to collaborate with other Texas A&M AgriLife faculty in agricultural economics, nutrition and food safety, and hospitality, as well as Texas A&M University System faculty in healthcare, transportation, and other fields. As an Assistant Professor, this Extension Specialist will establish research programs to align with their extension role. Expected outreach includes extension

and peer reviewed publications, train the trainer for county educators, conference presentations, and electronic and mass media releases.

Find more information or to apply at <https://tamus.wd1.myworkdayjobs.com/>.

### Non-Tenure Track Assistant Research Professor/Associate Director, Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development (NERCRD)

**Applications review began on November 10, 2022. Position starting date is December 1, 2022, or as negotiated. Open until filled.**

The NERCRD at Pennsylvania State University (PSU) is accepting applications for a limited-term, Non-Tenure Track Assistant Research Professor/Associate Director. The NERCRD is a part of the Depart. Of Agricultural Economics, Sociology, and Education. The research professor/associate director will lead the Center's outreach-oriented activities along with the Director. This position has remote and on-site work options available. Applicants should upload a letter of application, names, and addresses of three professional references, curriculum vitae, and official transcripts at the [PSU webpage](#). If you have any questions, please contact [Stephan J. Goetz](#), Depart. Of Agricultural Economics, Sociology, and Education at PSU.

### Oklahoma State University (OSU) Assistant Director/State Program Leader for Agriculture, Natural Resources and Community Economic Development

**Applications review began September 9, 2022. Position is to be filled by January 1, 2023.**

OSU seeks an innovative and creative leader to identify, plan, implement, coordinate, evaluate and report statewide Extension Agriculture, Natural Resources and Community Economics Development programs with campus and field staff to address critical needs of Oklahomans. The Assistant Director/Program Leader is reports to the Associate Vice President, Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service (OCES). The tenure track professor position is to be filled by January 1, 2023, or as soon thereafter as a suitable candidate is available. Interested applicants must apply via [OSU's online applicant tracking system](#) for the position labeled **req12058**.

### Assistant Administrator, Community Development and Outreach at Fort Valley State University

**Open until filled**

The assistant Administrator for Community Development and Outreach will develop, coordinate, and facilitate programming through the Cooperative Extension Program designed to assist communities to realize their long-term goals; through provision of education, technical assistance and opportunities to secure grants that support strategic planning and community visioning in order to provide a foundation for economic development. Coordinate or assist in the coordination of programs through outreach efforts with USDA Agencies, State, private and public and nonprofit entities. Master's degree in Agricultural Economics, economics, business administration or other business disciplines is required. Preference will be given to applicants with extension and strong community development experiences. Applicants with degrees in closely related disciplines with community development experiences may also apply.

**[LEARN MORE AND APPLY](#)**

## Conferences, Workshops, Trainings

---

### Southern Rural Sociological Association

**February 5-6, 2023, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma**

Theme: Social Justice Praxis, Community Development, and Building Resilient Communities in the Rural South  
**Abstract Submissions due December 19, 2022**

[LEARN MORE AND REGISTER](#)

### Joint Council of Extension Professionals (JCEP) Extension Leadership Conference (ELC)

**February 7-9, 2023, Kansas City, Missouri**

The Joint Council of Extension Professionals is hosting their 2023 ELC Conference. The conference is to engage and inspire individuals to lead the way to a bright future. Accommodations and reservation details will be released soon. For hotel and airport information, please visit the [JCEP webpage](#).

### Joint Council of Extension Professionals (JCEP) Public Issues Leadership Development (PILD) Conference

**In-person: April 16-19, 2023, Hyatt Regency Crystal City, Arlington, Virginia**

The JCEP is hosting their 2023 PILD Conference. The conference is to enhance education and advocacy skills to positively affect federal, state, and local resources available for Cooperative Extension.

[LEARN MORE](#)

### Proposal Request for the National Association of Community Development Extension Professionals (NACDEP) 2023 Conference

**In-person Conference: April 30 – May 3, 2023, Coeur D’Alene, Idaho. Proposal deadline is January 18, 2023 at 11:59PM EST/10:59 PM CST.**

NACDEP is requesting presentation proposals for their 2023 Conference. Topics for the presentations will be centered around economic development, diversity and inclusion, human capacity building, community resilience and sustainability, infrastructure, natural environment, and building capacity within government and organizations. **The deadline to submit proposals is January 18, 2023, 11:59 PM EST/10:59 PM CST.**

[LEARN MORE AND REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL HERE](#)

### The Rural Sociological Society (RSS) 2023 Conference

**In-person: August 2-6, 2023, Burlington, Virginia**

RSS President, John J. Green, SRDC Director

Theme: Pursuing Equity and Access in Development: Roles for Rural-Focused Public Scholars. **Abstract Submission due February 15, 2023.**

[LEARN MORE](#)

This material is based upon work supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.