



Items of Interest

SRDC 50th Anniversary, Letter from the Director Southern Rural Development Center Celebrating 50 Years of Work

With the onset of the Spring season, it seems an appropriate time to both celebrate the history of the Southern Rural Development Center (SRDC) and to envision an even brighter future.

The SRDC is one of the Nation's four Regional Rural Development Centers (RRDCs) established under the Rural Development Act of 1972. Along with our colleagues at the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development, Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development, and the Western Rural Development Center, we acknowledged the 50th anniversary of the Act in 2022 through a variety of activities, including numerous proclamations.

The year 2024 marks a related but distinct anniversary – the first year of work as the SRDC, housed at Mississippi State University but operating across Land-Grant Institutions. As documented in its first Annual Progress Report, February 1, 1974, was the first official day of operation, and March 28 is noted as the approval of the first plan of work. From the very beginning, according to minutes from the Board of Directors, the SRDC's approach has been interdisciplinary and focused on integration of research and Extension efforts. These ideas continue to resonate fifty years later. Rural people and communities have changed, as have the opportunities and challenges they confront, yet the importance of bringing together scientific knowledge, outreach, and education across organizational and state lines remains consistent.

This work has come to encompass regional collaboration with thirty universities across thirteen states and two territories, connecting 1862 and 1890 institutions, and now a 1994 tribal partner. It also involves work on national issues and collaboration between the RRDCs, regional research and Extension associations, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture. With such a solid foundation, the next fifty years are off to a good start. I invite you to join in the reflection and celebration of the SRDC's past fifty years. We will share highlights in upcoming issues of *Around the South* and via our website.

Webinars:

Recently Released: SRDC 2023 Annual Report



The 2023 Annual Report from the Southern Rural Development Center (SRDC) focuses attention on the important work of “Empowering Partnerships for Community Development.”

Month-by-month summaries highlight initiatives that not only have produced substantive benefits but have also contributed to the depth, breadth, and strength of partnerships for years to come.

To view the full report, please visit: <https://srdc.msstate.edu/annual-reports>.

SRDC Staff: Leah Mitchell Transitions to Business Manager Position



After three years with the Southern Rural Development Center, Cindy DeFelice, Business Manager, is transitioning to a new position at the University of Mississippi. The Center extends its gratitude and best wishes to her as she embarks on a new path in her career.

Although we will miss Cindy and her efforts to expand the Center's capacity, SRDC is pleased to announce the selection of Leah Mitchell to fill the position. Leah previously served the Center as its administrative assistant from July 2023 until now.

Regional Spotlight

Disadvantaged Communities to Receive Help Securing Wastewater Infrastructure Funds

UTIA and Partners Implement New Statewide University-Utility Partnership

Contact: Tina M. Johnson, Agricultural and Resource Economics, tjohnson@utk.edu

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. — The Tennessee Water Resources Research Center, affiliated with University of Tennessee, Knoxville, is partnering with the UT Institute of Agriculture, Tennessee Tech University, and the University of Memphis to implement a statewide university-utility partnership to help small and disadvantaged communities successfully apply for low-interest wastewater infrastructure loans.

“The partnership aims to train communities to build technical, managerial and financial capacity to improve wastewater infrastructure,” said Sreedhar Upendram, associate professor in the UT Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics.



Wastewater systems located in small and disadvantaged communities, such as the one pictured in Oliver Springs, Tennessee, may soon benefit from a statewide university-utility partnership that assists communities with successfully applying for low-interest wastewater infrastructure loans. **Photo by T. Johnson, courtesy UTIA.**

The publicly available loans are through the [Clean Water State Revolving Fund](#) program, which provides low or negative interest rate loans, debt refinancing, debt issuance and principal forgiveness to support the expansion and modification of critical wastewater infrastructure that help keep the nation’s waterways clean. The recent passage of

the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, provides an additional \$11.7 billion to the Clean Water State Revolving Fund, creating an opportunity for wastewater treatment service providers to make significant improvements to their systems. The additional funding is especially beneficial for small and disadvantaged communities, which are likely to qualify for these loans with the lowest available interest rates and principal forgiveness. However, these communities may have less time to devote to a loan application and often face significant barriers to accessing the loans, due to a lack of technical, managerial, and financial resources.

The partnership program is designed to overcome these barriers and help wastewater systems in small and disadvantaged communities access available loans and pursue other funding opportunities. The [Tennessee Water Resources Research Center](#) will lead the effort, tapping into resources and expertise at top institutions of higher education across the state to deliver technical assistance and training to these communities.

To read the full article, please visit <https://utianews.tennessee.edu/disadvantaged-communities-to-receive-help-securing-wastewater-infrastructure-funds/>.

Job Opportunities

Associate Director, Alabama Cooperative Extension System, Auburn University

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System (ACES) is seeking an outstanding leader for the position of Associate Director. This is a full-time administrative position based in Auburn, Alabama. The appointment can be considered, as appropriate, as a tenure-track position for the selected candidate. The incumbent will provide statewide leadership, in collaboration with the Associate Director of Alabama A&M University, to county Extension offices in Alabama to facilitate coordinated operations among seven Extension Districts, personnel development, enhanced extramural support, and strategic partnerships. The Associate Director reports to the Director of ACES on the Auburn University campus. The Director is organizationally responsible for all facets of the system, while the Associate Director is responsible programmatically for day-to-day operational functions of county operations.

Required qualifications include an earned doctorate from an accredited institution in a field related to programs within ACES or related and academic credentials commensurate with Professor rank. **Applications may be accepted until the position is filled. However, to receive full consideration, applications should be received by March 31, 2024.** Please contact Dr. Becky Barlow, Search Committee Chair, Associate Dean and Assistant Director for Agriculture, Forestry, and Natural Resources, rjb0003@aces.edu with questions. To learn more and apply, visit <https://www.auemployment.com/postings/43857>.

Extension Volunteerism Specialist, University of Tennessee

The University of Tennessee (UT) Extension seeks candidates for the Extension Volunteerism Specialist position. This position will provide leadership in building system capacity within UT Extension to effectively engage and support volunteers. The specialist will conduct, facilitate, and disseminate research related to emerging and contemporary issues affecting volunteerism and volunteer management. Collaborating with specialists and agents, the specialist will develop and implement strategies to attract, develop, and retain an appropriately diverse group of volunteers who will be demographically reflective of the communities they serve.

[LEARN MORE](#) & [APPLY](#)

Program Development Specialist, University of Georgia Extension

The University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences (CAES) seeks a dynamic and innovative professional to provide statewide support and coordination for the University of Georgia Extension program development functions. This is a full-time Faculty appointment. This position supports more than 1000 full-time and

part-time faculty and staff members across Georgia and is responsible for overseeing all aspects of the Extension Program Development process and developing a robust training system for the entire organization. The position reports to the Director for the Office of Learning and Organizational Development. The preferred home-base is in Athens, Georgia, however, there is potential to house the position at one of the district Extension offices in either Statesboro, Tifton, or Griffin Georgia. **All applications submitted in UGA jobs by March 17 will receive full consideration, however, it will remain open until filled.** Please contact Dr. Kristi Farner, Search Committee Chair, kfarner@uga.edu or 770-598-4798 with questions. To apply, visit <https://www.ugajobsearch.com/postings/360018>.

Postdoctoral Fellow/Research Associate – Decision-Making & Team Science, Auburn University

The Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology at Auburn University is accepting applications for a postdoctoral fellowship. The anticipated start date is April 15, 2024, for an initial period of 24 months with a possibility of extension depending on the availability of funding. This is a benefit eligible, non-tenure track position. They seek an energetic and motivated postdoctoral fellow/research associate to conduct innovative socioeconomic research for a project titled, Socio-Agroclimatology: Farm Security, Equity, and Sustainability. The minimum qualifications include an earned Ph.D. in any of the following or closely allied fields at the time employment begins: agricultural economics, environmental economics, environmental studies, science, and technology studies, economic or cultural geography, sociology, or rural sociology. Prior research in agrifood systems studies, as well as the science of team science, transdisciplinary, and convergence is highly desired. Experience working with data in Excel is also desired. The individual selected for the position must have a valid driver's license and be able to drive and work independently. In addition, the candidates must be able to meet eligibility requirements for work in the United States by the start date and continue working legally for the proposed term of employment. Applicants must complete an online application process at the following link: <https://www.auemployment.com/postings/42639> and attach the following: 1) Cover letter stating research interests and experience, 2) current curriculum vita, 3) recent research paper, and 4) copies of academic transcripts. When prompted, please provide names, phone numbers, and email addresses of three professional references. Only complete application materials will be considered. **Review of the applications will begin February 1, 2024, and continue until the position is filled.** Salary will be commensurate with education and experience. For questions regarding the position, please contact Dr. Worosz at mrw0016@auburn.edu or Dr. Sawadgo at wendiam@auburn.edu. To learn more, visit the [Postdoctoral Fellow/Research Associate pdf](#).

Extension Leadership Specialist, University of Georgia Extension

The University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences (CAES) seeks a dynamic and innovative professional for the position of Extension Leadership Specialist with primary responsibilities in leading the national faculty leadership development program, LEAD21, which is sponsored by the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities (APLU) and administered through a contract with the University of Georgia. This is a full-time Faculty appointment home-based in Athens, Georgia. The position reports to the Director for the Office of Learning and Organizational Development.

Applications received by Dec. 15, will be assured full consideration, but the position is open until filled. Applicants must submit their application via the UGAJobs website (<https://www.ugajobsearch.com/postings/349481>) and will require the following documentation: (1) a letter of application; (2) curriculum vitae; and (3) contact information for three letters of reference. Please contact Michael Toews, Search Committee Chair, mtoews@uga.edu with questions.

Assistant Professor & Extension Specialist in Tourism Economic Development, Auburn University

Auburn University is seeking a 12-month tenure track assistant professor and Extension specialist to provide statewide leadership in tourism economic development. This position is housed within the Horst Schulze School of Hospitality Management at Auburn University in the College of Human Sciences. This position is designed to assist the College of

Human Sciences and the Alabama Cooperative Extension System in developing the state's full economic tourism potential. The selected applicant will provide strategic and inclusive leadership in tourism economic development in the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. Required qualifications include an earned doctorate in Hospitality and Tourism Management, Tourism Economics, Sustainable Tourism Development, Outdoor Recreation, Natural Resources, Economic Development, or a related field when employment begins.

Applicants should also have evidence of, or strong promise in, building a record or scholarship, grantsmanship, and multi-disciplinary collaborations. The candidate selected for this position must also be able to meet eligibility requirements to work in the United States when the appointment is scheduled to begin and continue working legally for the proposed term of employment.

Apply online using the link: <https://www.auemployment.com/postings/40771>. Provide application letter, complete CV, transcripts from all universities attended, research and educational interests, and three (3) professional references (names, email addresses, and phone numbers). For more information about the position, contact Dr. Alecia Douglas, Ph.D., Chair- Search Committee, at acd0011@auburn.edu.

Assistant Administrator, Community Development and Outreach, 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 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. To learn more and apply, visit <https://fvsu.applicantpro.com/jobs/2568591>.

Conferences, Workshops, Trainings

National Extension Climate Initiative (NECI) Connecting Climate to Communities Webinar Series

NECI is hosting a free webinar series featuring 17 outreach perspectives for engaging different communities in addressing climate. The goal is to share resources, stories, methods, and tools from across the U.S. for re-use locally.

April 24: DIY–Self-Guided Climate Instruction, [REGISTER](#)

May 22: COMMUNITIES & Climate, [REGISTER](#)

June 26: AGING & Climate, [REGISTER](#)

2024 Association of 1890 Research Directors (ARD) Research Symposium

In-person: April 6-9, 2024, Gaylord Opryland Hotel, Nashville, Tennessee

Save the date for the 2024 Association of 1890 Research Directors (ARD) Research Symposium.

Theme: Climate, Health, and Cultivating the Next Generation of Agriculture Leaders: Creating Solutions in Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources.

[LEARN MORE & REGISTER](#)

2024 Joint Council of Extension Professionals (JCEP) Public Issues Leadership Development (PILD) Conference

In-person: April 15-17, 2024, Hyatt Regency Crystal City at Reagan National Airport, Arlington, Virginia

The Joint Council of Extension Professionals' Public Issues Leadership Development (PILD) Conference brings together Extension professionals, elected officials, and volunteers to learn how to communicate Extension's value, increase understanding of our federal partnerships, and build experience and confidence in engaging with elected leaders. PILD is open to all Extension professionals in 1862, 1890, and 1994 institutions and invites proposals from a wide array of disciplines that reflect the themes of the conference. Mission: Enhance education and advocacy skills to positively affect federal, state, and local resources available for Cooperative Extension.

[LEARN MORE & REGISTER](#)

2024 National Extension Technology Community (NETC) Conference

In-person: May 13-16, 2024, State College, Pennsylvania

Save the date for the 2024 National Extension Technology Community (NETC) Conference to innovate, educate, and connect NETC Style, with a unique Nittany Lion flavor. In early January, the NETC will share logistics including hotel blocks and airport considerations, a "Call for Proposals," and registration. The NETC website, conference tools, and services will be online early January. If you have conference-related questions, please contact NETC2024@psu.edu.

2024 National Association of Community Development Extension Professionals (NACDEP) Conference

In-Person: June 17-20, 2024, Marriott Marquis Houston, Houston, Texas

Save the date for the 2024 National Association of Community Development Extension Professionals (NACDEP) conference.

[LEARN MORE](#)

2024 Community Development Society (CDS) Creating Capacity for Resilient Communities Conference

In-Person: July 14-17, Omaha, Nebraska

Save the date for the 2024 annual Community Development Society (CDS) Conference.

[LEARN MORE](#)

2024 Rural Sociological Society (RSS) Conference

In-Person: July 24-28, Madison, Wisconsin

The 86th meeting of the RSS will explore the theme "Reconceptualizing Rurality: Toward a More Diverse and Inclusive Understanding." Abstract submissions for individual papers, posters, and special organized sessions are being considered! Submissions that are relevant to the symposium theme are encouraged, as are those that focus on rural life and livelihoods, demography, community structures and economies, technologies, environmental conditions, agriculture and food systems, or other sociological knowledge of rural communities.

[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.