

### **Dr. Jeffrey Stringer – University of Kentucky**

Extension Committee

The call for nominations for the 2021 Family Forest Educations Awards presented by NAUFRP and National Woodland Owners Association was sent out in March, circulated via NAUFRP, NIFA, and through three regional forestry Extension groups. This year's Individual Project Award is focusing on programming and education resources developed in response to the pandemic in 2020. The Comprehensive Program award is also available showcasing family forest education work over a 5 year period. Awards will be virtually announced at this fall's NAUFRP general session associated with the SAF National Meeting. The Extension Committee has attended meetings and/or maintained communications with Southern Region Forestry Extension (SREF) and the Northern and the North Central Forestry Extension groups in 2021.

### **Dr. Jim Ansley – Oklahoma State University**

Update from OSU-NREM Department, May 2021

Forestry faculty (Omkar Joshi, Rod Will, Lu Zhai, and Bryan Murray) in the Natural Resource Ecology and Management (NREM) Department at Oklahoma State University are doing research funded by a Sun Grant on productivity, economics, public social acceptance, and habitat suitability of sweetgum and hybrid sweetgum grown in short rotation woody crop (SRWC) systems. Compared to other candidate SRWC species in our region, sweetgum grows well on upland, lower productivity sites not suitable for agriculture, and produces feedstock without resins and other compounds inherent to conifers. The focus of this research is hybrid sweetgum genotypes, that can produce yields three to four times greater than that of native sweetgum and regenerate by re-sprouting after harvesting. Therefore, multiple rotations of hybrid sweetgum likely can be cultivated from a single planting.

With the expansion of the Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) program, there are more research opportunities in the Cross-Timbers region, which is a relatively intact, forested region stretching from southern Kansas through central Oklahoma and into Texas.

Through a USDA-NIFA funded project, led by Dr. Joshi from OSU, researchers from the University of Florida and University of Arizona will evaluate the impact of thinning, prescribed fire, and competition control on timber production, water yield, biodiversity, wildlife habitat, and carbon sequestration in this region.

The SAF-accredited forest ecology and management undergraduate option (one of 5 undergraduate options in NREM) has grown in the last 3 years. We have recently hired a forest wildlife faculty position (Dr. Colter Chitwood) to bridge the forest production/wildlife habitat disciplines.

Link to our website: <http://www.nrem.okstate.edu>

### **Dr. Hans Williams—Stephen F. Austin State University**

Dr. Christopher Schalk, assistant professor of forest wildlife management has received national recognition for his research investigating the effect of erosion control mats on snakes. His work, initiated in 2018 thanks to a grant from Texas Parks and Wildlife, found

that erosion control mats constructed of woven natural fibers without fixed edges appear to be the least likely to cause ensnarement. Additional research found that installation methods also effect entanglement. Snakes were less likely to attempt to pass through erosion control mesh with a buried edge treatment versus an exposed edge. He was recently interviewed by Stormwater magazine regarding his research.

Link: <https://www.sfasu.edu/10028.asp>

Thanks to a Conservation Innovation Grant from the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Stephen F. Austin State University's Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture is moving forward with the establishment of a silvopasture demonstration area at the Walter C. Todd Agricultural Research Center.

Link: <https://www.sfasu.edu/about-sfa/newsroom/2020/sfas-arthur-temple-college-forestry-and-agriculture-establish-silvopasture>