

Farm



Sense

May 2022

UAPB Small Farm Program

Dates to Remember

June 7 - Horticulture Field Day, UA Southwest Research and Extension Center - Hope, AR, \$20 Registration Fee

June 11 - 4-H Fishing Derby, Jefferson County Recreation Association

June 17 - National Black Growers Council Field Day - Conyer Farm, Pine Bluff, AR at 7:30 a.m., Lunch at UAPB at Noon

July 8 - Beekeeping Class, UAPB 1890 Extension Building Auditorium, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

July 15 - Acreage Reporting Date to FSA Office

July 15 - Beekeeping Class, UAPB 1890 Extension Building Auditorium, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

July 22 - Beekeeping Class, UAPB 1890 Extension Building Auditorium, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Forestland Owners: Get Paid to Complete First Tree Thinning

Forestland owners can get paid to complete their first tree thinning, said Joe Friend, forester for UAPB. The program is a U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service initiative to help prevent the spread of southern pine beetles – the most damaging insect pest of pines in the eastern U.S.

“As a forest stand grows, it needs periodic thinning to maintain plenty of growing room, which allows the trees to get enough moisture and nutrients,” he said. “Most thinning operations are income-producing. However, the first thinning doesn’t generate much money per acre, so some landowners neglect to complete this important step.”

To encourage landowners to complete their first thinning in a timely matter, they can receive incentive payments through the Southern Pine Beetle (SPB) Prevention Program. In addition to the revenue they receive for their harvested

timber, they will be paid \$50 per acre through the program.

For harvests less than 40 acres, the program will also pay the logger a \$2,000 bonus. This is to offset the expense of moving logging equipment to small acreages that do not generate as much income as larger areas.

Friend said the southern pine beetle is only about the size of a grain of rice, but it can devastate acres of pine forest if conditions are right.

“Southern pine beetles, like all bark beetles, bore through the bark of trees and lay their eggs in the cambium layer,” he said. “After the eggs hatch, the larvae feed on the cambium layer making S-shaped galleries under the bark and cutting off the tree’s nutrient and moisture supply.”

Friend said healthy pine trees are able to protect themselves from bark beetle attacks by producing a sticky resin called “pitch,” which floods beetle entry holes and stops the invasion. However, trees that are stressed by overcrowding or drought may not be able to produce enough pitch to fight off a bark beetle attack.

“This is why it’s so important that forestland owners thin their tree stands regularly,” he said. “This will help ensure the health of the forest and prevent the spread of the southern pine beetle.”

To sign up for SPB Prevention Program incentives, contact your local county forester. You can find a directory of county foresters on the Arkansas Department of Agriculture website at www.agriculture.arkansas.gov/forestry/.



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Solve Heirs' Property Issues at Local USDA Farm Service Agency Office: Challenges Related to Farm Numbers

Beverly Burkett, consultant for the UAPB Small Farm Program, said landowners must have an official U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Number to apply for Farm Service Agency (FSA) farm loans, disaster assistance and crop insurance. It is also necessary to have a farm number to be eligible for Natural Resources Conservation Service programs such as the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP).

Problems arise when farmers and ranchers have land on file in the name of a deceased relative at their local FSA office.

“People pass away every day, and the relatives of the deceased believe they have fully inherited their property,” Burkett said. “However, that is often not the case. In Arkansas, it is very common to find land that is technically in the name of a person who died 20 or 30 years ago. No one knows how to correct the ownership status of the farmland.”

To actively manage their land, family members who inherited land from a deceased relative need to go to their local FSA office and have the names updated on their Farm Number. Unfortunately, this is not as

easy as it sounds – especially in the cases where people have inherited heirs' property. In many cases the land needs to be reconstituted because part of the land has been sold or family members want their land separated.

“Reconstitution is the FSA process through which land is combined or divided,” Burkett said. “Imagine a group of siblings inherits

land, and the farm number is in the name of their deceased father. Now the siblings have different ideas for the management of their individual tracts of land. This means they need to fill out the FSA's reconstitution form to get their own farm numbers. In other cases, people may just opt for a track division, in which case the land is split into separate tracts, but the Farm Number stays the same.”



To actively manage their land, family members who inherited land from a deceased relative need to go to their local Farm Service Agency office to update their Farm Number and make sure their documentation is order.

Heirs' Property Issues: Having the Right Documentation

Documentation is always key in making changes to the status of one's land in the local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office, Burkett said.

“Whether you are updating the names on your Farm Number or reconstituting your land, it is of utmost importance to have documentation on hand that proves you are the owner of the land,” she said. “Of course, having access to the property deed is the best-case scenario. But in the event the deed is lost, there are other ways to prove ownership of land.”

According to the FSA, proof of ownership may include the following:

- A copy of the deed, if recorded.
- An unrecorded deed if the specific USDA program does not require a recorded deed.
- A land purchase contract or other similar document that affirms ownership interest.
- An FSA employee's check of the record at the county land records office or website.
- A certification of an heir that may not be able to provide legal documentation to confirm ownership of the

property. The certification will need to be accompanied by documentation such as real estate tax assessment or bill, proof of gift tax, a will or an affidavit of ownership.

For more information and resources on resolving heirs' property issues, contact Karen Lee, UAPB Extension assistant, at leek@uapb.edu or (870) 575-7225.

Producers: Get Paid to Turn Marginal Farmland to Native Habitat

Row crop producers who struggle with highly erodible or underperforming land may consider enrolling in the Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Levell Foote, conservation consultant for the UAPB Small Farm Program, said. In exchange for a yearly rental payment, farmers enrolled in the program agree to remove environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production and plant species that will improve environmental health and quality and enhance wildlife habitat.

Foote said he recommends CRP to producers who are in a difficult spot and having trouble managing land that has recently been used for row crop production. The program also applies to farmers with pastureland along a stream or water body.

"I was recently working with a producer who was farming 55 acres, but this part of his operation just wasn't paying off," he said. "In this case, I suggested he take his land out of production through CRP. That way, he wouldn't have to buy equipment, plant the land or raise a crop. Instead, he was able to get paid for taking his land out of production and helping improve its sustainability."

Foote said those who enroll in the program can plant native grasses or trees to help control soil erosion, improve water quality and benefit wildlife. Some program participants install bodies of water on their property to attract ducks and other waterfowl.

According to the FSA website, contracts for land enrolled in CRP are from 10 to 15 years in length. Participants receive annual payments, as well as incentive payments and some cost-share assistance. FSA bases rental rates on the relative productivity of the soils in each county and the average cash rent using data provided by the National Agricultural Statistics Service.

Producers can choose to enroll in the program through the general or continuous CRP signup. A producer must have owned or operated the land for at least 12 months preceding the first year of the contract period.

"I recommend producers opt for the continuous signup because they will receive a signup incentive payment of 32.5 percent of the first full year annual rental payment," Foote said. "A practice incentive payment of up to 50 percent is paid for installing a practice. Under con-



The Conservation Reserve Program offers a way for producers with marginal, underperforming farmland to earn money by restoring the vegetation, soil, water and wildlife habitat on their land.

tinuous signup, soil rental rates will be set at 90 percent of the existing rates."

Foote said producers interested in enrolling in CRP should contact the FSA office at their local USDA Service Center.

"The Conservation Reserve Program offers a great way for producers with marginal farmland to earn money by restoring the soil, water and wildlife habitat on their land," he said.

Producers: Find Out Land Value with National Agricultural Statistics Service Data

The National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) conducts an annual sur-



Producers can use National Agricultural Statistics Service information to determine how much land is worth and how much it rents for in Arkansas.

vey to collect data on crop acreage, land use, grain stocks, farms, rents and the value of land and sales. The 2008 Farm Bill mandated that NASS provide mean rental rates for all counties with 20,000 acres of cropland plus pasture.

Producers can use NASS information to determine how much land is worth and how much it rents for in Arkansas, Dr. Henry English, head of the UAPB Small Farm Program, said. State and county land value estimates can be found online at

<https://www.nass.usda.gov/ar>. The latest information is from the 2021 survey. Information for the year 2022 will be available in August.

In general, the land value of both irrigated and non-irrigated cropland increased only slightly in the last year, he said. The average land value per acre for:

- irrigated cropland in Arkansas is \$3,420.
- non-irrigated cropland is \$2,130.
- pastureland is \$2,690.

The average cash rent per acre for:

- irrigated cropland is \$139.
- non-irrigated cropland is \$45.
- pastureland is \$19.

Producers should remember these are average values only. Information from local real estate agencies may be more accurate, Dr. English said.

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May is National Mental Health Awareness Month

In 2020, an estimated 52.9 million adults aged 18 or older lived with mental illness in the U.S., according to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). That is one in five adults living with mental illness. Also, one in five children in the U.S. have experienced a mental illness, and one in 25 Americans live with a severe mental illness such as bipolar disorder, schizophrenia or depression.

“As we embrace the month of May, mental health is a concerning topic of discussion,” according to Teresa Henson, Extension specialist-program outreach coordinator for the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff’s School of Agriculture, Fisheries and Human Sciences. “This is excellent because mental illness stigma is slowly but surely coming to the forefront and getting the awareness it deserves.”

With mental illness, there is no one single root to the problem; there are many risk factors that may contribute to mental illness, according to the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Risk factors include:

- Chemical imbalances or biological factors in the brain

- Use of alcohol or drugs
- Experiences dealing with ongoing (chronic) medical conditions such as cancer or diabetes
- Feelings of isolation or loneliness
- History of traumatic life experiences (child abuse, violence or sexual assault)

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention explains that people can experience different types of mental illness or disorders, which can often occur at any time.

“Mental illness can happen within a short period or in episodes,” Henson said. “This lets you know that mental illness comes and goes and can be ongoing or long-lasting.”

There are several resources available to help friends, family and loved ones who are suffering from mental illness.

Sources include:

- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) Arkansas-
<https://afsp.org/chapter/arkansas>
- 24/7 Crisis Hotline: National Suicide Prevention Lifeline Network www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org
- 1-800-273-TALK (8255) (Veterans,



One in five adults live with mental illness.

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- How Right Now Finding What Helps: <https://www.cdc.gov/howrightnow/index.html>
- Suicide Prevention-
<https://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/programs-services/topics/suicide-prevention>
- Crisis Text Line
- Text TALK to 741-741 to text with a trained crisis counselor from the Crisis Text Line for free, 24/7

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